

BASIC COURSE

on

Franciscan- Missionary Charism



The Franciscan Family

Lesson Unit 3

The documents of Vatican II, Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, and Pope John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio* have deeply affected the understanding of mission. Constant efforts are being made to clarify its purpose and objectives, and to determine the most appropriate methods to carry it out. *Go, Rebuild My Church: A Comprehensive Course on the Franciscan Mission Charism*, provides a particular context to stimulate dialogue about the many dimensions of mission and the inevitable recognition of the equality, dignity and humanity of all persons. The course is unique, since it is genuinely inter-Franciscan and inter-cultural. An ongoing process for exchange among all members of the Franciscan Family from six continents provides for a creative meshing of the best in current theology, Franciscan research and pastoral practice. The vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent our search for a fuller understanding of humanity in the light of the Gospel and the Person of Jesus Christ.

As Franciscans, with the world as our "cloister," we welcome this refreshing moment of intercultural dialogue. Francis was the first among founders to situate the missionary dimension of the Gospel call clearly within his rule. This study reawakens us to the challenge and genuineness of Francis' message for our own times.



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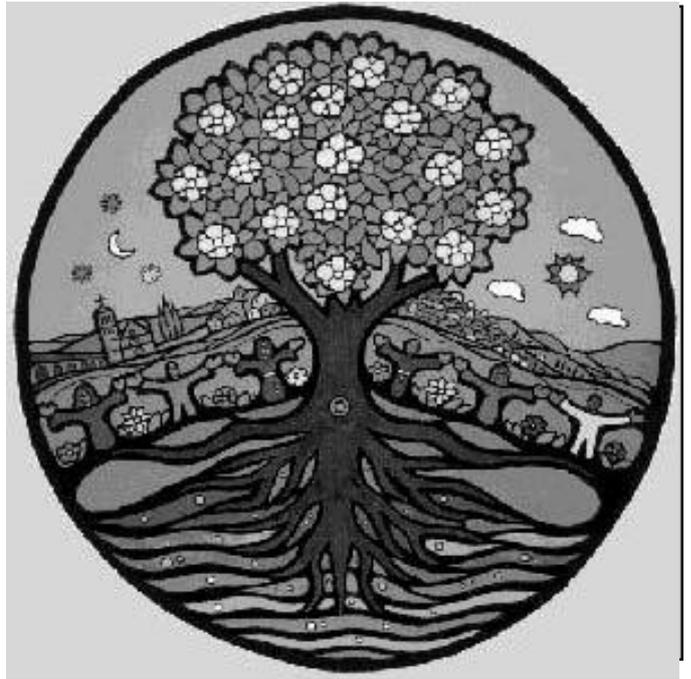
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Go, Rebuild My Church!

*A Comprehensive
Course on the
Franciscan Mission
Charism*



Franciscan Collaboration Today



Lesson Unit 3



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From the Sources

The Friendship between Francis and Clare

We all know that friendship bound Francis and Clare. He enjoyed speaking with her. He gladly listened to the graceful words flowing from her lips like honey. Clare, too, longed for his presence and tasted the words that Francis spoke 'of the good Jesus'.

Yet again and again they restrained themselves and refrained from seeing each other. Above all, Francis believed that not visiting Clare gave honour to God, who meant so much to him. Clare, however, suffered a great deal from not seeing Francis. She always pleaded with Francis' brothers to dissuade him from such hardness.

Accordingly, Francis once invited Clare to a meal at the Portiuncula, the small settlement of the brothers close to Assisi. She ate together with the brothers and some sisters while sitting on the bare ground. Both felt as bound to the earth as they did to God. And thus they spoke with each other, listening spellbound to the thoughts behind the words they said. Then God cast a divine fire onto their lips and into their hearts. They became nothing but fire and flame. The fire of love was so large that it blazed beyond the settlement and encompassed the entire area. The fire was so large that the fire brigades from Assisi and Montefalco, from Bettona and Spello raced to put it out. In vain, of course. Who, after all, wants to extinguish the love that God kindles among us mortals? (adapted from Fioretti, 15).



A. Introduction

Francis and Clare Founders of the Franciscan Family

This lesson unit will focus on the Franciscan family that Francis and Clare founded at the beginning of the thirteenth century. An intimate and deep friendship bound them to each other. Both worked toward the same goal, the reign of God. They held their greatest desire in common: to live the Gospel radically and to impart it to others as life-giving power. Their way of life attracted others. Men and women of all social classes wanted to join them in living the Gospel as they did. Within barely ten years, three powerful branches grew from a small seed: the fraternity of the Friars Minor in 1210, the community of the Sisters Minor in 1212 and, almost simultaneously, a lay community which developed into the Order of Penance.

Neither Francis nor Clare alone, but Francis and Clare together, founded a movement to create enthusiasm among women and men and call them to discipleship, a movement that still exists today. The special nature of their charisma lies in the mutual dependence upon each other as brothers and sisters in the one Franciscan family. The Franciscan family can experience its fullness only when all the siblings, men and women, are together. Accordingly, their unity in the midst of a multiplicity of vocations and their loving care for each other should be self-evident. It is only logical that the various Franciscan orders and communities should cooperate with one another.



B. Survey

Thousands of Women and Men on all continents strive to live according to the Gospel in the spirit of Francis and Clare of Assisi. They are bound to foster unity and collaboration. Those obligations arise from the fact of being brothers and sisters of one family, a thought that is so central to the Franciscan life-style. This allows them to say something important in a world torn by so many conflicts and contrasts and in a Church plagued by tension.

We will not simply present an ideal here; we wish to name specific examples of collaboration. Franciscan collaboration grows

today at the local, national and international level. Still, we also know that much remains to be done. In many areas of the world the decline in vocations forces us to join resources, and to search for and experiment with new forms of cooperation. In other places the poor and marginalized demand clear and united use of our forces. Today a large number of different causes call us to strengthen our fraternal bonds and to share our spiritual, material and human gifts.

C. Information

1. A Numerical Look at the Franciscan Family

The Franciscan family is a movement of many different forms. It reaches far beyond the borders of the Catholic Church. Its members come from the most varied social classes and personal situations. A common vision of a life according to the Gospel of Christ, inspired by the living witness and teachings of Francis and Clare of Assisi, unites the numbers of the entire family.

The Franciscan family reached its highest number of members during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1700 Europe, the principal area in which the Franciscans worked, had a population of some 115 million. (The figures of individual countries in millions: Spain/Portugal 10; Italy 13,3; Benelux 3.4; British Isles 9,3; Scandinavia 2,8; Germany 15;

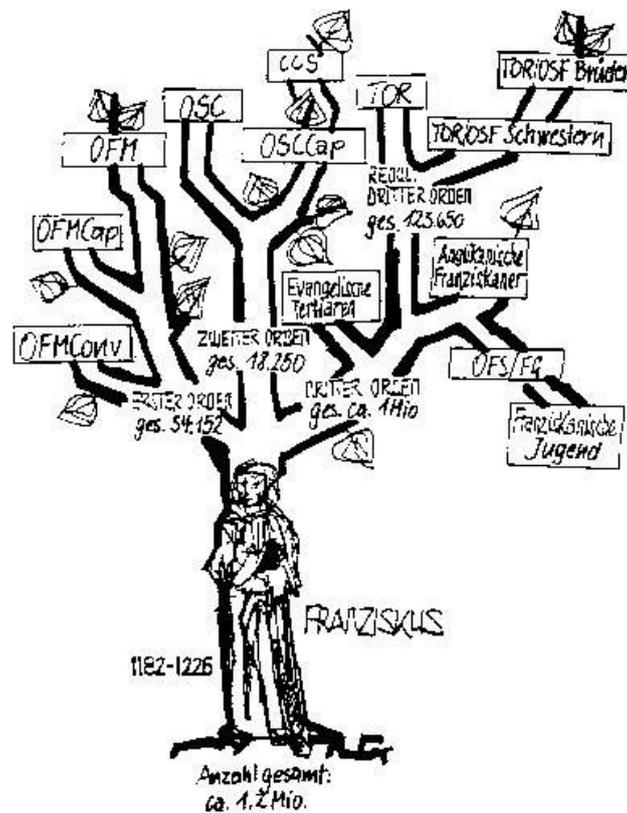
Switzerland 1,2; the Danube Countries 8,8; Poland 6; Russia 17,5; and the Balkan Countries 9). This period had experienced a tremendous upswing of missionary activity because of the discovery of America and the significant expansion of missions in Asia. To compare that situation to today, consider that Europe now has a population of about 650 million, or about 460 million without the European portion of the Conference of Independent States, Belarus, Ukraine and Turkey.

In the 17-18 centuries, the Friars Minor (OFM) had about 76,900 members; the Conventuals (OFM Conv) had some 15,000 members; the Capuchins (OFM Cap) 34,000; and the Clares about 34,000 members. We have no record



available for the other Franciscan communities (TOR, Secular Franciscans).

Much as the Church has developed into a world-wide Church today, the Franciscan Family has developed into a worldwide movement. As the Church's center of gravity has shifted to the southern hemisphere, the Franciscan Family currently enjoys its strongest growth there as well.



2. Franciscan 'Ecumenism'

The entire world has become a large house for the Franciscan family. For this reason we must reside together and work together in this house. The conviction that the Franciscan renewal can succeed only when the various Franciscan communities collaborate, is a basic expression of the post-conciliar documents issued by all the Franciscan orders.

Fraternity is the basic form of our life. The General Chapter of the Franciscans held at Medellin in 1971 identified as the sign of our Franciscan identity and credibility.

"We are convinced that this form of life of fraternity in the imitation of Christ and St Francis can provide the humanity of today a great service. We wish to relive the needs of our time with our fraternity" (Medellin OFM 1971).

The same document also gives detailed ways to maintain this fraternity:

- - the use of one's own talents to promote the well-being and joy of the brothers (no. 11);
- - in service to others, helping them "to realize the gospel values of human dignity, total development and true freedom" (no. 12);
- - in pledging to "make ourselves the neighbor of absolutely every human being and to help actively those whom we meet" (no. 13);
- - "We, the sons of St Francis, live in local fraternal communities and wish to serve the basic Christian communities... The grace of renewal cannot grow in communities unless each one of them extends the range of its charity to the ends of the earth" (no. 16).

The Mission Document of the Capuchins issued at Mattli in 1978, has similar emphasis on the witness of brotherly love:

- The work, the missionary engagement, must never so involve the missionary that fraternal community living becomes impossible (no. 38);



- Co-operating between the Provinces and the Regions would promote the convincing power of community life (no. 39);
- “We should esteem and value the spiritual gifts of so many brothers and sisters, sharing our spirit and service. In this way we will bring to maturity a community of faith and love, gifted with particular effectiveness in the preaching of the Gospel such as St Francis desired and people of our time expect” (no. 40).

The Missionary Document of “Bahia 1983”, actually devotes two whole chapters to this very same theme. Solidarity, fraternity, co-operation and unity among the branches of the Franciscan family in the First, Second and Third Orders are the essential and most important instruments of our missionary vocation.



“When people saw the friars, they described them as men of God, people who showed an honest concern, a smiling face, mutual respect, gentleness and love (cf. 1 Cel 38; AP 25). Their

very lives gave witness to the Good News. They not only believed and proclaimed, but more importantly in their lives together and with the people, they experienced the Gospel values of Jesus Christ. If we really desire to evangelize today, people must first see in us those same values that were conspicuous in the lives of the early friars” (Bahia, no. 22).

The new Constitutions of the Secular Franciscans, article 89, speaks of “the power of living, mutual relations between religious and laity in the Franciscan family and of the responsibility of the superior”. The spiritual assistant of the First Order is to guarantee that mutuality is an essential element of the commonality between all Secular Franciscan communities. The Constitutions also envision that all members of the Secular Franciscan Order promise to fulfill their mission together with other groups within the Franciscan family.

The Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular (TOR/OSF) calls for loyalty to those who hold office in the Church and for a deeper unity of the world-wide Church and the local church. The Rule especially notes: “Wherever and whenever they meet, they must meet each other spiritually and attentively and must honor each other. They should also foster unity and community with all members of the Franciscan family” (Ch.1,3).

A document of the 5th Plenary Council of the Capuchins, held in Garibaldi in 1983, emphasizes the pre-eminent place of fraternity and community spirit.

Let us strengthen fraternal co-responsibility and solidarity so that we can overcome the mentality of isolation and provincialism. To this end, let us make use of those agencies that stimulate and support collaboration in formation, in the apostolate, publications, etc.



And let us do so both at the level of the Order as a whole and at the continental, national and regional level. We devote particular attention to the conferences.

We encourage you to keep fraternal sentiment vital outside of and within provinces by sharing goods and by other signs. The living spirit of poverty and being on-the-road should keep local fraternities from constricting their development by allowing certain brothers to remain in the same place for too long (no. 27).

The examples noted above make it abundantly clear that the tendency toward a pledge of unity has grown within the Franciscan family. We know, of course, that wounds and scars from the past are still present. Nonetheless, we must

increasingly recognize that there is no longer room for individual members or communities to seek individuality and higher profiles at the cost of others. In the spirit of our founders Francis and Clare, we must realize our imitation of Christ in common. Obviously, there is no magic formula for Franciscan 'ecumenism'. We are still at the starting line. Yet it is clear, and therefore an obligation, that together we can accomplish many tasks far better than parallel to each other or even against each other. Such efforts can take place without the loss of individual traditions and charisms: unity in diversity! Only then will the richness of the Franciscan spirit become visible and bear fruit for the People of God.



3. Concrete Examples of Efforts at Franciscan Collaboration

The relations between the various branches of the Franciscan family have increasingly improved and found expression in common efforts. Franciscan centers for spirituality, studies, formation, research, publication and cooperation contribute to a better understanding and deeper appreciation of the Franciscan tradition. Activities and projects for peace, justice and the preservation of creation organized and held by Franciscan groups display solidarity among the members of the Franciscan family.

This lesson unit makes no claim to provide a complete list of all inter-Franciscan initiatives and projects. We consciously limited ourselves

to the associations, institutes and federations that have significance beyond the borders of their own regions. In addition to the work described here, there exists a wide range of Franciscan collaborative ventures at the local and national level which we cannot include here.



Our limitations, however, should not cause the reader to underestimate such initiatives. Quite the contrary, we hope that the sisters and brothers collaborating on the various continents make their examples known and have them integrated into this course.

3.1. World-wide Franciscan Collaboration

➤ Conference of the Franciscan Family

On October 3, 1995, in Rome, a new structure for Franciscan collaboration was created: the Conference of the Franciscan Family. Its members include the ministers General of the OFM, OFM Conv. OFM Cap, TOR and Secular Franciscans and the president of the IFC (International Franciscan Conference, the world-wide union of TOR communities). The newly founded conference seeks to foster community between the various entities and common initiatives. The presidency of the Conference revolves around the communities represented in the conference: The OFM minister general held the first term, 1995-96, followed by the president of the Secular Franciscans in 1996-97. Two meetings are planned annually.

➤ - Institute for Franciscan Spirituality (IFS), Rome

Affiliated with the “Pontificio Ateneo Antonianum” (PAA), the Institute for Franciscan Spirituality offers formal academic training for future teachers, formators and animators. Special attention is paid to Franciscan spirituality. The OFM Cap and OFM groups sponsor the Institute, and these communities also provide the majority of the teachers. Specialists from other communities and lay people also serve on the faculty.

➤ - International Franciscan Conference (IFC)

The communities of the Third Order Regular founded the ‘International Franciscan Conference’ in 1985 with an international office in Rome. Approximately three-quarters of the 400 TOR congregations in the world are active members of this conference. Some convents of contemplative TOR sisters are associate members. According to the most recent statistics, over 120,000 brothers and sisters in all continents belong to the Third Order Regular.

➤ Franciscan International (FI)



Franciscan International is a non-governmental organization at the United Nations. It seeks to advocate Franciscan values and concerns (care of the poor, peace and the preservation of creation) within the UN and to collaborate with similar initiatives and groups in dealing with these questions central to the future of the human race. FI consists of about five thousand members (in 1995) from all branches of the Franciscan family representing sixty countries.



Since 1995, groups such as convents and provinces could also become members of FI. The combination of individual and group members creates the possibility for far more sisters and brothers to share in this important ministry and strengthen the staff at the New York office in the future. An International Leadership Team of twelve members is planned. Representatives of the Conference of the Franciscan Family, continents, and inter-Franciscan projects will make up the team. Important criteria for the leadership team as a whole include international representation and a balance between members of men's and women's communities. FI has pledged itself to the following goals:

"We Franciscans, men and women, followers of St Francis of Assisi, are convinced that all of creation, from the smallest organism up to humanity itself, lives on planet Earth in mutual dependence. We know that that relationship is threatened by a deficient consciousness, exploitation and oppression. We pledge ourselves to strengthen awareness of that mutual dependence so that all of creation can live in harmony. We wish to do so by serving our own members, the staff of the United Nations and other non-governmental organizations in collaboration, educational programs and activities in the areas of environmental protection, work for peace and care for the poor."

On June 14, 1995, Franciscans International was granted the status of category 1 among the organizations of the UN. This status allows participation in all meetings of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It also permits special relationships with other UN bodies and representation at the UN headquarters in New York, as well as other UN agencies in Geneva, Vienna, Nairobi, etc. The new connection with

ECOSOC gives FI the opportunity to take direct part in the discussions of a UN body and influence its decisions. In doing so, of course, both expectations of Franciscans International and its responsibilities grow.

➤ **Missionzentrale der Franziskaner (MZF)**



The Franciscan Mission Center was founded in 1969 as an organ of the Central European Provincial's Conference. Its members include the OFM provinces of Germany (4), Austria (2), Hungary (2) and one each from Holland, Flanders, South Tyrol, Switzerland and Romania. For the Franciscan provinces in the southern hemisphere that have historical connections to and relationships with the member provinces, associate membership is available. As of 1995, associate members include six provinces in Brazil, two in Africa (South Africa and Democratic Republic of Congo) and one each in Bolivia, Pakistan, India and Indonesia. The task of the MZF is to foster the Franciscan missionary charism within the Franciscan family, education and works of solidarity for the "two-thirds-world", advertising and public relations work as well as the sponsorship of programs. A supporting group of enthusiastic donors, joined in the Franciscan spirit, make it possible for the MZF to fulfill its goals.

Although the MZF is sponsored by an OFM organization, it certainly understands itself as an inter-Franciscan agency in sponsoring projects. All sisters and brothers of the countries in the southern hemisphere can apply for project



support. Inter-cultural dialog and exchange are significant aspects of the center's support efforts. The MZF has, therefore, developed an international educational program which has since been used as a model by other orders. Since 1992, the MZF has had a Regional Branch in Berlin for educational work in the east and, since 1995, a similar branch in Vienna for central and eastern Europe. The branch in Vienna seeks to address the concerns of the Franciscan family in the east and to organize help for them in solidarity.

3.2. Continental and National Franciscan Collaboration



Latin America

In Latin America, some eight Franciscan centers (1995) serve the organizational and spiritual renewal of the Franciscan family. These include: CIPEE in Uruguay and Franciscan Centers in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay and Peru. In Chile, Columbia and Mexico sisters and brothers have organized themselves as the Franciscan Family, without, however, establishing a center. Venezuela has a Franciscan Family and an educational center. The strength of collaborative ventures between various Franciscan branches differs from place to place. The best and most effective collaboration is found in Brazil. Seminars, retreats, publications, congresses, and programs of actions for justice, peace and preservation of creation form the principal offerings of the centers. A Coordinating Office attempts to strengthen the collaborative efforts of the Franciscan centers in Latin America. The following presents two centers as examples.

➤ Franciscan Center in Petropolis in Brazil



The center was founded in 1969 as CEFEPAL do Brasil. The founders knew that successful renewal depends on the combination of the strengths and the many branches of the Franciscan family where unity is found in the midst of their diversity.

The center, to which some 155 communities belong today, has a central secretariat and an educational building. For its first twenty years, as CEFEPAL, the heart of the center was a nine-month course for 30-35 sisters and brothers. Study of Franciscan sources and documents, reflection upon individual history and experience, prayer and liturgy – all helped them to discover their vocation as Franciscan persons. The goal was not so much the imparting of knowledge, but rather an experience of self-awareness. The course set off decisive currents of reform for the entire Franciscan family of Brazil. Collaboration and exchange between the various branches have become self-evident.

The work of the center was reorganized in 1995 at the first general assembly of the Franciscan family, held in the capital, Brasilia. In addition to the central secretariat, five divisions were created:

- CEFEPAL for the educational program
- Division of Publications and Public Relations
- Division for the Study of Franciscan History
- Division for the Animation of the 15 regions



- A working group for justice, peace and preservation of creation

The center understands itself as a provider of stimuli and ideas for the entire Franciscan family.

➤ - **Center for Research, Franciscan Development and Ecology (CIPFE) in Uruguay**

CIPFE in Uruguay is unique as an inter-Franciscan agency. It co-ordinates almost all the activities of the Franciscan family in Uruguay. It always works with the support of specialists from the University of Montevideo. The center is deeply involved in the day-to-day problems of the people. They serve as models for ecological activities and orient themselves to marginalized groups in society (prostitutes, persons with AIDS, street children, homeless, women). The center maintains the following programs: Franciscan historical research, educational and pastoral courses, scripture study and educational opportunities for youth.



North America

- **Franciscan Institute at St Bonaventure University, St Bonaventure, NY, USA**

The School of Franciscan Studies, commonly known as the Franciscan Institute at St Bonaventure University is a center for teaching, research and publishing in all areas connected to the Franciscan movement, especially theology, philosophy and history. The Institute offers students from all over the world a Master of Arts degree as well as an Advanced Certificate in Franciscan Studies. Other opportunities available at the Institute are: Franciscan Formators Program, Sabbatical and

Ongoing Formation Program, Build with Living Stones Program, retreats, seminars and other courses. Various publications, including such periodicals as The Cord, Greyfriars Review and Franciscan Studies, display the variety and rich content of the Franciscan family.

- - **Franciscan Federation of the Third Order of the Sisters and Brothers of the United States, Washington, D.C.**

The Franciscan Federation works for communication and collaboration between the brothers and sisters of the Third Order Regular in the United States. It offers various renewal programs which provide a deeper understanding of the spirit and life of the TOR rule.



Africa

- **St Bonaventure Centre in Lusaka, Zambia**

The St Bonaventure Centre is a Franciscan study and formation center founded in 1992 for the three branches of the First Order: OFM, OFM Cap., and OFM Conv.. Students live in communities of their own orders, but have a common library, lecture halls, and chapel. They celebrate the Eucharist together. These features allow the sense of Franciscan family to grow.

Other inter-Franciscan establishments are currently (1996) being planned in Nairobi (for East Africa) and Johannesburg (for South Africa). For a long time the Franciscan communities and groups were very isolated and concerned only with themselves. Intensive work with the CCFMC in English-speaking Africa has provided lasting improvement and has helped to create a climate that can now allow structural collaboration.





Asia

➤ Franciscan Institute of Asia (FIA)

In 1980 the Franciscan Institute of Asia was founded in the Philippines. An inter-Franciscan leadership team is responsible for the Institute, whose goals include:

- To become acquainted with Francis and Clare, their vision and form of life, and to strengthen Franciscan consciousness;
- To teach the history of the Franciscan movement;
- To provide an experience of Franciscan life, prayer and work;
- To explore Franciscan methods of ecclesial ministry;
- To support dialog with the regions of Asia;
- To promote Franciscan research and publishing.

During the past sixteen years the FIA has served the Franciscan family through:

- basic courses in Franciscanism;
- educational programs for training in the order at various levels;
- model services and liturgical aids for Franciscan feasts;
- publication and sale of Franciscan books;
- programs for justice, peace and preservation of creation.

In the “FIA Contact”, its own periodical, the Institute seeks to enable a vital exchange within the Franciscan family.

➤ Shanti Sadhana, Franciscan Institute for Spirituality (FISI) in India



FISI is a center for animation, education and research. It focuses primarily on Franciscan topics, but also on topics that arise from the cultural context of India. The inter-Franciscan team at the center organizes courses and retreats for educational leaders and animators. According to need, the courses seek to serve renewal in the Franciscan family but also to attend to the marginalized. The center offers a nine-month program of study leading to a diploma in Franciscan Spirituality. Given the society in India, it is significant that participants come from all castes and regions of the country. Discussions are currently (1996) underway to establish a relationship with the University of Mysore. The Capuchins administer the FISI, however, it is open for all sisters and brothers in the Franciscan family.



Europe

The following countries have agencies of inter-Franciscan collaboration: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, England, Germany, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland. The following are two examples.

➤ Franciscan Samenwerking in Holland

Franciscan Samenwerking was founded in 1962, and is thus the oldest inter-Franciscan agency. Its members include forty-four



communities of sisters and brothers. Its goals include the spreading and deepening of Franciscan spirituality (above all for the orders and congregations themselves) and support and collaboration through a central office for the Franciscan movement. The most important offerings are a three-year course in Franciscan Spirituality, weekend courses and an annual follow-up course. Meetings for young people, for members of the Secular Franciscans and bustling publishing activities supplement the other offerings.

➤ - **Interfranziskanische Arbeitsgemeinschaft (INFAG) in Germany**

The Interfranziskanische Arbeitsgemeinschaft (Inter-Franciscan Working Group) for Germany, Austria and Switzerland was founded in 1982. Its tasks include support for collaborative ventures and continuing education in Franciscan spirituality. As of 1995, some 79 communities belong to INFAG. Its office is located in Würzburg. Providing a newsletter, publications, videos, course offerings and a summer ministry for pilgrims in Assisi, all help the group reach its goals.

4. Visions and Wishes

4.1. The 1982 Mattli Congress

The Mattli Congress in 1982 marked the first time in the 800-year history of the Franciscan movement that Franciscans from all branches of the family, sisters from several active and contemplative communities and members of the Third Order, met in Assisi. The group wanted to join Francis of Assisi in looking at the “Developing Countries”. The participants came from 28 countries and every continent. They displayed differences in culture and language, religious experience and theological perspective. The sisters and brothers from the “Developing Countries” comprised some four-fifths of the representatives at the congress, an overwhelming majority.

Although the Congress met some time ago, its document, the “Inter-Franciscan Message – Mattli 1982”, that was produced with great effort and much good will toward collaboration, has lost none of its significance.

- In addition to its official message, the Congress also passed a list of suggestions and wishes. Many of these ideas still await implementation today. Closer collaboration was requested primarily in the following areas:
 - Dialog between continents: During the Congress it became increasingly clear that the “Developing Countries” is not a monolithic block. A dialog between the continents is urgently required to begin a mutual learning process.
 - Franciscan Study Centers: Closer collaboration in the initial and later stages of formation should become an urgent priority. Centers for Franciscan spirituality were particularly desired in the “Developing Countries”. Such centers should offer the following ministries: studies, continuing education, vocational



discernment, and pastoral aspects of Franciscan life. The centers should address such issues as they similarly affect both male and female novices and those in the later stages of formation. They should become training centers for collaboration and unity.

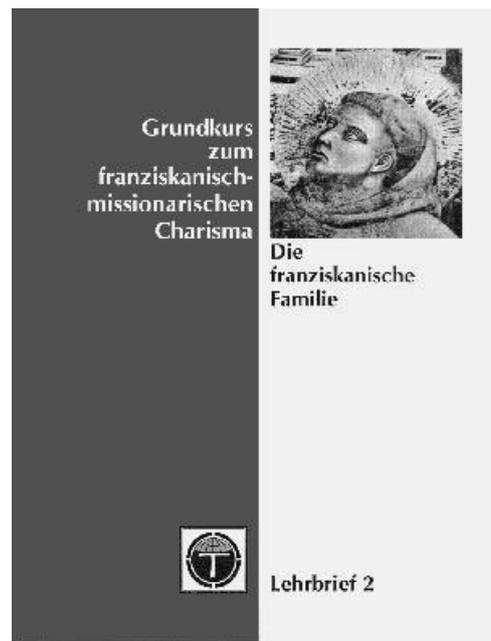
- Communication and Exchange of Information: The Congress suggested the creation of a TAU Communications Center for the entire Franciscan family to strengthen collaboration. Above all, the center should coordinate activities directed toward justice and peace.
- Regional Congresses: Inter-familial meetings are an absolute necessity for close collaboration and unity. The congress encouraged such meetings of the various branches at the local, national and international levels.

4.2 Comprehensive Course on the Franciscan Mission Charism (CCFMC), 1984

The present program of study with its twenty-five lesson units is known under various names. While the United States calls it “Build with Living Stones”, India uses the designation “We Are Sent”. Most countries, however, call it CCFMC (Comprehensive Course on the Franciscan Mission Charism). The course is an inter-Franciscan, inter-cultural and international project that was originally created in 1982-94 and today (1996) comprises twenty-five units. The lessons were written by male and female authors who come from varied linguistic, cultural, socio-economic strata and political viewpoints. The course aims at initializing a renewal within the Franciscan family in the context of a rapidly changing world.

Participants in the course allow themselves to be led by the following goals:

- To reinvigorate the Franciscan missionary spirit;
- To support openness and inter-cultural dialogue to learn rather than to teach;
- To support unity and co-responsibility at the national, international and inter-continental level.



The team leading the project has been entrusted with the task of caring for the course throughout the world. An international CCFMC Secretariat in Bonn (Germany) serves as a clearing house for communication between the continents and executes the decisions of the leadership team. National and international teams of coordinators plan, execute, and evaluate CCFMC programs in close collaboration with the international secretariat and the leadership team.

- Today (1999), this instrument of inter-Franciscan dialogue and collaboration has



spread to all continents with the support of the following publications:

- CCFMC News, appearing quarterly, which contains news on the spread and application of the CCFMC in other continents;
- Franciscan Digest, a semi-annual periodical which makes articles on Franciscan spirituality available in English;
- CCFMC Manual for Animators, produced by an international, inter-Franciscan team;
- A source-book for ecclesial and Franciscan mission documents, available in German and English;
- Additional instruments which are under preparation and will become available: e.g., an abbreviated version containing ten lesson units.
- New technology, such as CD-ROMS.

4.2. "Assisi 94"

From September 17, through October 1, 1994, 160 CCFMC participants (120 delegates and an additional 40 participants: leadership and organizing teams, experts and translators) gathered in Assisi. This congress had three goals:

- To enable an exchange of experience after ten years of spreading and using the CCFMC, and to gather constructive criticism and suggestions for revisions.
- To raise consciousness of the feminine and secular aspects of the Franciscan missionary charism and integrate this heightened level of awareness into the course. Also to recognize and honor the witness of the Poor Clares, the Third Order Regular (TOR) and the Secular Franciscans in their

meaning for the Franciscan family and the Church.



- To serve as a creative source of ideas for the 800th anniversary of the birth of St Clare and make the celebration bear fruit within the Franciscan family.
- "Assisi 94" can be seen as a connecting point between "Mattli 82" and the fulfillment of future Franciscan collaboration. The congress addressed the following concerns:
 - The contribution of the Secular Franciscans to the Franciscan charism which must be made more fruitful. As a world-order the Seculars are particularly called to work for peace and justice and to bear witness to the gospel together with other brothers and sisters in the midst of the world.
 - The feminine dimension of the Franciscan missionary charism which must become more consciously developed and deepened.
 - There are good examples of collaboration in the Franciscan family presently. However,



more effort is needed to bring the Franciscan Mission to the world. Such initiatives must be recognized and made known to the entire family. Some examples might be:

- The Nevada Desert Experience which was a non-violent protest near a nuclear testing area in the USA;
- The initiative of female Franciscans in the peace movement in the Philippines;
- The inter-Franciscan initiative in Berlin-Pankow soup kitchen, in care of persons with AIDS, in various efforts in education and Franciscan presence in a de-Christianized world;
- The inter-Franciscan presence at the UN Conferences in Rio (1992 – Ecology); in Vienna (1993 – human rights), in Cairo (1994 – world population), in Copenhagen (1995 – social development), in Beijing (1995 – women), in Istanbul (1996 – human settlements).
- Another important inter-Franciscan initiative is that of participation in the

conciliar process for justice, peace and preservation of creation in the following stages:

1988: The initiative of the European Franciscan family for the “European Ecumenical Dialogue for Justice, Peace and Preservation of Creation” held in Assisi;

1989: Participation in the European Ecumenical Congress on Peace and Justice;

1990: Participation in the “Ecumenical World Congress of Christians for Justice, Peace and the Preservation of Creation”, held in Seoul;

1997: Second European Ecumenical Congress held in Graz.

The youth of many countries look for examples. Francis and Clare seem to speak to those who search for meaning, for environmental balance, for justice and peace, for fraternal Church, a Church of the poor. The Franciscan family should lead the way on this road.



D. Exercises

1. Exercise

Draw up a list of Franciscan concerns in your country. Name goals and activities. Determine if more can be done in your country.

Questions and Assignments:

1. What similarities and differences can you identify in these projects?
2. If you know of initiatives in other countries, compare them to those in your own country. What strikes you?
3. using the following model, create a map of the entire Franciscan family in your region/country and enter:
 - Cities/towns where Franciscan brothers and sisters live
 - Their number
 - Their type(s) of ministry
 - Where are inter-Franciscan initiatives?
 - Who participates in such ventures?
 - What characterizes these efforts?

2. Exercise

What results do you draw from the previous questions and answers in view of:

- Life according to the Gospel as the basis of inter-Franciscan unity and collaboration;
- Inter-Franciscan unity and collaboration as an answer to the signs of the times and their

meaning for the future of the Franciscan movement.

Compare the Franciscan documents cited in this lesson unit.

Determine the similarities and the differences.

Questions:

1. What do we learn from the similarities and what do we learn from the differences?
2. What does that mean for the individual, the community and the entire Franciscan family?

E. Applications

1. Application

In a team of not less than eight members, formulate a three-year action-plan to meet the following goal: "How can we promote inter-Franciscan unity and collaboration in our own country?"

2. Application

How could you encourage others to participate in and collaborate with already existing inter-Franciscan projects such as:

- Franciscan International;
- Promotion of the CCFMC;
- Inter-Franciscan Centers in your own country or continent.



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