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First Encyclical of Benedict XVI

Deus Caritas Est

Pope Benedict XVI has published his first encyclical to show how Christianity does not repress love, but elevates it.

"Deus Caritas Est" (God Is Love), responds to one of the most common objections: "Doesn't the Church, with all her commandments and prohibitions, turn to bitterness the most precious thing in life?" asks the Pope.

The encyclical answers the question in two parts. The first reflects on love in its origin and different manifestations; the second, addresses the way in which the Church, as institution, must live the commandment of love.

The Holy Father begins by clarifying a generalized confusion, according to which the Church condemns "eros" -- love of attraction -- to accept only "agape" -- unconditional love.

A mere "thing"

"Nowadays Christianity of the past is often criticized as having been opposed to the body; and it is quite true that tendencies of this sort have always existed. Yet the contemporary way of exalting the body is deceptive," Benedict XVI points out in section No. 5 of the 15,000-word encyclical.

"Eros, reduced to pure 'sex,' has become a commodity, a mere 'thing' to be bought and sold, or rather, man himself becomes a commodity," he explains.

According to the Pope, this conception of love implies "a debasement of the human body: no longer is it integrated into our overall existential freedom; no longer is it a vital expression of our whole being, but it is more or less relegated to the purely biological sphere."

"Christian faith, on the other hand, has always considered man a unity in duality, a reality in which spirit and matter compenetrates, and in which each is brought to a new nobility," the Holy Father writes. "True, eros tends to rise 'in ecstasy' towards the Divine, to lead us beyond ourselves; yet for this very reason it calls for a path of ascent, renunciation, purification and healing."

"It is part of love's growth towards higher levels and inward purification that it now seeks to become definitive, and it does so in a twofold sense: both in the sense of exclusivity (this particular person alone) and in the sense of being 'for ever.'"

Thus, the Holy Father explains, "eros directs man towards marriage, to a bond which is unique and definitive; thus, and only thus, does it fulfill its deepest purpose."

The text acknowledges: "Love is indeed 'ecstasy,' not in the sense of a moment of intoxication, but rather as a journey, an ongoing exodus out of the closed inward-looking self towards its liberation through self-giving, and thus towards authentic self-discovery and indeed the discovery of God."

Christ as model

According to the Pope, the example of "love in its most radical form" is Christ on the cross, "the culmination of that turning of God against himself in which he gives himself in order to raise man up and save him."

"It is there that this truth can be contemplated. It is from there that our definition of love must begin. In this contemplation the Christian discovers the path along which his life and love must move," he stresses.

The second part of the encyclical is entitled "The Practice of Love by the Church as a 'Community of Love.'"

The text acknowledges that love "will always prove necessary, even in the most just society. There is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love."

"There will always be suffering which cries out for consolation and help," Benedict XVI writes. "There will always be loneliness. There will always be situations of material need where help in the form of concrete love of neighbor is indispensable.

"The State which would provide everything, absorbing everything into itself, would ultimately become a mere bureaucracy incapable of guaranteeing the very thing which the suffering person -- every person -- needs: namely, loving personal concern."

"Marxism had seen world revolution and its preliminaries as the panacea for the social problem: revolution and the subsequent collectivization of the means of production, so it was claimed, would immediately change things for the better," the Holy Father observes. "This illusion has vanished.

"We do not need a State which regulates and controls everything, but a State which, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, generously acknowledges and supports initiatives arising from the different social forces and combines spontaneity with closeness to those in need."

The Pope adds: "The Church is one of those living forces: she is alive with the love enkindled by the Spirit of Christ. This love does not simply offer people material help, but refreshment and care for their souls, something which often is even more necessary than material support."

Ecclesial activity

In this context, the Holy Father describes the "distinctiveness of the Church's charitable activity."

First, he points out that "Christian charitable activity, apart from its professional competence, must be based on the experience of a personal encounter with Christ, whose love touched believers' hearts, generating within them love for others."

Second, he points out that "Christian charitable activity must be independent of parties and ideologies. It is not a means of changing the world ideologically, and it is not at the service of worldly stratagems, but it is a way of making present here and now the love which man always needs.

"The Christian's program -- the program of the Good Samaritan, the program of Jesus -- is 'a heart which sees.' This heart sees where love is needed and acts accordingly. Obviously when charitable activity is carried out by the Church as a communitarian initiative, the spontaneity of individuals must be combined with planning, foresight and cooperation with other similar institutions.

"Charity, furthermore, cannot be used as a means of engaging in what is nowadays considered proselytism. Love is free." "A Christian knows when it is time to speak of God and when it is better to say nothing and to let love alone speak," notes the Pope, as a third and final point.

Benedict XVI concludes by giving examples of charity left by the saints. He mentions Blessed Teresa of Calcutta on three occasions, and ends with a dialogue with the Virgin Mary, who "shows us what love is and whence it draws its origin and its constantly renewed power."

Min. gen. in audience with the Holy Father

Vatican City - Rome

I was received by the Holy Father, Benedict XVI on the 26th of January. We spoke about the process being carried out by the Order as a preparation for the celebration of the VIII Centenary of its foundation during the personal meeting. We spoke about the priorities which the Order has at the moment: Giving a better quality to our life, “ad gentes” evangelisation, formation and studies, the service for dialogue. We spoke about the living of the Gospel, according to the form of life which St. Francis left us, in the Church and in profound communion with the Church. We spoke about our University, the PUA, and in particular about the Faculty of Biblical Sciences and Archaeology of Jerusalem. We spoke about the situation in Bosnia Herzegovina. We also spoke about some problems which affect us as an Order, particularly about the abandonments of the Order and the lack of vocations in some countries.



Although he followed the above mentioned points with great attention, I can

say, however, that he showed particular interest in the project of the VIII Centenary, which he judged to be very appropriate for the achievement of a real renewal of the Order, and in formation, especially in vocational discernment and intellectual formation, “indispensable for a fruitful dialogue with present-day society”. With regard to the project of the VIII Centenary, he encouraged us to follow it faithfully to the end, without fail, since “it will be very beneficial to the Order and to the Church”. With regard to vocational discernment, he asked that we do it “seriously and serenely” in order “to be able to assess the real motives”. He encouraged us to continue to push strongly with our “ad gentes” mission.



The Holy Father asked me about some particular situations, to which I responded with total frankness and sincerity, and about which the Holy Father showed great understanding.

All this was carried out in a climate of great cordiality and affection for our Order on his part. I confess that I had the feeling of being before a father who knows our charism very well, he knows us as an Order and loves us. Yes, once again, I have been able to observe his closeness to and love for us. We have a pastor who loves us. Let us respond generously to such love.

At the end of the meeting I presented some requests in the name of the Order, and he received them with good will.

At the end of the personal audience he received the members of the General Definitory, who could then greet him personally. The meeting ended with the Apostolic Blessing which Benedict XVI imparted to those present and to all the Friars of the Order.

“To the glory of Christ and of His servant Francis”.

**Br. José Rodríguez Carballo, ofm
Minister General**

BROTHERS AND SERVANTS

The re-foundation of authority

Br. José Rodríguez Carballo, ofm
Minister General

1. Remembering our identity

Our reflection has the service of authority, which we have been called on to exercise as Ministers and Custodes, as its object. However, any reflection on this topic must necessarily begin from what is constitutive of our identity. In this context I wish to remind you of only two aspects which seem essential to me in order to understand our ministry adequately and in a Franciscan key.

To begin: We are brothers

“All of you are brothers” (1R 22, 33). Whatever the ministry to which each one of us is called on to fulfil may be, it should never make us forget this fundamental and founding principle of our identity. We are all brothers through profession, we are all equal, with the same rights and the same obligations (cf. CCGG 3). In fraternity no brother is greater than another: “Let no one be called prior, but let everyone in general be called a lesser brother. Let one wash the feet of the other” (1R 6, 3). We all have the same title, Friar Minor, and we are all called to live relationships of equality within the fraternity, showing ourselves to be benevolent, fraternal and welcoming as we would like others to be with us (cf. 1R 6, 2)

Before being called on to exercise the service of authority, we were called to form part of a fraternity, the Order of Friars Minor (cf. GGCC 1). The service of authority is a particular and temporary calling within the definitive calling to be Friars Minor. Being brothers is what defines us and which, therefore, must have clear consequences in the area of our spirituality and also in the area of animation and administration of the fraternity, local and provincial, as well as universal.

To continue: We are servants

The Ministers and Custodes, applying to us the words which the Letter to the Hebrews uses to define the high priest, are brothers taken from among brothers to be placed at the service of our brothers (cf. Heb 5, 1), brothers with a very concrete and important ministry, though very humble: serving the brothers or, if you prefer, washing their feet, as Jesus did with His disciples (cf. Jn 13, 1ff; Adm 4). The example of Jesus must be present in our hearts and actions at all times (cf. Jn 13, 14-15).

What has been said leads us to affirm that our condition of Ministers or Custodes cannot be justified except in function of service: “Let the ministers and servants remember what the Lord says: I have not come to be served, but to serve” (1R 4, 6). Power is incompatible with the mission of Jesus and so, when this is offered to you do not hesitate in rejecting it (cf. Lk 4, 5-8; Jn 6, 15). Power is incompatible with the mission of anyone who considers himself a disciple of the “Servant of the Lord” (cf. Lk 22, 24-30). We who exercise authority in the fraternity are only permitted to boast of “washing the feet of the brothers” (Adm 4, 1).

Service, together with minority, classifies and characterises our “fraternal life in common” (GGCC 38), as well as that of those who “have been placed over others” (Adm 4, 2). “And let them be minors”. This classification which refers to all the Friars without distinction, must lead us to call ourselves and to be Friars Minor, and to behave at all times and in all situations as “the servants and subjects of all, peaceful and humble of heart” (GGCC 64), since “all the members of the Order are

brothers and minors in name and in fact, although they may exercise different offices, duties and ministries in the Order” (GGCC 41).

The service which we are called on to exercise fundamentally seeks to favour the integral growth of the Friars, to strengthen communion between them and to carry out the apostolic mission proper to our Order. At the centre of our ministry is the brother whom the Lord has entrusted to us and of whose development as a Friar Minor we will be asked to give an account: “If anything is lost on account of their fault or bad example, they will have to render an account [of the souls of the Friars] before the Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. 1R 4, 6). The sacrament of the brother must be placed at the centre of the Franciscan experience and, by the same token, the Friar, independently of his situation and of his behaviour, must be the first to be served by him who has received the “ministry” of authority.

Some consequences

Being brothers and servants, rather than being a declaration of principles, is a programme of life also, especially for the Ministers and Custodes. It is a programme which leads us to work untiringly at behaving as equals, as servants, and to exercise authority in a certain way, which is:

Authority cannot be conceived as power among us. They who feel they are “proprietors” of the fraternity conceive it in this way and they conceive the fraternity as an estate. This style is contrary to the Gospel (cf. Mt 20, 26; Lk 22, 24-26) and the Rule (1R 5, 9-10).

The exercise of authority cannot be thought of in a key of privilege either. That would be a conception proper to one who “washes his hands” instead of “washing the feet”. This conception also is contrary to the Gospel (cf. Mt 23, 8-10; Lk 20, 44-46) and the Rule (cf. 1R 4, 1-6).

Looking at the Gospel and at our “forma vitae”, authority only has meaning “within”, “in” and “for” the fraternity. Given that the fraternity is “a family united in Christ” (ES II, 25; GGCC 45), the Minister or Custos cannot be seen, or authority be exercised, as if everything turned around the person who has it. The centre of a fraternity –universal, provincial or local- has to be Christ. If it were not so, authority would certainly be situated outside or above the fraternity. He who has been called to preside over the Friars can never forget that he does not cease to be a brother and that, in a certain way, is obliged by vocation and mission to be even more a brother, because he is responsible for souls.

Having these principles in mind and looking at the way Jesus behaved, we can well affirm that authority based on the Gospel is an authority which makes relationships, a free and liberating authority, an authority which motivates and orients, an authority which is above all spiritual and an authority which knows how to decide.

All this, translated into concrete expressions of the service of authority, implies: Being with the Friars; being sensitive to the needs of the Friars, “showing love through works” (Adm 9, 4; cf. 2R 6, 8; GGCC 44) just as Jesus did when, moved by compassion, He healed the sick (Mt 14, 14). It also implies correcting those who sin (cf. Mt 18, 15-17; Gal 6, 1).

2. A profile of the Minister and Custos

Among the many traits which form the profile of the Minister and Custos, as can be deduced from the identity we have just presented, it seems opportune to underline the following:

A brother who listens to and obeys the Gospel

For St. Francis, to profess meant to enter into an obedient relationship (cf. 2R

2, 11. 14) in which every Friar Minor lives and moved. This obedient relationship is manifested in obedience to the “prelates”, “ministers” or “superiors” (cf. Adm 3); in the mutual obedience of the Friars (cf. 1R 4, 13-15) and in obedience to the “life and Rule”, which is the Gospel (cf. 2R 1, 1).

The Gospel is the greatest authority for Christians and, consequently, for the Friars. The other levels, including our Rule, receive their authority from the Gospel, or, rather, from Him of whom the Gospel gives testimony: Jesus Christ.

For Francis, therefore, the Gospel is the supreme authority within the Franciscan fraternity. Ministers and subjects have to obey it. The Gospel, or if it is preferred, the Word, has to inform the entire life of the Friars and of all the Friars. It is not by chance that the Friar professes to live “the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” as his “rule and life” (2R 1). Neither is it by chance that the very Rule closes with an explicit reference to observing “the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as we have firmly promised” (2R 12, 4).

In this context, it can be very well understood how Francis would have liked to put it in the Rule that the Minister General of the Fraternity was the Holy Spirit (cf. 2Cel 193). And, always within this context, it is also understood that he puts God and “His holy and true will” (cf. PrCr) as the first and determining element of the said fraternity: “Now that we have left the world, however, we have nothing else to do but follow the will of the Lord and to please Him” (1R 22, 9).

In this obedience to God, to Jesus Christ and to the Gospel, born of the love for Him, whom we confess to be “the good, all good, supreme good” (PrG 3), all the Friars, “without exception” are equal, that is, Friars Minor (cf. 1R 6, 3), and no one can feel dispensed or dispense from that. If we wish to be sons of the Father, we, Ministers and subjects, have to fulfil His commandments and, if we wish to be brothers of Jesus Christ, we must all equally fulfil His will: “Let us, therefore, hold onto the words, the life, the teaching and the Holy Gospel of Him Who humbled Himself to beg His Father for us and to make His name known” (1R 22, 41).

This gives us very practical consequences, which are:

A Minister or Custos has to make an effort to listen to and obey the Gospel always. This means accepting it as the supreme authority in his own life and in the lives of others: “My real programme of governance is not to do my own will, not to pursue my own ideas, but to listen, together with the whole Church, to the word and the will of the Lord, to be guided by Him”.

The Minister and Custos have to have the Gospel as the basis of their personal and institutional lives. If the Gospel has to be the daily bread, action and truth for the Friars, the Minister and Custos have to see to it that this is really so. The Minister and Custos must constantly give “reminders” of the gospel life options which the Friars accepted through profession. The Minister and Custos have to consider themselves called to be living reminders of the Gospel through their lives and words.

Finally, the Minister and Custos have to accept the Gospel as the interpretative law of their life and mission and of the life and mission of the Friars. The Gospel is the person with whom all our life and mission options have to be compared.

A brother put at the service of the brothers and of our charism

We have already said that the exercise of authority had to have the service of the brother as its inspirational principle and also, given our condition of Friars Minor, the service of our charism or “forma vitae”.

Being at the service of the brothers above all implies, for the Minister and Custos, loving them, nourishing and taking care of them, more than a mother loves, nourishes and takes care of her child (cf. Jn 21, 15-17; 2R 6, 7) and, “with

special care and as they see fit”, to “provide for the needs” of the Friars (2R 4, 2-3).

Being at the service of the Friars implies, for the Minister and Custos, feeling close to them and showing them the said closeness at all times: as much when he is sick and cannot repay him as when he is well and can repay him” (Adm 24).

Being at the service of the Friars implies being merciful with the brother who sins (cf. LtM 9, 11), without being upset or disturbed by his sin (1R 5, 7; cf. Adm 11): rather should they help him who sins spiritually, as best they can, since the healthy do not need a doctor, but the sick do (cf. Mt 20, 25-26) (1R 5, 8).

Being at the service of the Friars also includes seeing a brother in each member of the Fraternity and establishing relationships of equality, fraternity and friendship with him, without wishing, in any way, to be considered greater than others (cf. Adm 19), but rather, humbling himself (cf. Phil 2, 6-11).

Being at the service of the Friars means correcting them (cf. 1R 10, 1ff), imposing “penance with mercy” on them when they sin (2R 7, 1ff) and behaving with the said Friars “as they consider best before God” (1R 5, 6).

Being at the service of the Friars also involves distributing them throughout the Province and other places, visiting them frequently and admonishing them spiritually (1R 4, 2). Being at the service of the Friars means being careful that no one is lost through one’s fault (cf. 1R 4, 6).

Definitively, for a Minister to be at the service of the Friars is to put the person of the Friar and his faithfulness to the vocation, to which he has been called, at the centre of his preoccupations, “endeavouring to provide for them as he would wish to be provided for him were he in a similar position (cf. 1R 6, 2-3).

On the other hand, for a Minister and Custos, being at the service of our charism means:

Knowing it as deeply as possible in order to be able to personify it in his own life and, then, to interpret it in function of the life of the fraternity. The Minister is the “custodian of the charism” in his Province or in the Order. It is a responsibility that cannot be delegated to anyone.

Knowing and faithfully keeping the spirit of Francis, because only in this way can our identity of Friars Minor remain clear (cf. *Perfectae Caritatis*, n. 2). But, at the same time, given that every charism is a living and dynamic reality, to be at the service of the charism means, for the Minister or Custos, working at the coherent development of himself, re-reading it in order to go beyond its historical and contingent formulations. The words of John Paul II to religious, “You have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished” (VC 110), are also applicable to us. This means assuming, in the first person, the task of governing creatively with an eye to the future and, as far as possible, anticipating the challenges. It means entering fully into the process of the “re-foundation” of our life and mission.

To carry out this difficult task it is necessary that the Minister, as a starting point, should help the Friars to go deeply into the history of the Order, and, at the same time, help in knowing the challenges of the Church and of the religious life today. It is equally necessary for the Minister to help the Friars to inculturate the Franciscan charism by balancing esteem for his own culture with openness to and acceptance of other cultures in which our charism is expressed.

Finally, the Minister or Custos, to be at the service of the charism, has to help in developing it through initial and on-going formation. This is a fundamental responsibility which cannot be delegated either. On the other hand, formation is the best means for assimilating and developing the charism.

A brother in constant discernment, who provokes processes of discernment
The Minister and Custos are not simply, even fundamentally, charged with admin-

istrating a material and physical patrimony already inherited, which is already possessed or can be increased by the Province or Custody. The Minister and the Custos are principally called on to accompany, facilitate and guarantee processes of discernment and change. Like the faithful and prudent administrator of whom the Gospel speaks, the Minister or Custos must know how to discern the opportune conditions (cf. Lk 12, 42).

These processes, which should lead the Friars to “hold on to what is good” (cf. 1Thess 5, 21), to assume all that comes from the Spirit and to reject what is contrary to it (cf. VC 73), must begin with a careful reading and interpretation of the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel (cf. LgP 6) and carried out with a twofold perspective: “On the one hand, we must become aware of the personal and social systems that oppose life in order to denounce them and contribute to their overthrow. On the other hand, we must open our eyes of faith and hope in order to detect, in the midst of the crises, the emerging dreams of humanity, to open up channels for them in our own life and, in this way, anticipate the Kingdom proclaimed and lived by Jesus Christ” (LgP 7).

The technical contribution to these processes, perhaps, is not the most important one which the Minister Provincial could give. It cannot be expected that all Ministers are technicians. There are technical commissions, made up of Friars and others, which can give better contributions. His most worthwhile contribution would be that of initiating processes of discernment (where it is necessary), of encouraging them (where they have already begun) and, everywhere, paying attention to the methodology followed in order to bring them to a conclusion and that they may be in conformity with the Franciscan charism, as proposed by the Church (General Constitutions) and as the circumstances of the present moment we are living demand.

The most important role of the Minister in this respect will be that of guaranteeing a correct methodology so that the options to which the processes lead are coherent with the “forma vitae” embraced through profession, and that of guaranteeing that those who participate in the process of discernment have the proper dispositions in terms of personal freedom and abnegation together with familiarity with the essential intuitions of the Order and in attention to the signs of the times.

3. Attitudes and means of animation and government

It would be impossible to make a list of the attitudes and means that a Minister or Custos has to put into practice to carry out the animation and government entrusted to him. Here, as with many other aspects of our life and mission, we have to leave a lot of space to creativity. It is also impossible to foresee all the cases and problems which could arise. Life, if, on the one hand, it is very much more beautiful than we imagine, will always, on the other hand, offer surprises which we could not imagine. We have to be prepared to accept the beautiful things and also to face up to the unforeseen events.

In any case, and as an example, I will point out some attitudes and some means of animation and government which seem to be important to me. I think it is important to remember, among others, the following attitudes:

Remember that the basis of all moral Authority is in feeling to be humble workers in the vineyard of the Lord, recognising that the source of all fruitfulness and reciprocal communion is in Him.

With this perspective, the person who has authority will not exercise it vertically, but will live the dynamism of the parable of communion, because he will obey the Word, obey the Spirit, before all else.

The dynamism of the parable of communion should lead him to “willingly” listen (PC 14) to the Friars in order to arrive at a “common feeling” which will allow

them to walk together in unity of mind and heart. Listening will allow them to share the difficulties and the joys of the Friars.

Accept that the Minister or Custos must have the courage to make decisions for the good of the fraternity/community and for the good of the Friars and, once taken, the Minister or Custos must be “strong” and “constant” so that “what has been decided will not remain as a dead letter” (FLC 50).

Take up the cross, aware that the closer one is to the Lord, the closer is the cross and the more intimate, delicate and profound the “pruning” will be, as it places one closer to the graft. The power of authority is a crucified power and suffering is the necessary company of he who has been called to animate a fraternity. It is a matter, however, of a suffering “inhabited” by the Crucified One, who generates life.

Be instruments of justice, peace and reconciliation in the bosom of the local and provincial fraternities.

Strengthen team work. The Minister or Custos must make decisions “alone”, but this should happen only in really important cases and after having exhausted all possibilities of arriving at a certain consensus. Normally he should involve the greatest number of Friars in the reflection and in the making of decisions, which would facilitate the execution of the decisions and mitigate the loneliness proper to the ministry of Minister or Custos.

Work through a consensual vision. It is said that Spartacus spurred his companions to rebel against Roman power. All were condemned to death. Marcus Licinius Crasso, the Roman general, let it be known that if they revealed who Spartacus was they would be pardoned. Spartacus stood and said “I am he”. Instantly, they stood up, one by one, and said “I am Spartacus, I am Spartacus, I am Spartacus”. At the end all were standing. It was not so much a question of fidelity to Spartacus, but to the consensual vision which Spartacus had inspired. This vision was so strong that none of them was disposed to abandon it. In our case it is a matter of motivating and accompanying so that all may share the dream of communion with God.

Among the means which I think are opportune I underline the following:

Personal prayer. The Minister and Custos must try to be men of prayer. Those of us who have been called to exercise the ministry of authority need to ask for the gift of wisdom, as an art to discern and to govern (cf 1K 3, 14-15; 2Cor 1, 3-13; Wis 7-9); we need a “heart wise and shrewd” (1K 3, 12), in order to be able to carry out His “holy and true will” always; we need to be men of hope, in order to be able to prepare the future of the Friars with confidence (cf. NMI 1); we need to be “sentinels of the morning” (cf. Is 21, 1-11), in order to open up paths and fix our eyes on the future towards which the Spirit leads us (cf. VC 110). This requires a lot of prayer on our part if we are not to end up as mere “administrators”. The Congress on the Religious Life (2004), using the icon of the Samaritan woman, underlined the central role of the encounter with Jesus, which pacifies the heart and arouses the desire to give testimony of His love to others.

Take care of the quality and the depth of your own life. The Minister or Custos must involve others by speaking through his own life, otherwise he will give testimony to what he says in words and easily fall into what today has been called the “white schism”, that is to say, the divorce between our declarations and our options in private life.

Take great care of the human dimension of the fraternity: “all the friars are to have among themselves, to the highest degree, a family spirit and mutual friendship... to practise courtesy, cheerfulness and all other virtues in such a way that [they may encourage] one another unceasingly to hope, peace and joy, that they may

achieve full human, Christian and religious maturity” (GGCC 39).

Revitalise the Friars who have no voice or are “incapable” or are hurt. Help them to feel that they are a vital part of the fraternity, of the Order, being aware that all of us have something to contribute. Attention to these Friars can, at times, be interpreted as weakness. But we should remember that only true love can heal wounds, cure people from within and return them to the service of the Kingdom. Direct communication with the Friars of the Entity. Personal communication (personal dialogue with the Friars) and group communication (with the fraternities). The Ministers and Custos should visit the fraternities a lot to achieve this and they should meet personally with the Friars.

Encourage a climate of “familiarity” in the Entities (cf. 2R 6, 7). This makes fraternal sharing possible. Local Chapters, reviews of life, festive and informal gatherings have to be given privilege to achieve this.

The Provincial, Local and Personal Life Projects are “powerful” elements in the cohesion of the fraternity and as means for growth in unity.

The prayerful reading of the word in fraternity, so that the word may question us and orient and shape the demands and existence of the Friars.

A suitable on-going formation which would prepare us to respond to the great challenges presented today to us consecrated people and, more concretely, to those who exercise the service of authority.

4. Conclusions

If the Minister and Custos must obey the Gospel, we could well deduce that:

Whoever has received the ministry of authority from the Lord, through the Friars, cannot exercise it in a despotic or arbitrary way. The exercise of authority is subordinate to the supreme authority of the Order: God, Jesus Christ, the Gospel, the will of the Lord, which both subjects and Ministers have to discern carefully and faithfully observe. If the Ministers were to act in an arbitrary manner or if they were to proceed “indiscreetly”, putting their will before that of the Lord, they will have to render an account of it to the Lord (cf. 1R 16, 4).

The exercise of authority, however, cannot be left aside through fear of possible conflicts which could result from its exercise. Here also the words of Peter could be applied: “You must judge whether in God’s eyes it is right to listen to you and not to God. We cannot promise to stop proclaiming what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4, 19-20). He who received the ministry of authority has to remember that obedience to the Gospel, which he also promised to observe faithfully, obliges him to intervene when fidelity to the same Gospel is in play. The Minister cannot, in this case, “look the other way” with the excuse that he did not see it, because “if anyone is lost on account of their fault... they will have to render an account before the Lord Jesus Christ on the day of judgement” (1R 4, 6).

If “authority is a gift and not a privilege”, and if the Minister or Custos is at the service of the Friars, of the Gospel and of the charism, we can conclude that:

The exercise of the ministry of authority in a key of service can only be achieved in the measure that the Ministers or Custodes try to be spiritual animators, which implies a strong passion for God, and try to keep a constant eye to the world as the place where the history of salvation is carried out here and now (passion for the world), in order to take concrete decisions that are consonant with our “forma vitae” (passion for our charism). These have to be the three great loves of a Minister or of whichever Friar is called on to exercise the ministry of authority. The exercise of authority in a key of service requires that the Minister or Custos should always respect three authorities which have the last word: the Spirit of Jesus, the supreme authority of the fraternity, the Gospel, the rule and life of the Friars, and the fundamental elements –priorities– of our “forma vitae”. These three authorities can never be questioned, to the point that, if one were not to respect

them he should resign from being Minister or Custos (cf. 2R 8, 4).

Assuming and exercising the ministry of authority as a service means that the Minister or Custos should willingly accept to be the “place” for the meeting of the Friars among themselves and of these with the Gospel and the values of our charism. We could very well say, in this sense, that the Minister or Custos is the servant of communion. This implies that the Minister or Custos should love and allow himself to be loved, to demand and to be demanded, provided always, however, that he does not cease to be “compassionate and trustworthy” (Heb 2, 17).

In so far as he is a companion, facilitator and guarantor of the processes of discernment and change, the Minister or Custos:

Has to see to it that all the conditions for an adequate discernment are provided and that, in this way, it can be affirmed that the decisions made are really those which God wants for the Province, the Houses and the Friars at this given time, and that he can, with his authority, accept the result of discernment or help those who have carried it out to take into account other fundamental elements which are missing and, consequently, to do it over again.

Can only accompany, facilitate and guarantee the processes of discernment and change in the measure that he himself is in a process of discernment, as it is only in this way that he will be able to be a “readable sign of life” for the other Friars and for the world itself (cf. LgP 7).

In so far as he will have to know how to manage tensions, the Minister or Custos has to be: An open, flexible person, with great capacity for reflection and self-assessment.

Being a Minister or Custos is not an easy task these days. But I can say, from experience, that it is less difficult when it is known how to conjugate verbs such as: See (the capacity to analyse), listen (to God, to the Friars, to the signs of the times), interpret (the result of reflection and prayer) and act, with decision, but always moved by love.

Communication of the General Definitory *January 2006*

The General Definitory celebrated the “tempo forte” corresponding to January from the 9th to 24th with the following matters:

1. Communications. As is now habitual, the first day was dedicated to communications. The Minister General gave his impressions of the fraternal visitations made to the two fraternities of St. Anthony’s College (Rome) and that of Grottaferrata; of the audience granted to him by the Secretary of State of the Vatican and of his visits to the Vatican Congregations for the Consecrated Life, Bishops, Catholic Education and Divine Cult; of the meeting he had with the Rector of our University, the PUA; and of his meeting with the volunteers for the Sudan Project. Br. Finian McGinn spoke about his fraternal visit to the Custody of the Holy Family in the USA and of the Slovenian Foundation, also in the USA. Br. Ambrogio Nguyen Van Si spoke about his participation in the Conference of South Asia, Australia and Oceania and about his visit, together with Br. Vincenzo Brocanelli, to the foundations of Thailand and Myanmar. Br. Bernardo Amaral spoke about the meeting with the volunteers for the Sudan Project, held in Grottaferrata. Br. Miguel Vallecillo spoke about the meeting of the Betica Province (Spain) for the opening of the VIII Centenary. Br. Mario Favretto spoke about the

days given over to formation in the Sicilian Province and directed by him.

2. Congress on new forms of Evangelisation. Br. Mario spoke about the meeting held in the Curia for the preparation of the programme of the “seminar” on “the new forms of evangelisation” which is to be celebrated. The “seminar” will be held in Assisi (Casa Leonori) from the 20th to 25th March. The participation of 50 Friars is expected.

3. Service of Dialogue. On fulfilling 25 years since the beginning of meetings of the Friars who work in Islamic countries, the Definitory approved the broad lines of the celebration of a new meeting. A preparatory commission will prepare the programme, to be presented to the Definitory for approval.

4. Visitors. The Definitory appointed Br. Paul Smith, of the Australian Province as Assistant Visitor for the Friars of the Sarajevo Province living in Australia, and Br. Julio César Bunader, of the Assumption Province in Argentina, as Assistant Visitor for the Friars of the Zara Province who live in Argentina.

5. The Fusion of Provinces. The Definitory, after listening to the proposal of the interested Provinces, decreed the fusion of the Provinces of Blessed Engelbert Kolland, in Austria-Italy, and the Province of St. Bernardine, also in Austria. At the same time, it appointed Br. Claudius Gross, of the Province of St. Elizabeth in Germany, as Visitor to both Provinces and Delegate of the Minister General. The fusion is foreseen for November 2007.

6. The Mission of Libya. The General Definitory studied the situation of the mission in Libya. The need for more personnel and for the clarification of the relationship of the Friars with the Bishops was seen. Both topics will be dealt with through the Minister Provincial of Malta, to whose Province the presence in Libya and relationships with the Bishops corresponds.

7. General Chapter. The Definitory, in the presence of the Secretary General of the Chapter, dealt with various matters related to the Chapter organisation. The Definitory, on its part, studied and approved the “Ordo Capituli”, which will now be sent out to the Chapter Members.

8. Bursar’s Office. The Bursar General informed the members of the Definitory of the progress of the work of re-structuring in the Curia. More than 75% has been completed up to now. He also informed them about the situation of the old Orphanage and surrounding land, which belong to the “Pie Opere” of St. Anthony.

9. Personnel. The Definitory dedicated two sessions to speaking about the personnel of the Houses dependent on the Minister General.

10. Postulation. The Postulator General, Br. Luca M. De Rosa, and the two vice-postulators, Br. Francesco Antonelli and Br. Gianni Califano, presented the work carried out during 2005, the situation of some 222 causes being worked on by our Postulation at this moment and the financial situation of the Postulation Office, to the Definitory General.

11. Meeting with the Definitory of the Province of India. The General Definitory met with the Provincial Definitory of the Province of St. Thomas in India during two days. The Definitory appointed Br. Sean Collins, of the Province of

Ireland, as Delegate General for the Province of India.

12. The process of renewal in the Order. The Definitory General, on the occasion of fulfilling 40 years since the close of the II Vatican Council, dedicated ample time to reflection on the renewal of the Order carried out during recent years. The Definitory made a highly positive assessment of this renewal, even though it did not hesitate to point out some shadows such as: The lack of a profound experience of God, subjectivism, relativism and individualism... It therefore thinks that the renewal to which we were called by the II Vatican Council has still to be completed. The celebration of the VIII Centenary of the foundation of our Order could be a time of grace to do so.

13. Requests for financial help. The Definitory examined and approved some of the requests for financial help from needy Entities which arrived to the Curia recently.

14. "Folders". As during all "tempo fortes", the Definitory also examined and "dispatched" some 46 matters which came to the Curia from different Entities of the Order since the month of December last and which required a response and approval.

15. Meeting with the Apostolic Vicariates. The Definitory General approved the programme of the meeting which will be held in the General Curia on the 8th and 9th September 2006 to study the situation of the Vicariates, Prefectures and Apostolic Prelatures entrusted to the Order by the Church. They are 13 at this moment.

16. Meeting with the new Ministers Provincial and Custodes. The Minister and Definitory General met with the new Ministers Provincial and Custodes from the 16th to 24th January. In addition to all related to the animation and government of a Province or Custody, there was, this year, a reflection on lay brothers in the Order.

17. Opening of the VIII Centenary for the Houses dependent on the Minister General in Rome. The VIII Centenary of the foundation of the Order for the Houses in Rome dependent on the Minister General was officially inaugurated on the 21st January. The celebrations took place in the Basilica of St. Anthony, Via Merulana (Rome). Some 180 Friars participated in the act.

18. Audience with the Holy Father. The Pontifical Household confirmed that the Holy Father will receive the Minister General in private audience on the 26th January.

Br. Sandro Overend, ofm
Secretary General

Ma tistax...

- Ma tistax twaqqaf ix-xita... imma tista' tiftaħ l-umbrella.
- Ma tistax tneħhi n-nervi ta' haddieħor... imma tista tikkontrolla n-nervi tiegħek.
- Ma tistax iġġiegħel lil min jaçcettak... imma tista' taçcetta lilek innifsek int.
- Ma tistax tbiddel id-dinja... imma tista' tinbidel int.

PROVINĊJA FRANĠISKANA SAN PAWL APPOSTLU - MALTA

Prot. No. 0601\05

ĊIRKULARI

Gheżież Huti f' San Franġisk,

Il-Mulej jaghtikom is-Sliem!

Fil-laqgħa tad-Definitorju Provinċjali li saret il-Ġimgha, 20 ta' Jannar, fil-kunvent tal-Belt, id-Definitorju għazel lil Fra George Bugeja, bħala gwardjan-kappillan tal-komunita' ta' Tas-Sliema, wara r-rizenja ta' Fra Stephen Magro, għal raġunijiet ta' saħħa.

Niehu din l-okkażjoni biex niringrazzja lil Fra Stephen għas-servizz li ta fil-fraternita', servizz li ġie apprezzat hafna kemm mill-Aħwa tal-fraternita' u kemm mill-komunita' nisranija tal-parroċċa. Inwegħduh it-talb tagħna biex jiehu saħħtu mill-ġdid. Fra Stephen se jingħaqad mal-komunita' tal-Belt. Id-Definitorju japprezza wkoll is-sens ta' servizz minn naha ta' Fra George u d-disponibiltà minn naha ta' Fra Alex Borg, Fra Anton Farrugia u Fra Tony Briffa li se jassumu ċerti responsabilitajiet fi hdan il-fraternita' u l-parroċċa. Fra Tony Briffa se jingħaqad mal-fraternita' ta' tas-Sliema.

Ninfurmakom ukoll li Fra Ġużepp Beneditt Xuereb aċċetta li jkun l-Assistent Spiritwali fi hdan il-fraternita' ta' l-OFS, il-Hamrun, u Fra Joseph Magro se jkun responsabbli mill-Edizzjoni TAU.

Nhar it-Tnejn, 16 ta' Jannar, ahna l-Ministri Provinċjali Franġiskani flimkien mas-Superjuri tas-Sorijiet Franġiskani, fuq xewqa tal-Ministri Ġenerali, iltqgħajna għand hutna l-Klarissi biex nitkellmu dwar it-VIII Ċentinarju mill-approvazzjoni tar-Regula. Qbilna li kull attivita' flimkien tinzamm fil-Monasteru tal-Klarissi u l-ewwel waħda se tkun il-Ġimgha, 16 ta' Ġunju. Dettalji jingħataw aktar 'il quddiem.

Nhar is-Sibt, 4 ta' Frar niltaqgħu flimkien fil-kunvent tal-Belt biex niċċelebraw il-festa tal-Provinċja u tal-Ministru Provinċjal. Fl-10.30 a.m. niltaqgħu għal mument ta' talb u nieklu xi haġa flimkien.

Mahruga mill-Kurja Provinċjalizja
Il-Belt Valletta
Illum, 24 ta' Jannar 2006

Fra Paul Galea, OFM
Ministru Provinċjal

Fra Marcellino Micallef, OFM
Segretarju tal-Provinċja

Ma tistax...

- Ma tistax teqred it-tbatija mid-dinja kollha... imma tista' tfarraġ lil min jinsab hdejk..
- Ma tistax teħles mill-problemi li jinqalgħu fil-ħajja... imma tista' tqawwi qalbek u ma ċċedix quddiemhom.
- Ma tistax iġġieghel lil haddieħor iħobbok... imma inti tista' turi mħabbtek lejn haddieħor.

Messagg mill-Ministru Provincjal Fra Paul Galea, ofm

Ftuh tas-Sena Centinarja f'Tas-Sliema

Prot. No.0601\1

4 ta' Jannar, 2006.

Huti Frangiskani u
Huti Parrucçani Madonna tas-Sacro Cuor,
Sliema.

Il-lejla ngbarna fil-Knisja Parrokkjali taghna, madwar ix-xbieha għaziza tas-Sultana Taghna tal-Qalb ta' Ġesu', biex permezz ta' din iċ-ċelebrazzjoni Ewkaristika nagħtu bidu għal din is-sena speċjali, sena li matulha ser infakkru il-125 sena mill-ftuh ta' din il-Knisja, mill-wasla ta' l-istatwa devota tal-Madonna tas-Sacro Cuor u mill-miġja tal-Patrijet Frangiskani. L-Ewkaristija hija l-akbar talba ta' radd il-hajr li n-nisrani jista' joffri lil Alla. Għalhekk kien hsieb l-aktar għaqli u qaddis, li din is-sena kommemorattiva tiftaħ b'ċelebrazzjoni Ewkaristika b'sinjal li ċ-ċelebrazzjonijiet u l-attivitajiet li qeghdin jithejjew għal matul din is-sena, ikunu mibnija fuq spirtu ta' radd il-hajr u ta' talba lil Alla Missierna. Minn qalbi nixtieq nappella lil kulhadd, biex flimkien nagħmlu dak kollu li nistgħu biex ma nitbegħdux minn dan is-sens nisrani ta' dawn iċ-ċelebrazzjonijiet, għax fid-dinja tallum faċli niġu influwenzati minn idejat semplicement materjali.

Matul din is-sena, ahna se nroddu hajr lil Alla, talli 125 sena ilu, baġhat hawn f'tas-Sliema, lil Dun Pawl Vella, qassis mill-Belt mimli kollu heġġa pastorali lejn il-popolazzjoni li kienet dejjem qed tikber f'dawn l-inhawi ta' tas-Sliema. Din il-heġġa pastorali waslet lil Dun Pawl biex bl-akbar determinazzjoni jiddeciedi li jibni din il-knisja li fiha ninsabu miġbura. Hekk kiteb il-poeta Sliemiz u frangiskan Marjanu Vella fl-Oratorju Madonna tas-Sacro Cuor:

**“*Sehhet il-holma mbierka
Il-holma ta' Dun Pawl
U fuq it-tempju mqaddes
Jitraxxax frak ta' dawl*”**

Se nroddu hajr lil Alla, li żejjen b'doni l-aktar artistici lill-istatwarju Ġilormu Darmanin li tana statwa titulari l-aktar devota tas-Sultana Taghna tal-Qalb ta' Ġesu'. Isimgħu kif esprima ruhu Fra Marjanu quddiem id-dehra ta' l-istatwa taghna:

**“*Dchra tal-Ġenna din il-Vara taghna
holma ta' l-ifjen holm ta' rwieħ safjin
imbierak min ghamilha,
f'waqt ta' mhabba,***

Se nroddu hajr lil Alla, li 125 sena ilu, il-patrijet frangiskani kienu mmexxija minn Fra Tonin Cesal, li bi spirtu ta' veru frangiskan u bl-akbar entuzjażmu laqa' t-talba ta' Dun Pawl, li mifni bit-taħbit u l-mard, offra lill-frangiskani biex jieħdu t-tmexxija tal-knisja l-ġdida. Hawn ukoll Fra Marjanu hallielna kelma sabieħa u mirquma:

**“*Dghajef wisq il-ġisem tiegħi,
inhoss saħħti qieghda tnin,
issa nhalli dan it-tempju
f'idejn biezla u għaqlin.***

**“*F' mohhi niezel hsieb ta' fejda
Ngħid 'l ulied ta' San Frangisk
Biex ikomplu l-hidma tiegħi
barka w riżq.***

Se nroddu hajr lil dawk kollha, hutna frangiskani u parrucçani Sliemizi ta' qabilna, li tul dawn il-125 sena mhux biss komplew iżejnu, ikabbru u jirrenovaw dan it-tempju sal-ġurnata tallum, iżda li fuq kollox għamlu mill-aħjar li setgħu biex ikunu knisja hajja skond il-qalb ta' Kristu. Inroddulhom hajr, mhux biss għax għaddewlna bhala teżor l-aktar għażiż l-istatwa devota taghna, iżda fuq kollox għax jgħallmuna li l-qima lejn ix-xbieha tas-Sultana Taghna għandha tfisser għalina preżenza fostna ta' din l-omm taghna fis-sema li kontinwament tfakkarna biex ngħixu skond it-tagħlim ta' binha Ġesu'. Inroddulhom hajr, għax fuq l-eżempju ta' San Frangisk, għamlu dak kollu li setgħu biex bnew parroċċa fuq pedamenti sodi tas-sagramenti, tax-xandir tal-Kelma u ta' lealta' shiha lejn it-tmexxija u t-tagħlim tal-Knisja

Kattolika.

Matul din is-sena, ahna se nitolbu l'Alla Missierna biex qabel xejn napprezzaw id-don tal-Knisja. Napprezzaw il-gid li Alla jagħtina permezz tal-Knisja. Fl-istess hin nitolbuh biex jghina nkunu aktar konvinti xi tfisser għalina li niffirmaw il-Knisja ta' Kristu. Jalla l-parroċċa tkun tfisser mhux biss sempliċement dan il-bini, iżda li nkunu ġebel haj fid-dinja tallum li qegħda dejjem aktar titbiegħed minn kull sens spiritwali tal-hajja. Dan il-veru spirtu ta' Knisja, ibqgħu ċerti li bhal ta' qabilna jwassalna biex naghmlu dak kollu li nistgħu biex inkomplu nzejnuh u nikkonservawh mill-ahjar li nistgħu.

Se nitolbu l-ghajnuna, biex quddiem ix-xbieha għażiża tas-Sultana Tagħna, ikollna l-kuraġġ kollu li nisimghu l-istedina kontinwa ta' Ommna Marija biex dejjem naghmlu dak li jitlob minna binha Ġesu. L-esperjenza tal-hajja tghallimna li mhix faċli li nghixu irrieda t'Alla. Ilkoll nafu kemm fid-dinja ta' zmienna, il-Kmandamenti t'Alla qed ikunu tant imwarrba. Izda fuq l-eżempji ta' missirijietna, ahna ċerti li s-Sultana Tagħna qatt ma thallina neqsin mill-kuraġġ li jkollna bżonn. Jalla l-istatwa tagħna tibqa' tkun għalina qabel kollox, twissija biex nghixu rrieda t'Alla.

Fl-ahhar nitolbu wkoll biex qatt ma jonqos il-veru spirtu ta' Franġisku t'Assisi. Id-dinja tallum maħkuma mill-egoizmu u l-konsumizmu għandha bżonn hafna ta' dan l-ispirtu ta' paċi u gid. Għeziez parruċċani Sliemizi, itolbu għalina biex inkunu wlied denji ta' Franġisku t'Assisi. Nitolbu biex ilkoll kemm ahna nhossuna responsabbli li l-parroċċa tagħna, mogħnija bid-don tal-karizma Franġiskana, tkun Knisja mibnija fuq il-pedamenti sodi ta' l-imhabba lejn Alla u lejn il-proxxmu, Knisja msahha bil-qawwa tas-sagramenti, tal-Kelma t'Alla, u tat-talb, Knisja li tghix il-vera devozzjoni lejn Ommna Marija. Knisja hajja, Knisja attiva, Knisja miftuħa għal bżonnijiet tallum, Knisja lejali lejn it-tagħlim kattoliku, Knisja li toffri attenzjoni u kura speċjali lill-vokazzjonijiet saċerdotali u reliġjużi, lill-familja nisranija, anzjani, żghazagh, tfal u lill-foqra taż-żminijiet tallum, Knisja li tiċċelebra l-festa titulari fi spirtu veru nisrani, Knisja li tapprezza u tghożż dak kollu li huwa patrimonju artistiku u l-holqien kollu ta' madwarna.

Naghlaq dan il-messaġġ tiegħi bi kliem ta' barka ta' Missieri Franġisku:

***Iberikkom il-Mulej u jhariskom,
jurikom wiċċu u jhenn ghalikom.
Idawwar wiċċu lejkom
U jagħtikom is-sliem.***

Nhar il-Ħadd, 22 ta' Jannar 2006, il-Ministru Provinċjal Fra Paul Galea, il-fraternita' ta' Għawdex u xi aħwa oħra tal-provinċja ħadu sehem fl-Ordinazzjoni Episkopali ta' Mons Mario Grech, isqof ta' Għawdex. Huwa għażel bhala motto ta' l-episkopat: *In fractione panis*. Motto mislut mill-ġrajja ta' Għemmaws (Lq 24, 35). L-i-st-e-m-m-a episkopali ta' Mons. Grech għandha tabilhaqq il-funzjoni ta' identifikazzjoni



personali u ġurizdizzjoni ekkleżjali, imma fuq kollox illustrazzjoni ta' vizjoni pastorali. Huwa ġie kkonsagrat isqof mill-E.T. Mons. Isqof Nikol Ġ. Cauchi, assistiti mill-E.T. Mons. Ġużeppi Mercieca, Arcisqof ta' Malta, u l-E.T. Mons. Felix del Blanco Prieto, Nunzju Apostoliku ta' Malta. Għall-konsagrazzjoni ħa sehem ukoll l-E.T. Mons. Sylvester Magro, OFM.

IMSIEBAH JIDDU

Patri Vittorin Alessandro, ofm

Kan. John Charlo'

Patri Vittorin Alessandro maghruf għall-hidma tiegħu fiċ-Ċina, twieled l-Isla fi Frar tal-1920. Wara li studja l-Liċeo, dahal mal-patrijiet frangiskani, u wara li studja l-filosofija Malta, intbagħat jistudja t-teoloġija f'Collevieti, Pescia, fil-Provinċja ta' Toscana. Huwa ġie ordnat saċerdot fid-29 ta' Ġunju tal-1924 fl-eta' ta' 22 sena. Wara l-ordinazzjoni tiegħu, huwa hadem hawn Malta għal tliet snin.

Izda billi kien iħoss is-sejha għall-misjoni, is-superjuri tiegħu baġtuh ġewwa Ruma jagħmel kors fil-missjoloġija. Wara li spiċċa l-kors, reġa' ġie Malta u fl-1028, fl-eta' ta' 26 sena, telaq bhala missjunarju fiċ-Ċina f'Hankow fejn il-patrijiet frangiskani ta' Venezja kienu fetħu missjoni. Fiċ-Ċina, Patri Vittorin Alessandro dam jaħdem tmin-tax il-sena shaħ. Wara li tghallem sew iċ-Ċiniż, huwa beda l-hidma pastorali tiegħu maċ-Ċiniżi ġewwa Hankow flimkien ma' shabu l-patrijiet l-oħra. Il-patrijiet kellhom knisja u oratorju u kienu jaqdu n-nies fil-bżonnijiet spiritwali u materjali tagħhom mill-aħjar li setgħu. In-nies kienu jhobbuhom ħafna u qatt ma hallewhom nieqsa minn xejn.

Minbarra dan ix-xogħol pastorali, Patri Vittorin Alessandro kien ukoll jghallem il-Latin u l-Istorja Sagra fis-Seminarju ż-Żgħir, u t-Taljan lis-seminaristi l-kbar. Għal xi żmien kien ukoll rettur tas-Seminarju ż-Żgħir ta' Hankow. U meta l-patrijiet fetħu novizzjat biex irawmu vokazzjonijiet reliġjużi, hatruh bhala Viċi Mastru.

Matul it-tieni gwerra dinjija, huwa sab ruħu f'kamp ta' konċentrament Ġappuniż. Izda, bis-saħħa ta' l-isqof, wara tliet xhur ħelsuh għaliex minkejja li kellu passaport Inġliż, għaddewh bhala Taljan bħal shabu l-patrijiet l-oħra. Wara reġa' lura għall-hidma missjunarja tiegħu, sakemm is-segwaċi ta' Mao Tse Tung irnexxielhom bil-mod il-mod jieħdu ċ-Ċina f'idejhom.

Ftit wara li spiċċat il-gwerra, fl-1946, Patri Vittorin Alessandro ġie Malta biex jara 'l ommu bil-ħsieb li wara ftit jerga' fil-missjoni tiegħu taċ-Ċina. Izda meta applika biex jerga' jmur iċ-Ċina, baġtu jghidulu li r-reġim komunista ta' Mao-Tse Tung kien qiegħed ikeċċi l-missjunarji barranin u ma kienux qiegħed iħalli missjunarji Ewropej jidhlu ċ-Ċina. Għalih din kienet daqqa ta' harta kbira għax qalbu kienet maċ-Ċiniżi tal-missjoni ta' Hankow. Meta ra hekk, huwa għamel il-ħsieb li jmur jaħdem fil-missjoni tal-Brazil. Izda wara ddecieda li jmur jaħdem fost l-emigranti Maltin fl-Awstralja fejn dam sentejn shaħ.

Ma damx aktar għaliex shabu l-missjunarji Taljani li kienu jaħdmu miegħu fil-missjoni taċ-Ċina li ġew imkeċċija mill-missjoni tagħhom taħt Mao Tse Tung, baġtu jghidulu li kienu fetħu missjoni oħra fil-Gwatemala u El Salvador, ħajruh jerga' jingħaqad magħhom. Imzejjen bi spirtu missjunarju qawwi, huwa telaq l-Awstralja u mar fil-missjoni tal-Gwatemala u El Salvador.

Wara li kien ilu sitt snin shaħ jaħdem f'din il-missjoni, is-Superjuri tiegħu ta' Malta talbuh imur San Francisco fil-Kalifornja, fejn il-frangiskani maltin kienu għadhom kemm waqqfu parroċċa għall-emigranti maltin. Huwa mal-ewwel aċċetta t-talba tas-superjuri tiegħu, u mar f'Kalifornja. F'Kalifornja Patri Vittorin Alessandro dam 21 sena shaħ jaħdem mal-patrijiet frangiskani maltin fost l-emigranti Maltin kif ukoll emigranti Taljani, Spanjoli u Messikani. Huwa komplax-xogħol mibdi minn shabu l-patrijiet maltin u kemm dam Kalifornja rnexxielu flimkien ma' shabu jibni ċentru, kunvent u knisja għall-maltin.

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ikompli minn paġna 26

Wara sittin sena ta' saċerdozju u ta' hidma kbira missjunarja, Patri Vittorin Alessandro ġie jirtira Malta. F'Ottubru tal-1984 huwa miet fid-Dar tal-Kleru ġewwa Fleur-de-Lys, fl-eta' ta' 82 sena.

Lehen is-Sewwa 14.01.2006

Irtiri għas-Sena 2006
Poziuncola Retreat House, Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq

11 ~ 15 ta' Settembru ~ Fr. Arthur Vella, SJ

6 ~ 10 ta' Novembru ~ Fr. Charles Fenech, OP

Il-Gwardjani huma mħeġġa biex jinfurmaw lil Fra Julian, Direttur ta' Poziuncola Retreat House, sa ġimgħa qabel l-irtir.



Kunsill tal-Formazzjoni

Attivita' Provincjali fil-mixja ta' ċelebrazzjonijiet sas-sena 2009

Ġimgħat ta' Formazzjoni Permanenti
Kunvent Sant' Antnin, Ghawdex

17 - 22 ta' Lulju 2006

16 - 20 ta' Ottubru 2006

JISTRIEHU FIS-SLIEM

Is-Sinjorina Karmena Muscat, li kienet toqghod 9, Triq il-Patrijiet, ir-Rabat (Malta) u li tat għal tant snin is-servizz bhala koka fil-kunvent tar-Rabat. Hija ngħaqdet mal-Mulej għal dejjem nhar it-Tlieta, 17 ta' Jannar 2006.

Is-Sinjur Peter Falzon, missier Fra Angelo (Missjunarju fil-Honduras) li daħal jistrieħ fis-sliem ta' dejjem nhar is-Sibt, 28 ta' Jannar 2006.

FESTI U BIRTHDAYS

7. Fra Richard S. Grech
 10. Fra Pawl Galea
 Fra Paul Attard

19. Fra Ġużepp Vella
 Fra Ġużepp Camilleri
 Fra Joe Caruana
 Fra Joe Bonello
 Fra Ġużepp Debono
 Fra Joseph Magro
 31. Fra Benjamin Galea

7. Fra Alfred Tabone
 14. Mons. S. Magro
 16. Fra Nerik Cassar
 19. Fra A. Azzopardi

F R A R

M A R Z U

11. Fra Joseph Magro
 15. Fra C. Wickman
 Fra Paul Attard
 24. Fra Gabriel Micallef

Awguri u Xewqat Sbieħ!

JUM IL-ĦAJJA KONSAGRATA 2006

It-Tlieta, 7 ta' Frar 2006

Sorijiet Agostinjani - B'Kara

Hin: 6.00 p.m.

F' DIN IL-HARĠA

Frar 2006

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L-AĦBAR

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