



The Holy Spirit

“The Holy Spirit” – this is a quite theological term. The Church celebrates the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. But many people are having difficulties in doing so. Are we discovering the Holy Spirit? And the disciples? - They had expected the Messiah; someone who would make everything new. But Jesus of Nazareth – the figure of light shows up instead. Yet, Jesus was hung on the cross like a criminal. Did the disciples have false hopes; did they have the wrong expectations?

Only after Easter, the disciples realized who this man Jesus really was and what his message actually meant. Nevertheless, some of the disciples dwelled on their old hopes; Jesus task was to rebuild the Kingdom of Israel. Two angels had to forcibly convince them during Jesus’ ascension that they should not look up into the heavens but that they should look upon the earth instead. Leaving the real world behind what a temptation for mankind.

Yet Jesus did not leave us behind as orphans. The evangelist John told us that Jesus breathed his last breath and released his spirit on the cross. His final breath, his Holy Spirit was for them; they were to carry the message of peace and forgiveness to the world. At Pentecost they finally felt this spirit that had been with them, even within them and they started preaching about it. It was quite astonishing that suddenly language and cultures did not matter any longer. Everyone was able to hear and understand them. “Babel” had been overcome.

Nowadays there are many signs for a new time of Pentecost within Christianity. We are discovering the great resources - especially in the young Churches of our world, but also in religious traditions of other religions, which

are older than Christianity. During the Second Vatican Council the Word of God in the Holy Scriptures became alive again. Especially the poor and the small discovered His Good News about the freedom and the liberation of God’s children. It is a gift by the Holy Spirit to the Church of the Second Vatican Council for rediscovering the Word of God. It is also a gift to realize that God speaks to every individual in all cultures and in all religious traditions. For centuries, the Church had always felt resistance against the Gospel in foreign cultures and other religions. Today the Church observes any culture and any religion as the basis where the Gospel will be able to take root. The Church does nothing else but what Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, had done with the Romans and the Greeks at that time – until the limits of the world.

The Christian message is portrayed by a concrete person; it is not an invitation to accept a certain theory or philosophy, yet it is an invitation to do likewise and to follow Christ: “I have given you an example”. In the third millennium of her history, the Church has for the first time opened up to the wealth of the divine revelation - especially for the Asian religions. The Second Vatican Council explicitly mentions Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. The Document entitled “On the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions” does not mention “the clash of cultures and religions”. The document talks about bridging the gaps and about dialogue, as the Church has been doing for over 50 years and just like Pope Francis is doing nowadays.

This is not an easy task, but this is our mission, and we should not wait for others based on the motto: first they should...

Hadrian W. Koch OFM

Asia

Bangalore: The CCFMC in South Asia addresses urgent regional issues

Franciscans of the CCFMC Region of South Asia in Bangalore



Fr. Nithiya OFM Cap reports

The Franciscan Family of the CCFMC Region of South Asia is determined to address and to deal with “the burning issues of their people“. These issues namely include the situation of the Indigenous peoples, the problems with migrants, the status of women and the integrity of creation. This agreement was reached during a meeting held from 2 to 8 April 2016 in Bangalore, India. It was attended by 63 delegates from countries in the region.

The uniting issue of the event was the CCFMC (Comprehensive Course on the Franciscan Mission-Charism). The “CCFMC Region South Asia” is a network of the Franciscan Family in South Asia (FFSA) represented by about 60,000 Franciscan Religious from 200 provinces in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. Fr. Andreas Müller OFM, the organizer and coordinator of the CCFMC, had travelled to India from Germany to attend the event.

The following topics have been debated and covered during group discussions, group reflections and also in plenary sessions:

- Sources, texts and context of the CCFMC Lesson Units and their focus on South Asia
- Response of the Franciscans of South Asia to *Laudato Si* and *Misericordiae Vultus*
- Globalisation and the prophetic Franciscan standpoint in South Asia
- Status of women in South Asia and gender justice
- Relevance of Franciscan life and the Franciscan movement in today’s conflicts
- Franciscan response to the growing materialism in individual and collective life
- Franciscan inculturation in response to the signs of the times and place
- Franciscan contribution towards peace building in society

A central feature of the CCFMC Lesson Units is the focus on the concrete Franciscan response to the global socio-economic and cultural developments and facts – both within the Church and in society in general. The current version of the CCFMC dates back to 1994 and it is still topical today. Now, it is all about new momentum, deepening and adaptation to the South Asian context.

The FFSA Network, a branch of the CCFMC Region of Asia, began in 2013 in Sri Lanka; Fr. Paul Kallan; OFM was its first coordinator. Meanwhile, a new team has been elected for the duration of three years: **Fr. Nithiya** OFM Cap as coordinator for South Asia; **Sr. Amita** UFS as Secretary; **Fr. Susai Raj** OFM as Treasurer; **Sr. Severine** UFS is in charge of the website. In order to improve processes, the following country coordinators were also elected: **Fr. Divakar** OFM Cap (South India), **Sr. Stella Balthasar** FMM (North India); **Fr. Vajjira** (Sri Lanka); **Fr. Vincent** (Bangladesh); **Fr. Victor John** (Pakistan).

The FFSA Network will focus on supporting and strengthening its members through regular training courses and workshops. The increased use of the Lesson Units will be the basis for the dissemination of Franciscan thinking. The introduction to the contents of the CCFMC of the Major Superiors and formators will be enhanced in order to be better prepared for its dissemination. The participants of the event determined to serve the people through their personal and institutional commitment: the poorest, the lost and the last in South Asia.



It was well worth the effort

It was an ambitious programme with a quite impressive agenda – which frequently lasted from 06.30h in the morning to well after 09.00h in the evening – in a well-dosed sequence of prayer, work, free time, meals and relaxation. The event was characterized by an atmosphere of great openness, interest in discussion and Franciscan brotherly-sisterly relationship. It was a good start for the newly founded “CCMFC Region South Africa”.



In his report, **Fr. Nithiya** mentioned the comprehensive list of topics including the genesis of the course and its theological and spiritual topicality for the Church and the Franciscan Family in Asia. A total of eleven Lesson Units were reflected and discussed raising the issue of today’s challenges and problems from a Franciscan perspective.



The **Lesson Units 15** (*Dialogue with other Religions: a Franciscan way*) and **17** (*Inculturation as a Franciscan Commitment*) address the key focus of the Council and the Church in Asia. The discussion rounds in Bangalore showed that this concern is still a long way from being realized. There is hardly any practical sense in the Church of Asia regarding the Holy Spirit also in other religions (**Nostra Aetate**) and Francis of Assisi’s peaceful way of dealing with the Muslims. An honest dialogue will not be possible without humbleness and love. The same also applies for a successful inculturation. Regarding the organisation of the liturgy as well as the canon law, the Roman principles are still very dominant. **Fr. Paul Kallan** OFM introduced these Lesson Units.



Joy Fabic OFS, the coordinator for South East Asia presented **Lesson Unit 13** (*Franciscan Mission and the Preaching of the Word*) and **Lesson Unit 23** (*Franciscan Commitment to Peace*). Throughout his entire life, Francis of Assisi had proclaimed God's endless and gracious love and he had sent out his fellow Brothers to bring this Good News to the world. The Council calls this the mission for God's people, thus not only for the bishops and priests, but for all those who have been baptized. This is exactly what Pope Francis repeatedly encourages us to do. The same applies for the commitment to peace. Francis of Assisi lived in peace, because he did not claim any kind of leadership. Peace will not be possible without love and without sharing all goods provided by Mother Earth. In Asia this is still an unfulfilled dream.

Sr. Stella FMM impressively introduced **Lesson Unit 21** (*Prophetic Criticism of Social Systems*) and **Lesson Unit 22** (*As Man and Woman He Created Theme*). The entire drama of the division into rich and poor, a small profit-oriented elite and the ever growing majority of poor people became clearly visible. The issue of equal dignity and equal rights of men and women is almost omnipresent in the Asian context. It also became just as clear that the issue of a *Secularised World* (**Lesson Unit 14**) has meanwhile turned into a global phenomenon.



One highlight of the meeting was the introduction to **Laudato si** carried out by Fr. **Divakar** OFMCap. The document explains Pope Francis' concern for our common home to bring the whole human family together to participate in the fullness of life according to God's plan. Interestingly enough, he did not only correlate the holistic perspective of a Franciscan ecological spirituality to **Lesson Unit 12**, but to **Lesson Unit 24** as well, which deals with the responsibility of science for the common home.

Last but not least, Fr. **Charles** OFM talked about the *Biblical and Prophetic Basis of the Franciscan Mission* (**Lesson Unit 5**), as well as the *Permanent Role of Franciscans in the Church* (**Lesson Unit 25**). In this respect it can be said that Francis of Assisi already 800 years ago lived and practiced what had been formulated by the Second Vatican Council as the new understanding of mission in the Church. In summary, it can be said that we discovered our permanent mission. It was well worth the effort.



Andreas Müller OFM



Manila: CCFMC Weekend Seminars are quite popular

Sr. Dorothy Ortega SFIC reports:



National CCFMC Seminars will also be conducted in the Philippines in 2016. These seminars come in three phases and are usually offered on weekends. Phase 1 is composed of eight to nine Lesson Units dealing with the foundation of the Franciscan Mission Charism. Phase Two with nine Lesson Units mainly addresses the mystical dimension of the Franciscan mission. The main focus of the third and final phase, which covers eight Lesson Units, lies on the Franciscan challenge to be “among people” and the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world” to make those values tangible, audible and visible that are encased in the CCFMC Lesson Units.

In the period 2015 to 2016 two national programmes will be simultaneously conducted in the Philippines: one will be held in the Luzon area (in the northern part of the Archipelago), and the second one will take place in Visayas and Mindanao in the south of the country. The seminars in June 2015, in February 2016 and a third seminar (date still to be determined) will all be held in Luzon. Thirty participants have enrolled in this programme. Similar events have previously been offered in this region.

This type of programme will be offered in Mindanao for the first time to Franciscans in Visayas and Mindanao. These seminars will be held in June 2016 and August 2016 at the residence of Mrs. Mae Salazar in General Santos City. The 55 participants, who are all quite eager and committed to put their learning experience into action – come from five islands in the Visayas and three cities in Mindanao. The newly emerging Franciscan fraternity in General Santos City is interested in the CCFMC materials as well as in the sources on the lives of Francis and Clare. For this purpose, the respective basic sources will be provided to the formators and lecturers. In 2016, the formators and lecturers will participate in the International Programme in Sabah, Malaysia. Mrs. Belinda Iano from Siquijor and Mrs. Mae Salazar from General Santos City are especially committed to their work in this area.

