

APRIL 2014

Message
of our Holy Father Francis
for Lent 2014

He became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich

[...] In imitation of our Master, we Christians are called to confront the poverty of our brothers and sisters, to touch it, to make it our own and to take practical steps to alleviate it. **Destitution is not the same as poverty: destitution is poverty without faith, without support, without hope.** There are three types of destitution: material, moral and spiritual. Material destitution is what is normally called poverty, and affects those living in conditions opposed to human dignity: those who lack basic rights and needs such as food, water, hygiene, work and the opportunity to develop and grow culturally. In response to this destitution, the Church offers her help, her diakonia, in meeting these needs and binding these wounds which disfigure the face of humanity. In the poor and outcast we see Christ's face; by loving and helping the poor, we love and serve Christ. Our efforts are also directed to ending violations of human dignity, discrimination and abuse in the world, for these are so often the cause of destitution. When power, luxury and money become idols, they take priority over the need for a fair distribution of wealth. Our consciences thus need to be converted to justice, equality, simplicity and sharing.

No less a concern is **moral destitution**, which consists in slavery to vice and sin. How much pain is caused in families because one of their members – often a young person - is in thrall to alcohol,

drugs, gambling or pornography! How many people no longer see meaning in life or prospects for the future, how many have lost hope! And how many are plunged into this destitution by unjust social conditions, by unemployment, which takes away their dignity as breadwinners, and by lack of equal access to education and health care. In such cases, moral destitution can be considered impending suicide. This type of destitution, which also causes financial ruin, is invariably linked to the **spiritual destitution** which we experience when we turn away from God and reject his love. If we think we don't need God who reaches out to us through Christ, because we believe we can make do on our own, we are headed for a fall. God alone can truly save and free us.



The Gospel is the real antidote to spiritual destitution: wherever we go, we are called

as Christians to proclaim the liberating news that forgiveness for sins committed is possible, that God is greater than our sinfulness, that he freely loves us at all times and that we were made for communion and eternal life. The Lord asks us to be joyous heralds of this message of mercy and hope! It is thrilling to experience the joy of spreading this good news, sharing the treasure entrusted to us, consoling broken hearts and offering hope to our brothers and sisters experiencing darkness. It means following and imitating Jesus, who sought out the poor and sinners as a shepherd lovingly seeks his lost sheep. In union with Jesus, we can courageously open up new paths of evangelization and human promotion.

The General Minister and other Capuchins in the Congregation for Religious

VATICAN CITY – On March 29, Pope Francis named our General Minister, Br. Mauro Jöhri, to the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, together with our brother bishops: Francisco Chimoio, Archbishop of Maputo (Mozambique) and John Corriveau, Bishop of Nelson (Canada). The Pope also reappointed Cardinal Seán Patrick O'Malley, OFM Cap., Archbishop of Boston (USA) to the same dicastery.

INDEX

- 01 He became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich - *Message of our Holy Father Francis for Lent 2014*
- The General Minister and other Capuchins in the Congregation for Religious
- 02 Spiritual Exercises: return to interiority
- Spiritual exercises of the General Curia in Assisi
- 03 Meeting of the International Commission of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation
- Ethiopia: a new school is inaugurated
- International symposium on ecclesiastical goods
- 2015 – year of consecrated life: principal events
- 04 India: The General Minister blesses and inaugurates an electric generator
- Franciscans in India: No to social exclusion, no to the caste system
- A Franciscan Missionary at sixty: Taekwondo for children with tumors

Dear brothers and sisters, may this Lenten season find the whole Church ready to bear witness to all those who live in material, moral and spiritual destitution the Gospel message of the merciful love of God our Father, who is ready to embrace everyone in Christ. We can do this to the extent that we imitate Christ who became poor and enriched us by his poverty. Lent is a fitting time for self-denial; we would do well to ask ourselves what we can give up in order to help and enrich others by our own poverty. **Let us not forget that real poverty hurts: no self-denial is real without this dimension of penance.** I distrust a charity that costs nothing and does not hurt.

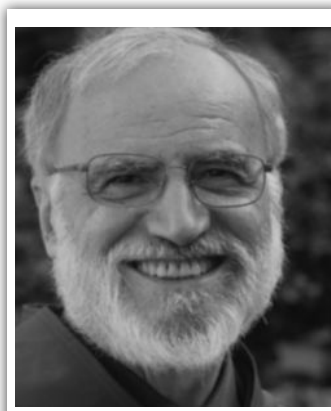
May the Holy Spirit, through whom we are “as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything” (2 Cor 6:10), sustain us in our resolutions and increase our concern and responsibility for human destitution, so that we can become merciful and act with mercy. In expressing this hope, I likewise pray that each individual member of the faithful and every Church community will undertake a fruitful Lenten journey. I ask all of you to pray for me. May the Lord bless you and Our Lady keep you safe.

Spiritual exercises, independent of the theme chosen for the occasion by the preacher, are above all a privileged occasion to 're-enter oneself,' to check up on and renew one's own relationship with God. St. Augustine made this famous appeal: "Re-enter into your heart: there examine him whom you perceived as God, because the image of God is there, Christ dwells in man's interior."

To return to the heart means, therefore, to return to what is most personal and interior to us. Unfortunately,

re-enters the interior of success or lack thereof in life. However, where is authenticity for a Christian? When is it that a person is truly himself? Only when he has God as his measure. "There is so much talk – writes the philosopher Kierkegaard – of wasted lives. However, wasted only is the life of a man who never realized that a God exists and that he, his very self, stands before this God. St. Francis said the same thing in simpler words: "What a man is before God, that he is and nothing more."

Persons consecrated to the service



Br. Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap
Preacher to the Papal Household

Spiritual Exercises return to interiority

interiority is a value in crisis. Some causes of this crisis are old and inherent to our nature itself. Our "composition," that is, our being constituted of flesh and spirit, inclines us toward the external, the visible, the multiplicity. Like the universe, after the initial explosion (the famous Big Bang), we are also in a phase of expansion and of moving away from the center. We are perennially "going out" through those five doors or windows which are our senses.

How many of us must make our own the bitter observation that Augustine made in regard to his life before his conversion: "Late have I loved Thee, beauty so ancient and so new, late have I loved Thee! Lo, you were within, but I outside, seeking there for you and upon the shapely things you have made I rushed headlong – I, misshapen. You were with me, but I was not with you. They held me back far from you those things which would have no being were they not in you."

Inwardness is the way to an authentic life. There is so much talk today of authenticity and it is made the crite-

of God are the ones who above all are in need of a return to interiority. In an address given to Superiors of a contemplative religious Order, Paul VI said:

"Today we are in a world which seems to be gripped by a fever that infiltrates itself even in the sanctuary and in solitude. Noise and din have invaded almost everything. Persons are no longer able to be recollected. They are prey of a thousand distractions, they habitually dissipate their energies behind the different forms of modern culture. Newspapers, magazines, books invade the intimacy of our homes and of our hearts. It is more difficult to find the opportunity for the recollection in which the soul is able to be fully occupied in God."

It is an admonition close to our Capuchin Order. St. Francis of Assisi was concerned that in all the friars did they might not ever lose "the spirit of holy prayer and devotion." Saint Francis suggested another device closer at hand. Sending his friars on the roads of the world, he said: We always have a hermitage with us wherever we go

and every time we so wish we can, as hermits, re-enter in this hermitage. "Brother body is the hermitage and the soul is the hermit that dwells within to pray to God and to meditate." It is like having a desert "in the house," in which one can withdraw in thought at every moment, even while walking on the street.

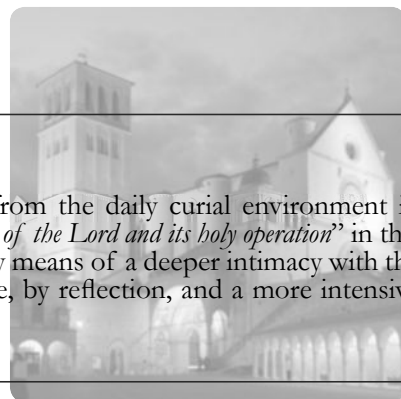
We conclude this first part of our meditation listening, as addressed to us, the exhortation that Saint Anselm of Aosta addresses to the reader in one of his famous works:

"Come now, miserable mortal, flee for a brief time from your occupations, leave for a while your tumultuous thoughts. Move away at this moment from your grave anxieties and put aside your exhausting activities. Attend to God and repose in him. Enter into the depth of your soul, exclude everything, except God and what helps you seek him and, having closed the door, say to God: I seek your face. Your face I seek, Lord."

Spiritual exercises of the General Curia in Assisi

ASSISI, Italy – The fraternity of the General Curia traveled to the city of St. Francis and St. Clare from March 24 to 28 for Lenten spiritual exercises. Spent at the Domus Laetitia house and led by Br. Luigi Boccardi of the Province of Lombardy, the exercises presented a propitious occasion to be brothers in Christ and Francis on retreat, also

geographically apart from the daily curial environment in order to find "the spirit of the Lord and its holy operation" in this special time of Lent by means of a deeper intimacy with the Lord helped by silence, by reflection, and a more intensive prayer.



Meeting of the International Commission of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation

ROME, Italy – The recently reformed General Commission of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation met from March 10-12 at the General Curia (International College). At the meeting coordinated by the JPIC secretary, Br. Benedict Ayodi (CU Kenya) were present: Br. Jean-Bertin Nadonye (GC Congo), General Councilor, Br. John Celichowski (PR Calvary), Br. James Donegan (PR NY-NE, Guatemala), Br. Darwin Orozco (CU Ecuador), Br. John Sulley (PR Tanzania), Br. Jacob Kani (PR Krist Jyoti, India), Br. Henryk Cisowski (PR Krakow). The first goal of the meeting was to orient the commission towards creating a strategic plan for its activity in the next two years regarding the structure and activity around the objectives: Inform, Integrate, and Inspire, making a database of all

the social and JPIC projects of the Order.

The meeting also saw the participation of the General Minister, Br. Mauro Jöhri, Br. Jaime Rey (Secretariat of Formation), Br. Aklilu Petros (Promoter of Solidarity) and Br. Joe Rozansky, OFM. The commission also looked forward to the next Plenary Council of the Order on the grace of working in such a way as to offer a substantial contribution.

The meeting concluded with a Eucharistic celebration, at which the General Minister presided, for the intentions of the JPIC initiatives in the world.



Ethiopia: a new school is inaugurated

BOMBE, Ethiopia – Illiteracy in Ethiopia is rampant; it is estimated that 82% of the population over 15 years of age is illiterate (UNESCO). The town and area of Bombe is found in the south of the country and is not much different from other rural settlements: it is far from the main roads; one arrives after 30km of gravel road. The houses are made of mud. The population works, the local administration is forward-looking, coffee and ginger are grown, and you can see the small beginnings of artisans and cooperatives. There is not a

parish, but a small chapel with mud walls and a tin roof that belongs of the parish of Embecho entrusted to the Capuchins of Ethiopia. The most-felt problem is the lack of a school. By rule a bus departs when it is full and therefore attendance in school is difficult for those who remain outside. In Ethiopia a nursery school has a different role. Children, in fact, are socialized in the villages, living outdoors in the fields and rural roads, developing skills and a basic knowledge in the family. According to government programs, in the beginning of elementary school they begin to learn three languages and two alphabets: Amharic with a complicated alphabet of 270 graphic signs, and the local language (in this case Wolayta) with the Latin alphabet and pronounced like Italian, Spanish, or English.

The brothers of the Marches, at the urging of

International symposium on ecclesiastical goods

ROME, Italy – With the participation of more than 500 bursars and general bursars of institutes of consecrated life from all parts of the world, the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL) promoted the first initiative of the year dedicated to “Consecrated Life.” We speak of the International Symposium on the “Management of ecclesiastical goods at the service of the mission of the Church,” held in the Antonianum Auditorium in Rome from March 8-9, 2014, subdivided into four sessions and a conclusion. “A theoretical poverty doesn’t serve, but a poverty that learns by touching the flesh of the poor Christ, in the humble, in the poor, in the sick, in the child.” Thus writes Pope Francis in the message to the Symposium. “It is necessary to watch attentively that the goods of Institutes are administered with caution and transparency”: this is the recommendation of Pope Francis, who asks that resources be “protected and preserved, joining the priority of the charismatic-spiritual dimension to the dimension of economics and efficiency,” according to a tradition—affirms Pope Francis—that “does not tolerate waste and is attentive the good use of resources.” The mandate of Pope Francis is most clear: “Be today, for the Church and the world, the outposts of attention to all the poor and all miseries—material, moral, and spiritual, thus overcoming every selfishness in the logic of the Gospel.”

Today Pope Francis denounces “an economy of exclusion and inequity.” Observing the work of the Symposium, Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, prefect of CICLSAL, in his talk explained how it was “necessary to take stock of a situation that presented light and shadow.” He emphasized how religious are “almost induced or forced to enter into the mechanisms of the laws of the modern economy,” but then insisted that “they must do so with simplicity and the prudence appropriate to a disciple of the Lord.”

2015 – year of consecrated life: principal events

ROME, Italy – the letter “**Rallegratevi**” [Rejoice] which the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life has addressed to all consecrated persons in preparation for the Year of Consecrated Life, was presented on Wednesday, February 26, 2014, at the Urbana University in Rome. The presentation was moderated by Vittoria Terenzi and the following spoke, in this order: Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, Prefect of the Congregation; Sr. Nicla Spezzati and Fr. Sebastiano Paciolla, undersecretaries of the Congregation; Fr. Bruno Secondin, theologian; Most Rev. José Rodríguez Carballo, secretary of the Congregation. Cardinal João Braz de Aviz said, “The sense of this title is marvelous, because our life must be an expression of great joy; it is better that a sad consecrated person not even exist. Our face must change, we must find again this joy, not just outside, but also within. In the letter we have taken passages of Scripture but above all the words of the Holy Father.”

The circular letter “Rallegratevi” consists of two parts, enriched by two biblical icons: **Rejoice**, exult, be ardent with joy and **Comfort**, comfort my people. The final part, with some questions from Pope Francis, will serve to stimulate reflection. Hail, Mother of joy is the final prayer.



The text, published in Italian, will be available soon in Spanish, English, and French. Other circular letters will follow, with the aim of accompanying and following the preparation for and reflection on the Year of Consecrated Life.

The dicastery has developed a calendar of events for 2015:

November 30, 2014, first Sunday of Advent, the official opening of the Year dedicated to Consecrated Life.

From January 22-24, 2015, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, an Ecumenical Gathering with consecrated persons of other Churches.

From April 8-11, a Gathering for Formators, to examine the criteria that come from a spirituality of communion.

From September 23-26, a Gathering for young people and young consecrated persons.

From November 18-21, a Gathering for Monastic Life. The presidents of the Federations of all the Orders will be invited. On the same dates, a Gathering for the Societies of Apostolic Life and for the Ordo Virginum.

From January 28 to February 1, 2016, a Theological Symposium on Consecrated Life.

February 2, 2016, the official closing.

There will also be a worldwide chain of prayer with the monasteries of the whole world to support the initiatives. Finally, an online course is imagined for contemplatives to participate and be accompanied in formation.

A Franciscan Missionary at sixty:
Taekwondo for children with tumors

SINGAPORE – Sr. Linda Sim, Franciscan Missionary of the Divine Motherhood, in her nearly 60 years of life, has just won the silver medal in a national sporting event in Korea, the “2013 Chuncheon Korea Open International Taekwondo Championships.” Already having been a missionary in Zimbabwe and England and showing enviable physical form, she wanted a military career when she was young but then chose “the best army.” Sr. Linda, director of a hospital and center for recovery has also become a missionary of “Poomsae” Taekwondo with application in therapy of rehabilitation for children sick with cancer. After a good seven years of effort she achieved the black belt in the martial art learned in the Parish of St. Vincent de Paul in Singapore and right away put such a resource at the service of the sick and especially children affected by tumors. She has used the program since 2006 with the support of Federation of Taekwondo and observes, with the doctors of the hospital she directs, positive results above all in the youngest patients before and after chemotherapy. This initiative created the group “Little ones of Assisi” that in a 2007 championship won 6 gold medals, 2 silver, and one bronze. Feeling “privileged to be able to give these theories and practices and at the same time to learn much from these little ones,” Sr. Linda comments, joking, that, “I thought to be old by now, but instead that’s not how it is.”

► Ethiopia: a new school is inaugurated

Br. Aklilu Petros, offered to begin a nursery school that also looked forward to expanding in the future. Local authorities donated a plot of land adjacent to the chapel. The construction, entrusted to the volunteer Antonio Striuli, was completed in a few months. The school has three large and well-ventilated classrooms along with many multi-purpose rooms and a kitchen. In October a crowd of parents came to sign up their children. The school set up for 150 signed up 213, to the disappoint-

ment of many families that arrived late. The official inauguration was on February 19, 2014, with the presence of civil and religious authorities, Br. Mark Schenk as representative of the General Minister, parents and children, and a large group of benefactors from the Marches led by Br. Francesco Pettinelli and Br. Alessandro Tessei. Let us thank the Lord for all who contribute to this project of solidarity and human and spiritual development.

India: The General Minister blesses and inaugurates an electric generator

ANDHRA, India – In almost all of India the citizens in the villages and smallest cities must face a power outage every day. It can last from 5 to 8 hours. And in summer one can imagine how hard it is to live without electricity when the functioning of such essential things is compromised: lamps, fans, air conditioning, and refrigeration. Thus, practically all homes must have generators or other means of alternative electricity. Visiting Andhra, where summer has just begun and the heat is already rising, our General Minister, Br. Mauro, inaugurated a generator in the provincial curia, giving it the



blessing on this past March 16, after the morning Mass. Now the brothers can face the climate and structural difficulties with more tranquility.

Franciscans in India: No to social exclusion, no to the caste system

BHOPAL, India – Franciscans, consecrated persons as well as lay members, have reaffirmed their prophetic role in India, their desire to be “a poor fraternity among the poor and for the poor”, committed to eliminating social exclusion and the “caste system”, and working to promote respect for the dignity of the poorest and most marginalized persons: Fides was told this by Fr Nithiya Sagayam OFM Cap, coordinator of Association of the Franciscan Families of India (AFFI) and director of the Udhayam Franciscan Centre for Peace in Tamil Nadu.

Franciscans in India – present in the country with 53 religious congregations, in 65 provinces – have just concluded a general assembly in Bhopal, during which they expressed determination to remain deeply rooted in the gospel style of life, following in the footsteps of Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Clare, above all living close to the poorest and most marginalized persons.

It was reported to Fides that the Franciscan participants, consecrated and lay members, focused

attention on various aspects connected with the itinerary of formation, in relation to present day necessities and with direct reference to the new pastoral and missionary approach proposed by Pope Francis in the exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. Franciscans feel called to “communicate, propose and live a culture in contrast with violence, consumerism, individualism and materialism, widespread in Indian society”. The antidote to all this, Fides was told by Fr Nithiya Sagayam, consists in a return to the “radical gospel options”, made by Francis of Assisi. Franciscan Apostolate among the poor and the neglected is within this framework and represents a prophetic movement which goes hand in hand with efforts to counter the culture the caste system, still in use in India. The Assembly concluded that Franciscan apostolate cannot fail to turn its attention to slum dwellers, Tribals, Dalits and immigrants and all those deprived of basic human rights: this will achieve “a poor fraternity, among the poor and for the poor”. (Fides)