



## Year of the Consecrated Life

From 30 November 2014 to 2 February 2016 the Church celebrates the "Year of the Consecrated Life". Based on Pope Francis' wish, the year is to be regarded as a year for the renewal of consecrated life. There are surely many activities worldwide. The recipients of the CCFMC are also asked to participate on a global level. The CCFMC that started in 1981 is a course that was compiled through an international dialogue among the Franciscan Family for the renewal of the Franciscan mission charism. Finally, in 1994, 160 Sisters and Brothers from Franciscan congregations from all over the world came together in Assisi during a two-week gathering to revise, develop and adopt the course in its present form, 30 years after the Council and 20 years before the "Year of the Consecrated Life".

The Year of the Consecrated Life has a different emphasis in different places. In the Decree of Vatican Council II "Perfectae Caritatis" of 28 October 1965 the Bishops' Assembly in Rome speaks of a "modern" renewal of the orders. But what does renewal actually mean, and what is the meaning of "modern"? In the course of 50 years different things have happened on a global level regarding constitutions and rules. But many things have remained unchanged.

My thoughts are certainly very "European" as I am lacking the personal encounter with other cultures. But I think that there are still some aspects that can be observed all over the globe one way or the other. For once it is the change in religious, political and economic areas. Nowadays it is the state of peace that is threatening almost everywhere. It is the economic upswing on the one hand and the abject poverty on the other hand. Religiousness is fading in one place, and in other places religiousness has a forceful side. Religious communities are withering away in Europe and communities are started up in Asia and Africa.

There are also the changes among mankind in regard to self-perception, social behaviour and also religiousness. What has become of "calling", "obedience", "chastity", and "letting go"? What does "leadership" and community mean among all the "individualism" and "selfishness" that can be globally observed almost everywhere? These issues have meanwhile been

frequently examined and scientifically proven and I am, therefore, quite reluctant to write about them.

Consecrated Life is symbolic. How can this kind of life by symbolic today? People of religious communities in Europe may ask this question, which is certainly just as important in other parts of the world like in Africa, in America and in Asia.

There is often mention of the "signs of the times". But what does this phrase mean exactly? And have all religious congregations recognized them? Or are they – at least in Europe – much too self-absorbed? In Europe it is the speedy loss of their members, their preoccupation with their facilities and institutions, and the necessity to deal with their old and ill members. In other parts of the world there is a lot of worry about how to recruit young members. It is all about the missionary sending in a multi-cultural and multi-religious world, which they are able to closely encounter every day. What are the "signs of the times" for them? Or do they only also just establish themselves in their own world?

The Year of the Consecrated Life may be of help in all these instances to get a clearer view here and there. It should be possible through local dialogue and also with the Brothers and Sisters on a global level to reinterpret the Franciscan mission charism in the light of the "signs of the times" and for them to become useful for concrete life.

"The adaptation and renewal of the religious life includes both the constant return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original spirit of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time." (Perfectae Caritatis 2). The CCFMC News will spend time to cover the sources of Christian life, to return to the original spirit and will also point out some aspects regarding the adaptation to the changed conditions of our time. It is very important to us – just as it was at the time when the course was developed and compiled – to listen to the experiences and impressions of the Brothers and Sisters from all over the world and to communicate with them as well.

Hadrian W. Koch OFM

## Europe

### Germany: Franciscan Spirituality in our time

Conference for Youth Ministers at the Youth Centre am Knock in Teuschnitz on 26 and 27 January 2015

***What is the significance of Christianity in our secular world? How can religion help to accompany people in their respective context of life? How can young people be supported in the discovery of their abilities and values?***

The starting point for the debate of this and many other issues is offered by the "Comprehensive Course on the Franciscan Mission Charism". 26 participants dealt with these questions during the Conference for Youth Ministers of the Archdiocese of Bamberg at the end of January at the Youth Centre am Knock in Teuschnitz.

The CCFMC is the international abbreviation for the Comprehensive Course that consists of 25 Lesson Units and which was initiated in the 1980s as a result of an international dialogue process of the Franciscan Family. In 1984 the course was developed further during a two-week conference.

The five letters stand for "Comprehensive Course on the Franciscan Mission Charism". Although the title sounds rather theoretical, the content is very much oriented towards concrete experiences. The main aim is to convey the meaning of the Franciscan charism, its history and development as well as its significance. The impetus for the creation of the CCFMC had been given by Vatican Council II in the 1960s. "The course attempts to put the most important contemporary concerns into a Franciscan perspective. It therefore does not offer solutions but asks the right questions". This is how Dr Monika Tremel and Michael Albrecht of the Association of Catholic Higher Education in Nuremberg judge the efficacy and the practical benefit of the Lesson Units. Together with the theologian, Professor Elmar Klinger, Father Andreas Müller (OFM) and Claudio Ettl, educational consultant at Caritas-Pirckheimer-Haus in Nuremberg, they organised and conducted the study part of this year's Conference for Youth Ministers. It is their goal to provide the Comprehensive Course to give an introduction of the course in general, and in particular also in the area of church-related work with children and young people. "The course combines the intentions of Francis of Assisi and Pope Francis. The course builds a bridge from the Franciscan reform movement of the Middle Ages to the present times. This constitutes the course's genuineness and its spiritual power", Dr. Tremel and Mr Albrecht say.

During workshop sessions, the Conference participants dealt with the statements and the inspirations of the course on topics such as the incarnation of God, the option for the poor or the dialogue of religions. The main focus was not only the theoretical preoccupation with the texts but especially involved around the issue on the practical application in church-related work with children and young people. "The workshop generated many intensive discussions and also initial concrete ideas on how to work with the Comprehensive Course in the field of pastoral care of children and youth." Tremel and Albrecht are glad to report about the results.

The Conference for Youth Ministers is held annually and addresses the spiritual leaders of youth organizations as well as pastoral staff of the youth welfare office of the Archdiocese. On the one



hand, the aim is to deal with current issues of church-related youth work, says the Diocesan Youth Advisor Detlef Pötl. "It is very important for us, on the other hand, to also have professional exchange which will especially enhance motivation and inspiration for the day-to-day work" he explains. The program of this year's Conference, therefore, included the study part on Franciscan spirituality as well as a review of last year's highlights and an outlook on upcoming projects and activities.

## Asia

### Philippines

#### "Called to be Brave, Called to be Franciscan Missionaries"

*This was the theme of a CCFMC Seminar at the end of August 2014 that was conducted in Eastern Samar, one of the Philippine provinces, which was hardest-hit by hurricane Yolanda. The report submitted on the event reads:*

The seminar had been organized in order to uplift and affirm the members of the immerging OFS fraternity from two barangays of Camada and Locsoon, Borongan City, Eastern Samar. Inspired by Franciscan solidarity the participants whose barangays had not suffered a lot of damage by the storm organized medical and other assistance for those barangays that had been heavily affected. Their support for the victims of Yolanda turned out to be a deed of courageous Franciscan missionaries. So many stories are being told that God had arranged that their city of Yolanda had been spared. Out of gratitude they want to be closer to Him and to know more about Him. Hence they have the desire for more formation activities on Franciscan spirituality.



Belinda Inao, who was newly elected to the OFS National Council helped in bringing the CCFMC Program to their barangay. She emphasized that the CCFMC had so clearly influenced the life of the OFS on Siquijor Island and so she made the promise that the CCFMC would become part of the OFS formation program in the Philippines and abroad... Therefore, CCFMC Phase 1 with 30 participants of the OFS and the YouFra was held in the Church of Locsoon from 23 to 25 August 2014.



That the CCFMC can make a change in the life of Franciscans was clearly shown in the evaluation of the seminar participants. Unique to this program is the participation of members of YouFra ranging from school pupils ages 8 and 15 years of age to college students ages 16 to 20 years old. The participants diligently took notes and in the end they came up with a realistic action plan for a three-year period. All participants stated that they now have a better understanding of the aspect of incarnation in our religion (Lesson Unit 1), they have a keener sense of the connectedness with the

Franciscan Family (Lesson Units 2 and 3), they are now better informed about the foundations and the origin of the Franciscan mission (Lesson Units 5 and 6), they are affirmed by their desire for formation in the Franciscan spirit (Lesson Unit 4) ... and that they have now become more conversant on how to respond, plan and act as Franciscans in day-to-day living. The participants gave a very high

ranking (4.48 of 5 possible scores) for the CCFMC seminar. They were inspired and impressed by the presentations of the Lesson Units by Maria Renita F. Fabic, Fe dela Rosa OFS, Jeanne Luyun SFIC und Dorothy Ortega SFIC.

In the absence of high-tech audio-visual facilities, the resource persons worked with their own audio-visual equipment in order to make their presentations understandable and meaningful to the participants. Their prayers brought out the hope that similar CCFMC programs in the Philippines should be held for young Franciscans. Out of gratitude to God for this three-day CCFMC experience, they presented the traditional "Kuratsa Dance", which usually accompanies fundraising activities. A good amount was collected which the local OFS Fraternity will use for the implementation of their action plan 2014-2015.

## Sri Lanka: 2014 was a successful year for the CCFMC

*Sr. Marlene Perera FMM reports about three events and activities of the CCFMC in Sri Lanka:*



**1. One-day programme for "Young Franciscans" (YouFra)** in Jaffna on 30 March under the motto "special challenges of Franciscan spirituality for the today's youth in Sri Lanka". This group of "Young Franciscans" some years ago had been founded by the seminarists of the Third Order Regular (TOR) during a pastoral practical training in Jaffna; the Sisters of the Holy Cross have accompanied the group since then by conducting meetings on a regular basis.

The group was made up of 63 boys and girls from Mannar and Jaffna. Fr. Benedikt OFM conducted the one-day programme in Tamil language based on the above slogan. The national CCFMC team as well as the Sisters of the Holy Cross were responsible to administer the programme and to take care of the groups.

The day programme started with a short prayer. Then Fr. Benedikt gave insights on the topic of the meeting with special emphasis on the current situation in the north of the country. After the experiences of the brutal war that had lasted for thirty years comprehensive efforts are being made regarding reconstruction. Fr. Benedikt invited the young participants to think about the challenges resulting from this situation and how they are facing these challenges – filled with the spirit of the Gospel and thus the Franciscan comprehension of life in this world. The intellectual confrontation with this aspect was a revelation to the young people regarding the necessity after the traumatic experience of violence to consolidate and to show an interest in those that are still suffering as they have lost their loved ones, their homes or others things; they also realized that they had to see and accept their role within the community. The participants were able to learn that you have to rise from the ashes of the past in order to set off a healing process and to also encourage and support others in order to establish a more just and more peaceful society in Sri Lanka.

The corresponding group session dealt with the mission of the Gospel covering also the example and the legacy of Saint Francis. In this respect we are asked to forgive those who are responsible, to reach out the hand to one another in friendship, and to practice cross-border solidarity. If we accept each other as Brothers and Sisters, relations will thrive, as extended humanity will accrue from wisdom and goodness.

The young people experienced a wonderful day filled with intense contemplation, togetherness and games at the end of the programme.

**2. Annual three-day programme for novices and postulants of all Franciscan congregations.** This workshop in Subhodhi in Piliyandala was attended by 20 members of the congregations CMSF, FFM and of the Holy Cross; the group was joined by a coordination team of five people. The programme was conducted by Fr. Vajra Silva, who lectured on the topic "Biblical and prophetic foundation of the Franciscan mission charism". He also addressed the current circumstances in Sri Lanka. The discussions in small groups and the exchange of ideas in the plenary showed that we as Franciscans are called upon to fulfil a prophetic mission in the context of a society focused on consumption in which money is the most important. The conversion of Saint Francis and his rejection of worldly goods was

a challenge for the participants by removing themselves from the temptations of this world and to approach a life according to the Gospel. The desire for wealth, prestige and power has to be overcome and has to be replaced by voluntary dedication to all forms of life – humans, animals or nature – as Francis had done. This kind of pursuit will lead us to true liberation, peace, tranquillity, and joy – which we will transfer onto others – just like Francis. Reconciliation is a direct challenge in our society that strives for rehabilitation following a brutal time of war. If we succeed to free ourselves from desire – just like Francis - it would be much easier for us also reconcile with our enemies, with nature and with all of creation. The process of developing this attitude in the course of our vocational training is of vital importance as we will then be able to act truly prophetic everywhere – in our congregation or in missionary settings with people.

**3. Annual Francis' Day for All Franciscans.** This day was celebrated at Mazenod-House in Colombo on 22 October. 105 participants from ten different Sri Lankan congregations met under the motto "Franciscan Presence and Witness in a world focused on power, which is violent and fragmented". In his lecture Fr. Vajra Silva emphasised that Franciscan life and thinking was not geared to follow the masses, to obey the tendencies that create distrust, doubt, estrangement, war and destruction that target at wealth, power, and exploitation and that only bring harm to nature and fellow human beings. God means COMMUNION, and it is especially required to live this spirit of communion in a Franciscan manner. This will ask us to keep a distance to the masses that are captured by mammon; we should truly enter a brotherly-sisterly relationship with ourselves, with each other and with all creatures. In doing so we will become trustees of liberty and joy that our Father Francis was also able to experience in this world.



Following the discussions and the exchange of ideas on the plenary we deepened our solidarity with a Eucharistic mass, which was joyfully arranged by the clergy of the Capuchins. The participants went home with a sense of enlightenment and strength.

Marlene Perera, FMM



### Pope issues letter for Year of Consecrated Life

[http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2014/11/29/pope\\_issues\\_letter\\_for\\_year\\_of\\_consecrated\\_life/1112885](http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2014/11/29/pope_issues_letter_for_year_of_consecrated_life/1112885)

### Year of Consecrated Life

[http://ofm.org/AVC2015/calendario-anno-vita-consacrata\\_en.pdf](http://ofm.org/AVC2015/calendario-anno-vita-consacrata_en.pdf)

### Calendar of the Year of Consecrated Life

[http://vd.pcn.net/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&id=1567:year-of-consecrated-life-2015&Itemid=41](http://vd.pcn.net/en/index.php?option=com_content&id=1567:year-of-consecrated-life-2015&Itemid=41)