

## **Animation Letter to the Assembly of the Franciscan Family in Cameroun**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

At the beginning of your meeting we would like to present you the CCFMC, its origins and its development towards a fascinating and highly topical project.

With the Vatican Council, which had started in 1962 and ended 50 years ago in 1965, Pope John XXIII demanded a renewal, an “aggiornamento”, and an approach of the Church to meet the needs of our time.

The Council then really made history. It was the birth of a new concept of renewal: The Church as the travelling people of God in the world, where every one - clergy and laity - were able to participate in the mission of Christ, the opening of the Church towards the world, a new understanding of mission as the proclamation of the Kingdom of God comprising a comprehensive liberation and salvation, also in non-Christian areas. Especially the orders were called upon to recollect the original sources of their charisms and to fill them with *new life* in the light of the Council and the signs of the times.

The worldwide Franciscan Family has very enthusiastically supported and inspired all the processes and renewals in many ways. It discovered the contemporary and controversial meaning of the spirituality of Francis of Assisi, as he had already lived and anticipated many decisions of the Vatican Council II already 800 years ago. Francis was able to do so as he radically followed the message of the Gospel and by using it as the principle of his actions. The Swiss observer of the Council and Jesuit Mario von Galli had thus called Francis to be the secret topic of the Council.

The Comprehensive Course on Franciscan Mission Charism can only be comprehended in connection with this occurrence. Fifty years after the Vatican Council we should therefore recall once again how we began with this inter-Franciscan and intercultural project driven by the passion of discovery and openness. It was an initiative by the OFM Mission Council. Yet the Roman Curia of all branches as well as the local communities showed great interest in this new training programmer.

Thousands of Sisters and Brothers of the Franciscan Family have followed the call of the Council and they have re-read the Franciscan sources in the light of the Council and based on the needs of our time; they have rediscovered the meaning of the theological contents for our time. During a long intercultural dialogue they were able to revive the challenges of their present in a Franciscan way. They realized that the relevant Franciscan options accorded with the important Council documents. These documents include the Church of the poor, the people of God as brotherly/sisterly and serving Church, creation as the original element of God’s revelation, justice and peace and the integrity of creation.

Thus the CCFMC is not the achievement of a small circle of experts, but rather the result of a true intercultural dialogue. This was especially demonstrated during the magnificent event “Assisi 94” when 160 Sisters and Brothers from all over the globe met for two weeks to revise the lesson units. This was a real learning process, which led to a joint project. It was our

goal to connect the conciliar impulse of renewal with the rediscovery of the Franciscan sources.

Pope Francis is able to provide us with a Franciscan-prophetic moment within the Church. The choice of the name Francis – as the Pope said himself – is program and obligation for him. If the Pope succeeds in doing so, the vision of the historic Francis will affect the life and the structure of the Church of today. His modest lifestyle, his uncomplicated interaction with people, his obvious sympathy towards the poor and the marginalized, his commitment in the search for peaceful solutions and also his concern for the protection of God's creation - all these are signs that he does not want to be perceived as a strict guardian of faith, but as a good shepherd and as a Samaritan and that he is very close to his name patron.

Pope Francis demonstrated this in a very impressive manner during his trip to Sri Lanka and the Philippines. In fact, he became the "Pope of the People" as he was called in the headlines of the daily newspapers. In a very inspiring way he was able to further unfold his teaching profession of clear speech. The Pope emphatically and repeatedly addressed the issue of poverty, social inequality, and corruption.

Pope Francis can truly be regarded as a gift by the Holy Spirit. He comes from the outside and who does not originate from old European Christendom. The Pope does not act like a pedantic theologian, yet as the shepherd, who puts into practice what Jesus had expected of Saint Peter. "Strengthen your Brothers in Faith" (Luke 22, 31). Pope Francis brings along the experiences of the Third-World-Churches, especially those of Latin America. Thus, we are approaching the simple facts. Christianity today is a religion of the Third World as the German theologian Johann Baptist Metz had emphasized many times. Still only 25 % of Catholics live in Europe; 72.56% are living in third world countries (48.75% of which live in Latin America). Europeans will have to learn and accept that the European Church no longer signifies to be the Mother of all Churches, yet that is still only a (small) part of the many-voiced and colourful universal Church. Asia, Africa, Latin America, is reaching priority for the Vatican. This is quite obvious due to Pope Francis' repeated travels to these continents (Africa is also on his travel plan).

For people who invoke on Francis and Clare and who are fascinated by them this is a renewed and challenging question of identity. We have to stand at the side of the poor, the marginalized if we do not want to betray the Francis-Clarian idea. The CCFMC is there to prepare us for it.

The CCFMC is truly a fascinating project, even though it does not offer concrete solutions for the urgent problems of our time, yet it provides the spiritual power and phantasy helping us to the required reversal. What we require is the passion and the devotion, the affection and the power portrayed by almost no one in history as by Francis and Clare. These features need to be rediscovered again and translated into our time; we will then have a safe compass throughout the turmoil of our time.

May you achieve this during your meeting in February!

Andreas Müller OFM and the CCFMC Team in Würzburg are sending best wishes from the bottom of their heart.

Würzburg, in February 2015

