

## 2015: The Year of PCO VIII "The Grace of Working"



br. Štefan Kožuh, General Vicar OFM Cap

The New Testament perception of work, taken on and interiorized by St. Francis with the expression, "The grace of working," calls to mind for me a story, probably invented, but not for this reason any less current, that tells of an attentive observer who finds himself in a stone quarry during a hot summer. Under the scorching sun, he saw a worker bent over a block of stone. His strokes with a heavy hammer seemed to be an expression of an obvious anger. "What are you doing?" was the question put to him by the one passing by. The worker did not look up. His response was not very kind; it was the expression of a deep discontent: "Don't you see? I'm breaking the stone." He seemed to be a slave.

A few steps away, the traveler saw another worker. His strokes seemed determined, but also impersonal. "What are you doing?" was the question put also to him. The worker got up, wiped the sweat from his forehead, and answered: "As you see, with this heavy and tiring work I am earning bread for my family." Resigned to his destiny, he bent down anew to his work.

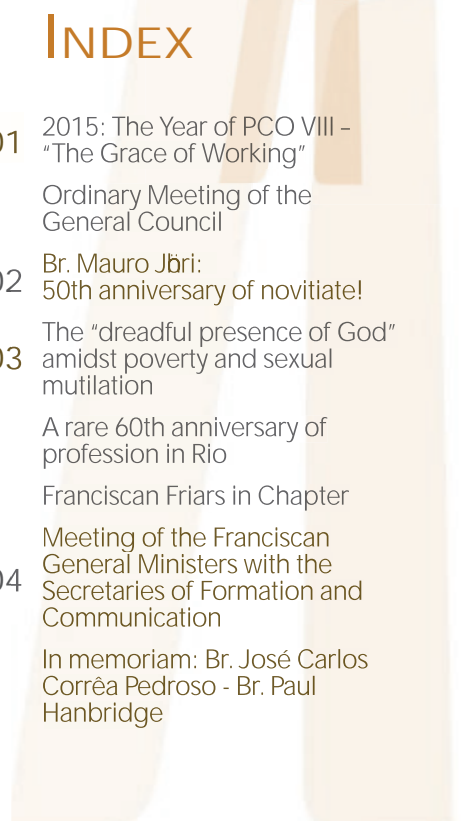
A little further away, but still under the scorching sun, the traveler observed a third worker. His strokes on the cube

of stone were delicate, well-focused. With a certain respect, the traveler approached him and put to him the usual question: "What are you doing?" The worker broke away gently from his job and with his face beaming replied: "I feel very honored because the task of collaborating in the construction of a great cathedral has been entrusted to me!"

The same work carried out in three different ways: as a slave, with resignation or with full dedication; as condemnation, destiny, or opportunity; curse, duress, blessing...for all of us it will do good to make a humble and sincere check up on the interior attitude with which we carry out the work entrusted to us.

One speaks much of work in the world of today. Many have become slaves of work and many have lost it. To have work today in which someone can live peacefully and with dignity is a grace!

As we approach PCO VIII, which will be celebrated from October 26 to November 21, 2015, let us in our fraternities ask ourselves two questions: Immersed in the world of ruthless competition and growing individualism, are we still a sign, serving freely and in fraternal collaboration? What is really at the base of



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all that I do together with the others: my self-realization or the free gift that can only come from a life truly consecrated to God and to the brothers, working with fidelity and devotion?

"It is the duty of the Order to help every brother to develop his own "grace of working," (Constitutions 37,4). Let us pray that our brother-delegates to PCO VIII on the grace of working fulfill this task which will be entrusted to them with responsibility and competence.



## Ordinary Meeting of the General Council

ROME, Italy – From January 7 to 16, 2015, the General Council had its first ordinary meeting of this new year, treating, among other things, the following themes: the usual dispensations from the various grades of consecrated life, reports of the circumscriptions, pastoral visitations, chapters, the presentations of the JPIC review of social projects in the Order and of the offices of General Curia; the draft of guidelines for the protection of minors and vulnerable adults was approved and will be

sent to all the ministers for observations and comments. It will be discussed in all the coming meetings of Conferences; study burses for the International College 'San Lorenzo da Brindisi' were approved.

APPOINTMENTS: Directors of Capuchin Friars International: Br. Victorius Dwiardy and Br. Alejandro Nuñez. Province of Switzerland: Br. Bernard Maillard – IV councilor (following the resignation of Br. Jean-Marc Gaspoz for health reasons). Houses dependent on the



# 50th anniversary of novitiate!

**B**r. Mauro, 50 years have already passed since you began your novitiate and took up the Capuchin life. What are the feelings that you are experiencing and that you want to communicate to us, your brothers of the Order?

First of all I want to say that these fifty years have passed very quickly! It doesn't seem true, and yet it is. Looking back, I see the various stages, the difficulties encountered along the way, but also the great joys for having been able to receive much and having been put in a position to give something of myself. Then it's about a path that I have not done alone, but together with others, in the first place the friars of my Province and then opening myself to other realities. The formative journey has brought me to live in countries and to have contact with different cultures: I believe that this was a very precious gift. I refer especially to the formation received in Montreal, attending the Institute of integral human formation, a formation which made me look inside in a new way, discovering my abilities, but no less my areas of shadow, my wish to remove myself from certain difficult situations. At times I thought that I would not make it, and then I discovered that this tight confrontation with my own person represented for me a path of freedom, a true and proper broadening of my interior world and of my possibilities for relating myself to others and to God. When the Order entrusted to me the task of being its General Minister, at first I wondered what I

had ever done wrong to find myself with so great a responsibility. Today, in the awareness of my many limits, I am grateful to be able to give my contribution and to accompany the many and varied realities that are us Capuchins.

In your circular letter, "Let us Fan the Flame of our Charism," you emphasize *the positive points and the current challenges in the Order for initial and ongoing formation*. Do you have other current challenges that can help the brothers to engage a better formation for our life?

Formation, both initial and ongoing, remains a primary challenge for all of us. There is the real danger of resting on our laurels, of thinking that we have done enough and that we have already arrived. I think we have to deepen and make more specific what we mean by "initiation for our form of life." The great challenge remains that of integrating, especially after the novitiate, formation for our life and study. How to transmit to each, in a way that remains rooted in his heart, the desire for an ongoing conversion and growing in the dimension of unconditional gift of self to God and to all humanity?

Without passion and a good share of enthusiasm, life ends up like the salt that lost its flavor (Mark 9:50). Acedia takes over, and this risks undermining others as well. No less important is the awareness of entering to be part of fraternity like ours as Capuchins; that I commit myself to embrace a simple and fraternal style of life and to promote these evangel-

ical and Franciscan values wherever I find myself.

After eight years of service to the Order, what do you think will be the near future of the Order?

These eight years of service have allowed me to know better the Order and to take note of certain tendencies that are already outlining the future developments in our Order in terms of geographic development. Our Order arose in Europe and had in Europe an extraordinary development even to reaching a figure beyond thirty thousand members in the 1700s; today, however, the torch of our charism is passing progressively into the hands of our young confreres from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Let us rejoice in this! The future of the Order is in their hands. I believe it very important to promote in these emerging places the awareness of this ongoing transition. The numerical growth should go hand in hand with the taking on of responsibility for the conservation and the transmission of the charism in an integral way. There remains then the concern about how to guarantee that our charism will remain in Europe. Presences will be downsized but I hope no less meaningful for it. For the rest we are simply in the hands of the good God and this must allow us to live these historic transitions with a sense of profound trust and gratitude for all that has happened and will happen among us and around us.

General Curia: Kofele (Eritrea): Br. Giampiero Bernardo Coccia, guardian, Br. Matteo, vicar. Consolazione (Rome): Br. Ciprian Vacaru – guardian (CU Romania), Br. Fulvio Antonio Salvi – vicar (PR Marches); General Bursar: Br. Alejandro Nuñez from April 5, 2015; Bursar of the International College: Br. Maximino Tessaro (PR Rio Grande do Sul) from July 1, 2015. Nominations for PCO VIII: Secretaries: Br. Ivan Michele

Milazzo, secretary of the preparatory commission of the PCO (PR Palermo); Moderators: Benedict Ayodi (CG Kenya); Christophorus Goedereis (PR Germany); José Mari Lana (PR Spain) Interpreters: Fernando Ventura (PR Portugal); Alfredo Marchello (PR Puglia); Charles Serignat (PR Great Britain); Gian Nicola Paladino (PR Abruzzo); Ricardo Luiz Farias de Santana (CU Amazzonia); Translators: Charles Sammons (PR New York-

New England); Francisco Lopes, (PR Ceará e Piauí); Jean-Marcel Rossini (PR Sardinia); Marek Przechowski (PR Warsaw); Liturgy: Domenico Donatelli (PR Puglia); Gianpaolo Lacerenza (PR Puglia). For the celebration of PCO VIII the following are proposed: Br. Sidney Machado, secretary of the PCO (PR Paraná-S. Catarina); Br. Damian Pereira, vice secretary (PR Tamil Nadu South).

**D**AWRO KONTA, Ethiopia - Br. Raffaello Del Debole, having spent 40 of his 80 years in Ethiopia, is one of the last Capuchin missionaries remaining in the region of Dawro Konta, a land forgotten by all, but not by God. In recent days he has baptized in the water of the river 80 new faithful. Last year he had to return to Italy with urgency: he had the larger part of the stomach removed, but right away afterwards he was already on the first plane for Ethiopia, a land of red clay that gets inside you and never leaves. It is perhaps his real first "illness", together with the need to be alone that brought him to live in a house of a few square meters far away from everything, but very close to the clinic that he started. "HERE



A rare 60th anniversary of profession in Rio

**RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil** - On the morning of January 4, 2015 the Capuchins of Rio de Janeiro e Espírito Santo rejoiced together with the parish community of S. Sebastião (Tijuca) in the 60th anniversary of profession of Br. Nemesio Bernardi. With the eucharistic celebration followed by refreshments, in the presence of all the brothers of his Province, Br. Nemesio renewed his intention to be faithful to his consecration, up to now carried out with great zeal and esteem from the people. Everywhere he is considered a Capuchin of exemplary life in simplicity and fraternal availability. Where the majority of the friars are still young, the celebration of a 60th anniversary of profession was a special reason for joy and a rare occasion for all.

## The "dreadful presence of God" amidst poverty and sexual mutilation

I HAVE LEARNED TO DESIRE NOTHING". "I chose this in order to no longer desire anything - he recounts, with his slender hands and determined eyes, never stopping - You have to love God in poverty. It's easy to be among the poor, but it's necessary to learn first how to be poor within. Only in this way do we find what I define as the 'dreadful presence of God'". His adventure began in 1971: "I taught English to the kids. With my backpack on my shoulders I passed rivers and founded the first school of reading and writing. When I return to Italy, I feel like a foreign-

er: it's too cold and humid. This land, on the other hand, is marvelous. It's as if all the world, with all its colors, opened itself before our eyes, spreading out its wonder. I have not seen this light anywhere else." His dream is to enlarge the clinic he manages. And to find new volunteer personnel. "The first ability required is to suffer with the one suffering; without this you aren't going anywhere" he explains.

I therefore ask everyone, if it's possible, to give more attention to this clinic... We need people who are honest, independent, believers, able to adapt themselves and to live in austerity. The problems of the many patients are worms, AIDS, pneumonia, wounds, malaria, epilepsy. But also induced abortions and many cases of badly circumcised babies and of girls subjected to the barbaric practice of infibulation. Clitoridectomy and excision, although prohibited by the Constitution, are still widely practiced, such that Ethiopia has a high female mortality rate during childbirth, caused in part by the complications due to the mutilation. "When I ask someone, 'What happened to that little girl?' If I don't hear an answer, I understand that she was subjected to infibulation."



Franciscan Friars in Chapter

*A proposal for a path to walk together and to grow in the common Franciscan vocation and mission*

**ROME, Italy** - On January 18, 2015, the General Ministers of the first Franciscan Order and of the TOR, together with their respective councils, gathered at our General Curia in Rome to reflect on a possible path to grow in their common vocation and mission. The idea of a 'Synod of the Franciscan Family' - that is, a sharing of a path that, taking a cue from historical memory, through reconciliation and making use of dialogue and fraternal discernment that can bring us to choose and implement new initiatives of evangelization - came from a set of messages and experiences of communion received and experienced in recent years, and at the same time by the approach of two meaningful anni-

versaries in our history: The VIII Centenary of the 'Pardon of Assisi' (2016) and the V Centenary of the bull of Pope Leo X, *Itē vos* (2017).

Having as an ultimate aim "the growth in creative fidelity to the charisma, joined to a more incisive and constructive witness," a path of four years is imagined, from 2015 to 2018, each year centering on a particular theme: "Enlighten the darkness of my heart" (2015) – a year of preparation to "remember and understand" the events of the Order and its pluriform development; "What we do not completely forgive,

## Meeting of the Franciscan General Ministers

### with the Secretaries of Formation and Communication

**R**OME, Italy, January 10, 2015. – Life is full of challenges, and it is just this that makes it beautiful. Formation is what makes us able to transform threats into opportunities. Without realizing it, we are ever more immersed in the digital world. What are the challenges that we are called to face? This past January 10 in our General Curia, the General Ministers of the Franciscan family, together with the directors of communication and the secretaries of formation, animated by Salesian sister Caterina Cangia, reflected on the use of the new means of communication in our religious life. We have before us a journey to make. The

construction of our identity is at stake, which today more than ever faces a new conception of time and space, with deep consequences for the way we relate to each other. And, as always, our fraternal life presents itself as the verifying criterion of discernment. Let us take advantage of everything that helps us to improve our communication, without forgetting the risks, which aren't few, that can bring on the individualism that distances us from God, from our brothers, and from the men and women of our time. Let us learn to meet one another on the Web in order to expand the bounds of our fraternal life and to better serve the Gospel!

make us, Lord, forgive completely" (2016) – celebrating the anniversary of the VIII Centenary of the 'Pardon of Assisi', the friars will be invited to "implement paths of conscious penance, of requests for pardon and of a joyous welcome of mercy"; "And to love them in this and not wish that they were better Christians" (2017) – the year dedicated to fraternity ad instar Capituli and the pilgrimage to Rome; "I want to send you all to heaven" (2018) – a year dedicated to evangelization.

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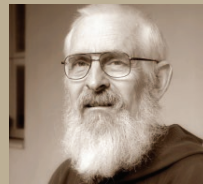
## In Memoriam

In the month of January, the Lord called to himself two confreres who served the Order in the offices of the General Curia...



**B**r. José Carlos Corrêa Pedrosa, (PR of São Paulo, Brazil), Franciscan scholar and General Councilor for two terms. Born in São Paulo on August 14, 1931, Br. José Carlos became a Capuchin friar in the Province of the Immaculate Conception of the Capu-

chins of São Paulo on January 8, 1950 – sixty-five years ago – made religious vows in the Capuchin Order, confirmed with solemn profession on January 11, 1953 and followed by priestly ordination on June 24, 1956. He died on January 9, 2015.



**B**r. Paul Hanbridge (PR of Australia) was 62 years old and made his first religious profession among the Capuchins in 1974 and was ordained priest in 1979 at the age of 27. During his life he was in various fraternities, among them Leichhardt, Wynnum, Plump-ton, the hermitage of Murrurundi, and the General Curia in Rome. He was pastor, itinerant priest of the Neocatechumenal Way, director of postulants, hermit, archivist and vicar in the community of the General Curia. He met Sister Death on this past January 19.

R.I.P.