

# VOX FRANCISCANA

*Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis*



Published by CIOFS

SUMMER 2018



**Franciscan  
charism  
blossoms  
all over  
the globe**

## CIOFS Presidency

Segreteria CIOFS,  
Via Vittorio Putti, 4, Int. 6,  
00152 Rome, Italia  
Tel. 0039 06 45471722  
Fax. 0039 06 45473094  
E-mail: ciofs@ciofs.org  
www.ciofs.org

MINISTER GENERAL  
**Tibor Kauser**, OFS  
Hungary

VICE-MINISTER GENERAL  
**Maria Consuelo de Nuñez**, OFS  
Venezuela

PRESIDENCY COUNCILORS  
**Ana Fruk**, OFS  
Croatia

**Ana Maria Raffo Laos**, OFS  
Peru

**Jenny Harrington**, OFS  
South Africa

**Silvia Diana**, OFS  
Argentina

**Attilio Galimberti**, OFS  
Italy

**Augustine Young Hak Yoon**, OFS  
Korea

**Michel Janian**, OFS  
Lebanon

FRANCISCAN YOUTH  
COUNCILOR

**Andrea Odak**, OFS  
Bosnia and Herzegovina

GENERAL SPIRITUAL  
ASSISTANTS

Fr. **Amando Trujillo-Cano**, TOR

Fr. **Pedro Zitha**, OFM

Fr. **Francis Bongajum Dor**, OFM Cap

Fr. **Alfred Parambakathu**, OFM Conv

COMMUNICATIONS

Ana Fruk, Michel Janian,

Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor,

Xavi Ramos, Robert Stronach.

EDITOR

**Robert Stronach**, OFS  
USA



*Band of Brothers* © HOWARD SCHROEDER, OFS

## Art as Formation and Service

*One OFS artist spurs a creative explosion in his fraternity's formation program while another's talent directly serves CIOFS. PAGES 17 and 18.*

## YOUFRA 'SKYPES' IN TO CIOFS VATICAN MEETING ON YOUTH

Page 9

## POPE'S SECRET PASSAGE WAY A VISIT TO CASTEL SANT' ANGELO

Page 11

## OFS JOURNEY TO SAINTHOOD L. BOTOVASOA IS BEATIFIED

Page 12

## BABY CLOTHES FOR GUATEMALA 10th LATIN AMERICA CONGRESS

Page 15

## WELLS FOR AFRICA 3rd EUROPEAN CONGRESS

Page 16

## COVER

General Spiritual Assistant Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM, and Presidency Councilor Silvia Diana, OFS, were welcomed to Mozambique by a long line of Secular Franciscans who would soon break out in song and dance.

Page 6



*CIOFS Presidency meets on the life and business of the Order.*

# FOCUSING ON LIFE OF THE ORDER

CIOFS begins action on chapter's decisions, is busy with OFS around globe

Last fall's General Chapter was a priority topic for the CIOFS Presidency as its members met at the Seraphicum in Rome April 7-14.

They assigned Presidency councilors to address eight decisions coming out of the chapter, including formulating a strategy and plan for implementation.

The meeting focused on the business and life of the order. They reviewed

developments, growth and challenges in regions around the globe.

They also heard Minister General Tibor Kauser report on his recent (February) meetings with:

- the friar ministers general (with YouFra Councilor Andrea Odak, OFS, and the general spiritual assistants joining him).

- Holy See offices (including Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin).

While in Rome, Tibor and Andrea took part in

a meeting of the YouFra Commission, along with Presidency Councilor Ana Fruk, OFS, and General Spiritual Assistant Fr. Amando Trujillo-Cano, TOR.

The prior month, in January, Tibor was off to Korea to preside at its elective chapter, along with General Spiritual Assistant Alfred Parambakathu, OFM Conv.

"The whole chapter took place in a spirit of intense fraternity, sharing and dialogue," Fr. Alfred reported. *Continued on next page.*



**Tibor Kauser, OFS**  
MINISTER GENERAL

# CIOFS Presidency at work

*continued from previous page*

“It was a marvel to see how well organized the national fraternity was.”

Then in March the minister general flew to Russia, where the temperatures were frigid, but Secular Franciscans warm and welcoming.

“It was a great experience,” with “a very fraternal spirit.” He presided over the election of a provisional national council for the emerging national fraternity.

Also in March, Presidency Councilor Attilio Galimberti, OFS, headed to Switzerland, along with Fr. Alfred, where he appointed a

*Continued on next page*

## TACKLING THE DECISIONS

Presidency members assigned to address eight decisions coming out of the 2017 General Chapter are:

- **Formation Office:** Ana Maria Raffo Laos, OFS.
- **JPIC Secretariat:** Attilio Galimberti, OFS.
- **Communications Office:** Michel Janian, OFS.
- **Life in Fraternity:** Tibor Kauser, OFS.
- **Leadership:** Maria (Chelito) Consuelo de Nuñez, OFS.
- **Finances:** Augustine Young Hak Yoon, OFS.
- **Spiritual Assistance:** Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor, OFMCap.
- **YouFra:** Andrea Odak, OFS.

Furthermore, Presidency councilors would be seeking support from national fraternities in implementing the chapter’s decisions.



**Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS, an architect by profession, could not help but admire skyscrapers in Korea. INSET: The newly elected national council of Korea. Joseph Jim Wook Sohn was elected as national minister and Timothy Gill Soon Yim as international councilor.**

regional council, marking an “historical milestone” on the road to establishing the Swiss National OFS.

“It is the result of the journey of those members inserted in the Mouvement Franciscain Laïc, who had made OFS profession,” Attilio said, adding: “It will be the council’s responsibility to activate fraternities and, then, in one or two years, celebrate an elective chapter.”

Other members of the CIOFS Presidency were busy, too.

Ana Fruk, OFS, and Fr. Amado Trujillo Cano, TOR, were in Rome for the You-Fra Commission and then conducted the first-ever fraternal and pastoral visits to Cyprus in February.

Since there were only three local fraternities, they spent time not only with the provisional national council, but also with all the fraternities (including visiting a parish soup kitchen following Sunday Mass where the OFS volunteer).

“There are only five Catholic churches on the island, and almost all Secular Franciscan members are foreigners (from Philippines, Sri Lanka, Great Britain, Ireland, USA and Malta),” noted Ana.

The CIOFS Presidency officially upgraded their



**The new Swiss Regional Council. The council members are: Minister Gerard Corpateux, Vice-Minister Edith Rohwedder, Treasurer André Besson, Secretary Geneviève Corpateux, Formator Brigitte Gobbi, and Spiritual Assistant Fr. Pierre.**



**Assembly of Cyprus fraternities at Nicosia Holy Cross Parish Hall.**

status to an emerging national fraternity.

Vice Minister General Maria (Chelito) Consuelo de Nuñez, OFS, along with General Spir-

itual Assistant Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM, visited Japan in March for its national elective chapter. Francis Takeda was re-elected as national minister and international councilor.

“I was very impressed with their culture...” Chelito said. “They are so respectful... They care so much for the environment...”

*Continued on next page.*

Presidency Councilor Michel Janian, OFS, visited Togo in January with Fr. Francis Bon-gajum Dor, OFM Cap, to conduct its national elective chapter. Then Fr. Francis made a pastoral visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in February before flying across the globe in March to visit the national fraternity in Brazil with Presidency Councilor Silvia Diana, OFS.

Silvia herself was in Africa in January to join Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM, for Mozambique's National Chapter. "It was incredible," Silvia said. The people of Mozambique suffered the "pain of war" yet were so welcoming and spiritual.

"The brothers and sisters of the OFS fraternity were waiting for us, welcoming us with beautiful songs in their original language, with much joy and fraternity, we shared a very fraternal moment."

The members of the chapter identified priorities for the next triennium: training, youth, economy, spiritual assistance and fraternal visits.

The closing mass of the chapter was, for her, extraordinary, Silvia said, noting:



**Fr. Francis and Michel pose with the Togo National Council. Joseph Adegnon was elected as national minister and international councilor.**

"We shared three hours of celebration between songs, dances, and a large number of brothers and sisters who shared this moment."

Fr. Pedro then put on his teacher's hat and, along with Presidency Councilor Augustine Young Hak Yoon, OFS, conducted a workshop in Hong Kong for spiritual assistants there and from Taiwan.

"It was a good experience," Fr. Pedro said. "They were very enthusiastic."

During the Presidency meeting, Jennifer Harrington, OFS, gave an update on Project Africa, noting that a new Project Africa Team was assembled at the General Chapter and would meet just prior to the first-ever Pan African Congress

(taking place July 20 to 25 in South Africa).

With CIOFS assisting in establishment of the OFS and YouFra in Ethiopia, she was pleased to report that "some brothers and sisters want to make their permanent profession." There are five emerging fraternities in Kanafa, Megenesse, Oma, Addis Ababa and Dubbo.

Thanks to fraternal and  
*Continued on next page.*



**MOZAMBIQUE NATIONAL COUNCIL**

**Bonifacio Paulino was elected national minister and international councilor, and Rita Jossanias Francisco Chico was elected vice minister and substitute international councilor. Others elected were: Secretary Lourenço Ribeiro, Treasurer Idalina Simango and Training Counselor Manecas Paulo Sindique.**



**Jenny Harrington, OFS**  
AFRICA PROJECT

pastoral visits and formation workshops for OFS, You-Fra and spiritual assistants, “Admissions for both OFS and YouFra have taken place as well candidates making temporary profession.”

Jenny left the Presidency meeting a day early, delegated to preside at the professions in Ethiopia and appoint local councils.

In his report on the Arab Project, Michel Janian, OFS, noted a possible emerging OFS group in Kuwait and the appointment of new Capuchin spiritual assistants in Dubai and Bahrain. Dubai, in particular, has a flourishing fraternity with 40 members. In fact, he added, in Dubai “there’s the biggest parish in the world, with one and a half million people.”



**Michel Janian, OFS**  
ARAB PROJECT

With Formation in the Franciscan charism being a priority topic, the Presidency gave approval to:

- publish an initial formation booklet,
- explore an online formation classroom,
- produce a video on the history of the OFS Rule of Life (in time for the 40th anniversary of the Rule of 1978). The anniversary date of June 24, 2018 kicks off a year-long celebration of the Rule.



*Formation Commission members huddle during a break in the CIOFS meeting. At right is Commission Chair Ana Maria Raffo Laos, OFS. The others are, from left, Mary Stronach, OFS; Fr. Pedro Zithra, OFM, and Jenny Harrington, OFS.*

Joining the CIOFS meeting was Fr. Dinh Anh Nhue Nguyen, OFM Conv., president of the Pontifical Faculty (University) of St. Bonaventure, commonly called the Seraphicum. He welcomed CIOFS, and shared a new book about the Franciscan faith experience in Asia. He is the editor and one of the authors.

“I’m quite excited about it,” he said, especially since it is a biennial product of the Seraphicum’s



*Fr. Dinh Anh Nhue Nguyen, OFM Conv., presented a copy of his new book to Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS.*

Franciscan Institute for Asian Theological Studies. By the way, Fr. Dinh

is a native of Vietnam and a professor of biblical theology.

## CIOFS Presidency at work



### **THE MESSAGE IS CLEAR, NO MATTER WHAT THE LANGUAGE**

An artistic portrait of St. Francis, with the word “peace” in multiple languages, dominates the St. Francis Room at the Seraphicum, where the CIOFS Presidency convened. The portrait was painted on panels of fibre board by Mario Romani in 2012. Another multi-lingual aspect is the role of interpreters at the Presidency meeting. Like at the United Nations, participants wear headphones to hear the proceedings in languages they know. **RIGHT: Fr. Alfred Parambakathu, OFM Conv.**

## Some of the Presidency members



**Attilio Galimberti, OFS**



**Augustine Young Hak Yoon, OFS**



**Fr. Amando Trujillo-Cano, TOR**



**Isabella Di Paola, OFS**  
GENERAL SECRETARY



**Ana Fruk, OFS**



**Maria Consuelo de Nuñez, OFS**



**Lucio Monti, OFS**  
CIOFS TREASURER



## CIOFS Presidency at work

### 2019 YOUTH DAY, 2020 YOUFRA ASSEMBLY, AND PRE-SYNODAL MEETING

Franciscan Youth Councilor Andrea Odak, OFS, had to be at a trade show for her employer, but was able to join the semi-annual Presidency meeting via Skype to kick off the YouFra presentation.

With her live video image projected on the wall, she focused on the YouFra gathering planned for World Youth Day in Panama in January 2019. Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, general spiritual assistant for YouFra, elaborated on the planning.

Later in the meeting, **Riccardo Inero**, Italy's national YouFra president, told the Presidency about the Pre-Synodal Meeting on Youth. He represented International YouFra at the Vatican's week-long assembly in March seeking insights and proposals from young people.

"Youth want to be active rather than just recipients of pastoral care," he said. He also urged church leaders and mentors to listen and not just give superficial or canned responses on issues and to their concerns.

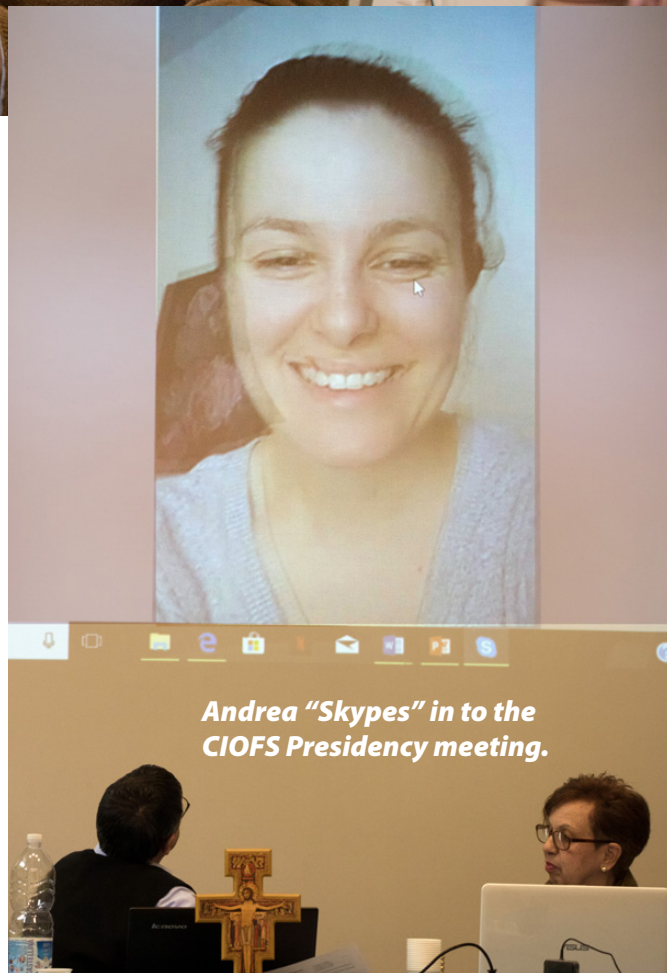
Asked what the OFS



*Riccardo Inero of YouFra Italy*

could do to attract youth, Riccardo said the OFS could better form itself to accompany youth. "I personally had a beautiful journey with a friar... but religious life excludes him from daily life, so Secular Franciscans could have something to say." But it goes back to believable witnessing.

He "was moved by the many reflections" at the pre-synodal meeting, and the speech given by Pope Francis, "who asked us to be synodal in our daily lives;" that is, "walk together."

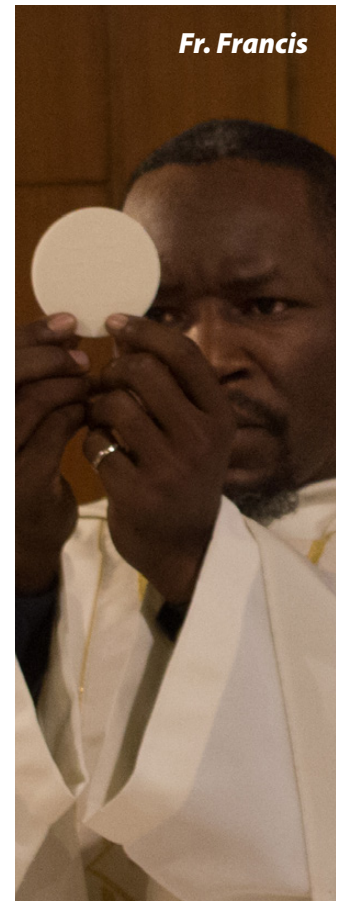


*Andrea "Skypes" in to the CIOFS Presidency meeting.*

## CIOFS Presidency at work



Fr. Alfred



Fr. Francis



Fr. Pedro



Fr. Amando

### **PRAYER IS LIFE AND JOY**

*Spiritual inspiration and joy spurred on the CIOFS Presidency, with the members starting and ending each day with the Eucharist and liturgy of the hours. The general spiritual assistants celebrated daily mass and issued words of inspiration and challenge throughout the proceedings. Fr. Amando shared his joy of musical prayer at the iiturgies and at the start of each session.*

# Traveling through the ‘secret’ passage linking the Vatican to Castel Sant’ Angelo



*CIOFS Presidency group poses atop the four-story-high fortified wall at the border to Vatican City. The wall contains a hidden passage that popes used to flee to safety during invasions.*

Members of the CIOFS Presidency were able to take a mid-week afternoon break from the marathon schedule to get a special tour of Castel Sant’ Angelo (Castle of the Holy Angel) in Parco Adriano, Rome. It features a towering cylindrical building set inside a fortress. The structure started out as a mausoleum for Emperor Hadrian in the second century, but grew over the centuries and was later used by popes as a fortress and castle. Today it is a museum.

Of particular interest was the secret passage (also known as Passetto di Borgo), linking the Vati-

can to Castel Sant’ Angelo. The passage is an elevated corridor hidden within a fortified wall built in the late 13th century. It has a row of narrow window slits spaced along each side, allowing in streaks of daylight.

Pope Alexander VI crossed the hidden passage to safety in 1494, when Charles VIII invaded the city. Clement VII escaped through it during the Sack of Rome in 1527, when troops of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, massacred almost the entire Swiss Guard on the steps of St. Peter’s Basilica.

The CIOFS group got to

traverse about 600 meters of the 800-meter passage, and then climb to the top of the wall to travel the rest of the way to Vatican City.

“It was a spectacular view,” as one councilor put it, with the dome of St. Peter’s Basilica looming ahead while walking four stories above street level.

A locked metal gate atop the wall marked the Vatican border. The guide said that was as far as they could go as she didn’t have a key.

They returned to Castel Sant’ Angelo and donned hard hats before descending into the bowels of the

fortress. They ducked their way through dungeons, and also got to see rooms filled with vats for storing oil and underground silos for grain.

The tour then took the group up to Clement VII’s marble bath house, and after a bit of a walk, for a peek at the pope’s toilet (a three-hole latrine).

Once the private tour ended, Presidency members wound their way up to the top of the central structure to take in a spectacular view of Rome and admire the statue of Michael the Archangel perched above. It is where the castle derives its name.

# Secular Franciscan is beatified

## School teacher Lucien Botovaso of Madagascar



famvin.org Vincentian Family blog

*Cardinal Maurice Piat, bishop of Port-Louis (Mauritius), who presided at the beatification of Lucien Botovaso, read a sermon prepared by Cardinal Angelo Amato, prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.*



**Bl. Lucien Botovaso, OFS**

*“Lucien taught people how to do good, to live in peace with others, to form a fraternal, welcoming and respectful community... To hatred he responded with charity, to division with communion, to falsehoods with truth, to evil with good. He was an authentic teacher of a good life: a good citizen, a loving father, a loving husband.”*

– **Cardinal Angelo Amato**, Prefect  
Congregation for the Causes of Saints

**in a sermon prepared for the beatification ceremony on April 15, 2018.**

Those words, written by Cardinal Angelo Amato for the beatification of Lucien Botovaso, OFS, accurately describe the man, but his passion for life, and death, can only be revealed by taking a closer look.

Blessed Lucien Botovaso was born in 1908 in Vohipeno, Madagascar at the southeastern end of the

island. The missionaries in his village noted early that Lucien had special gifts and they sent him to study with the Jesuits. Upon his return to the village, he became a parish school teacher and give his many gifts as an exceptional musician and singer, a great sportsman, a speaker of five languages – Chinese, English, French, German and Latin -- to the service of his students and the

church. He would often end his lessons by reading the lives of the saints to the children. The lives of the martyrs seemed to interest him the most. He was so captivated by their stories that he shared with his wife and father the fact that he would be quite joyful to give his life. His only regret would be to leave them.

In 1930 Lucien married sixteen-year-old Suzanne Soazana. They had eight

children, five of whom survived. Lucien was a devoted husband, but often, Suzanne would complain to him that he was too devoted to the church and that he would leave her and the children to serve the church. Indeed, Lucien did spend hours in prayer – at church, at home and even got up during the nights for prayer. When Suzanne would make such accusations, he would


laugh and say that it would be a sin to do such a thing.

This passion and love that Lucien had for his God was also noted by a local nun who said to him one day, "If only you had gone to the seminary, you would have become a priest. Do you regret having married?" Lucien responded without hesitation: "I do not have the slightest regret. On the contrary, I am very happy about my state because God called me for this: to be a layman, married, a teacher. This way, I live with the people of the village, and to attract them, I can do what you, Fathers and Sisters, cannot do because most of them are still pagan and I can show them a Christian character that is accessible to them because I am not a stranger among them." Lucien understood the rights and duties of lay people in the Church, and the complementary role they play with the priests and nuns.

While he understood his state in life, Lucien sought for a more formal way to live this vocation in the secular, married state. One day, he stumbled upon the Rule for Franciscan Tertiaries, also known as Third Order Franciscans, now known as Secular Franciscans. This was what he was looking for! He embraced the charism of St. Francis

***The Secular Franciscan Order***  
*participated in all the preparatory phases of the beatification ceremony. For the great Franciscan family – 1,000 secular and religious -- it was a moment to live fraternal joy in one community... during three days of pilgrimage: 13, 14, 15 April 2018. The pilgrimage began at a church near where Lucien lived (near where the OFS erected a small monument in memory of Lucien) and concluded at the beatification ceremony where Franciscans joined 60,000 faithful.*

*-- Dr. Gérard Cécilien Raboanary, OFS  
national minister of Madagascar*



**Gérard Cécilien Raboanary, OFS**



***A group of Secular Franciscans in the crowd of 60,000 at the beatification ceremony.***

and the Rule – accepting a more simple life, going deeper into his prayer life and fasting, wearing pants and khaki shirt and a cord as a belt that represented his new direction in life, joyfully serving and living the Gospel as Francis did.

Since there were no Third Order Franciscans in his village, Lucien sought out people whom

he thought would make good Franciscans, but they all rejected his offer, saying they were too busy and already too involved in the church. Lucien did not give up and finally found a mother who indicated an interest. They began meeting – and every Wednesday night, the joy of Lucien and his enthusiasm about the Rule grew

and spread. The zeal of the first associates is an authentic “bubbling over.” His companions remembered how their heart would beat when he would talk about the happiness of the Christian who lives in self-sacrifice, especially if this can lead to the death of the martyr!

Suzanne did not like the image of Francis and

the Wolf that Lucien had hung on their wall and she would shout, "He's the one that makes you crazy!"; fearing he would abandon her and the children ... to which Lucien would burst out laughing, reassuring her that he would never leave her. He was professed as a Third Order Franciscan in 1944.

Lucien prayed incessantly. Whenever he would walk along the village roads or go to visit his father in another village, he would be saying his rosary, often inviting those walking alongside to pray with him. He was so engaging and passionate in his prayer that many would join him. He was Franciscan in spirit and joyful.

During the mid-1940s Madagascar was in the midst of a civil war where Catholics were thought

to be conniving with the French colonialists and were, therefore, persecuted. During Holy Week of 1947, churches were burned and many faithful were killed. On April 14, 1947, having heard that he was wanted by the local authorities, Lucien spent the day with his wife, ate a leisurely lunch and provided her guidance on what she should do to care for the children. She urged him to go hide. He felt they would then come after his family. He reassured her that he would be happy to die. His only regret would be to leave her.

In the evening, the "Christian teacher" was captured and summarily tried. His refusal to participate in the insurrection led by local rebel leaders earned him the death sentence. He was taken to the

banks of the Mattanana River. He asked his executioners, some of whom were his former students: "Why do you want to kill me?" "Because you are a Christian," was the answer. "Then you can do it," he said, "I will not defend myself. May my blood on this earth save my country."

"Do not tie me to kill me," he told them. "I'll tie myself." He put his hands in front of him, crossing them. He knelt down at the edge of the water and prayed. No one dared disturb his prayer! He remained kneeling down and leaned forward, continuing to pray while waiting to be struck. They were afraid and hesitated. Finally Lucien turned to them and said, "Please, use your sword in such a way so as to cut my neck with only one blow." His

last words were asking for forgiveness for his executioners.

The chief executioner struck one great blow and beheaded Botovasoa and his body was thrown into the Matitanana waters. He was dressed in his Secular Franciscan outfit, khaki jacket and pants, and belted with the cord.

Cardinal Amato concluded his sermon, with Cardinal Piat telling the crowd:

**"He teaches us to live the Gospel in full, which is the book of life and not of death, of love and not of hate, fraternity and not discrimination. He leaves us a great example and an important legacy: forgiveness of neighbor, forgiveness of enemies, and an invitation to live in fraternity and peace with all."**



Lucien and Suzanne Botovasoa

# X Latin America Congress

## GUATEMALA: JAN. 28 - FEB. 1, 2019



### **FRATERNAL SHARING: baby clothes for Guatemalan families in need**

The 10th Latin America Congress convenes in Guatemala from January 28 to February 1, 2019, with a central theme taken from OFS Rule 6: “go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission.”

Besides the main theme, workshops and panels will cover:

- 40 years of the OFS Rule.
- JPIC: “Citizen commitment, life experiences.”

• Family: “The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World”.

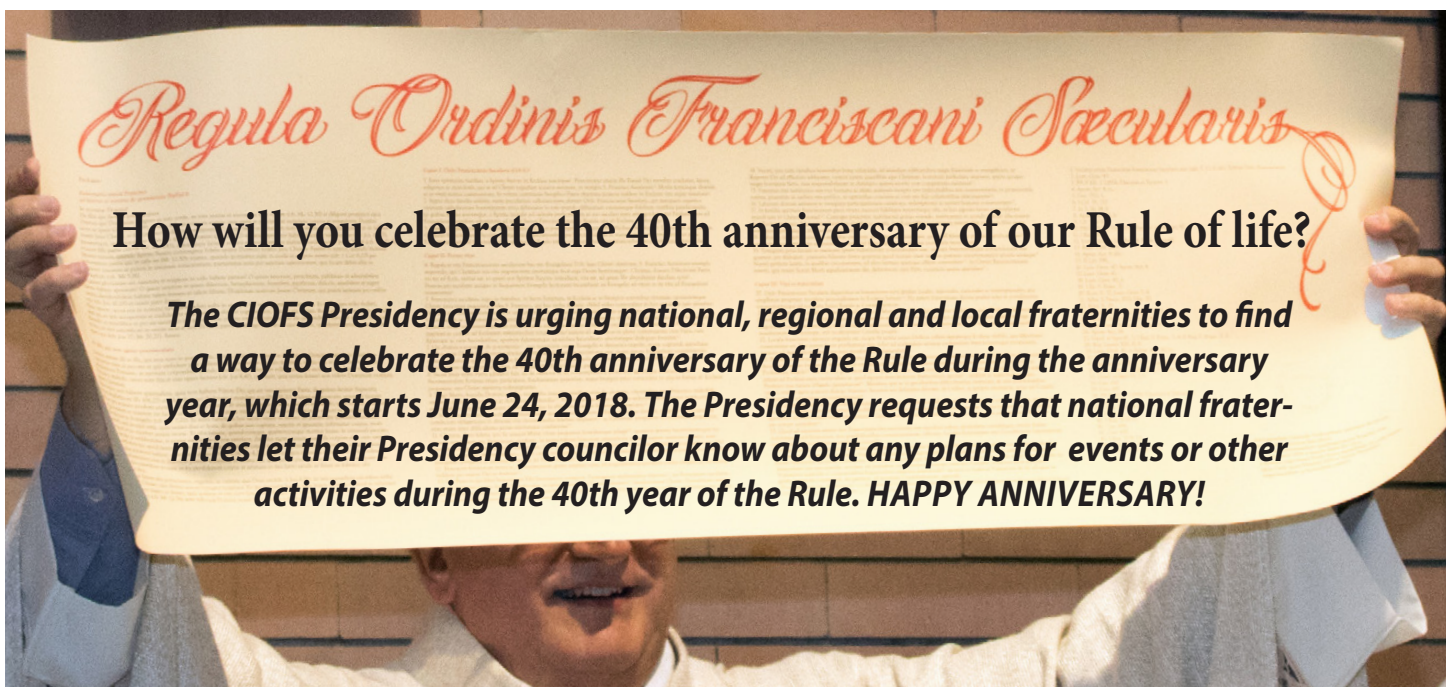
• YouFra: “Challenges of Latin American Youth”.

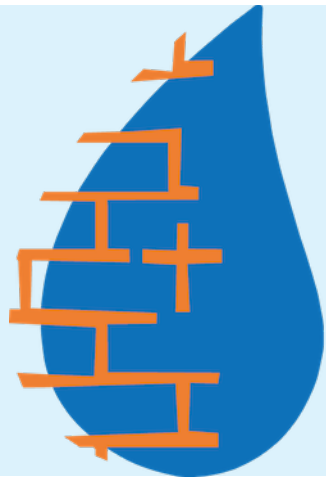
CIOFS Presidency Councilor Silvia Diana, OFS, notes a “fraternal sharing” initiative, with participants being encouraged to bring baby clothes to give to families in need in Guatemala.

The National Council of Guate-

male and Latin American YouFra are helping to coordinate the congress in conjunction with the CIOFS Coordination Commission, comprised of Vice Minister General Chelito Nuñez, OFS; Silvia Diana, OFS; Ana M. Raffo Laos, OFS, and Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR.

The congress location is Retirement House Renacer in San Lucas Sacatepéquez.





well4africa.eu

## 'Living Water' is spiritual *and* practical focus for European Congress

The 3rd OFS-YouFra European Congress, which takes place in Lithuania Aug. 20-26, 2018, sports a theme taken from John's Gospel: "Whoever believes in me, rivers of living water will flow from within him" (Jn 7:38).

"We hope that this experience will inspire all European OFS and YouFra fraternities to commit themselves to intensive prayer life and daily conversion, direct evangelisation missions and active social service in the society," said

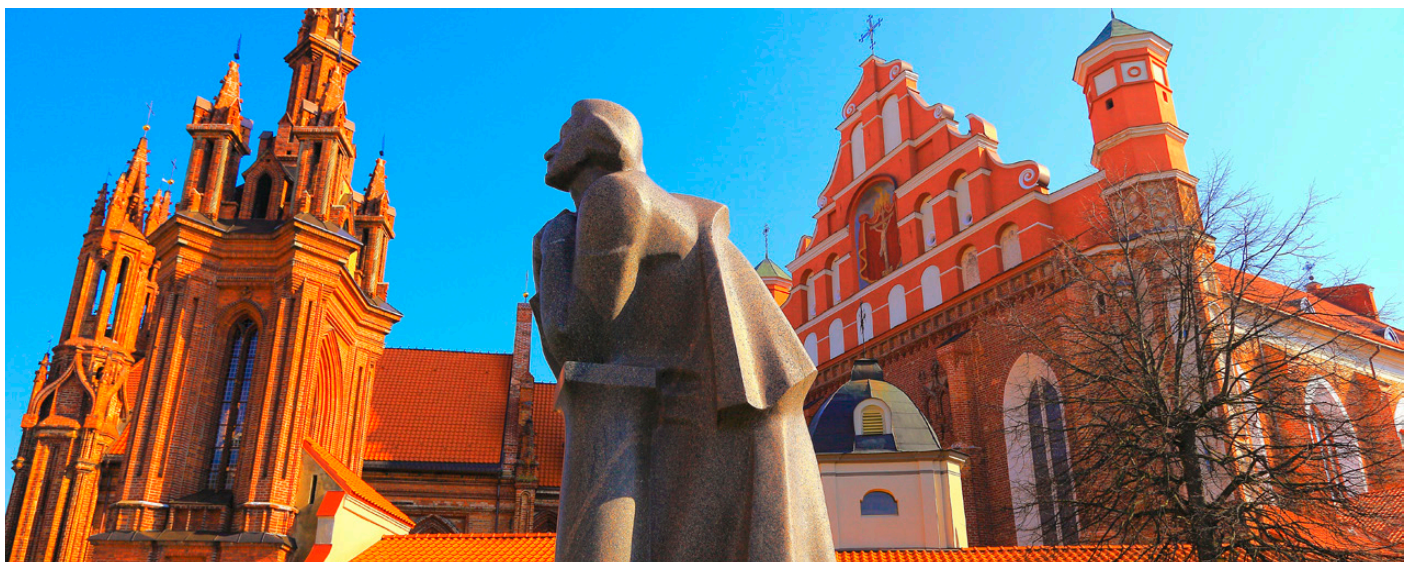


Presidency Councilor Ana Fruk, OFS. She noted that the congress

organizers have taken the theme a step further to focus on ecology and a basic human right to clean drinking water.

They have launched a social initiative dubbed "Well4Africa" with hopes of raising enough money to drill three wells in Africa where OFS members have identified dire need (villages in Malawi, Uganda and Zimbabwe).

Their website, [well4africa.eu](http://well4africa.eu), provides details in English as well as an easy way to donate.



**Statue of a praying St. Ann greets visitors and church-goers in Lithuania's capital city of Vilnius.**



# Art as service to the Order

by MARY STRONACH, OFS

Giovanna Centioni believes that “the image comes before the words.” The image inspires us and draws us into the message. And so, she paints, hoping that the message is clear, especially for those who have the opportunity to go to General Chapters and CIOFS Presidency meetings. Her paintings have adorned covers of OFS song books, liturgy books and OFS General Chapters. Her simple yet engaging style allows us to digest the message.

Giovanna is a Secular Franciscan from Latina in the region of Lazio in Italy. She and her husband, Lucio Monti, the Order’s International treasurer, have been professed since 1993, but her love of Francis started years earlier when

she met her parish priest, Fr. Giuseppe Lalle, OFM Cap. “There was a radical change in our lives when Fr. Giuseppe spoke of God as ‘love’. Before then, we had only learned of God from the Catechism, but with him, we learned the ‘true essence of God.’”

This friar also “made us fall in love with St. Francis.” This journey of love took Giovanna and Lucio on a fifteen-year initial formation adventure. If they were impatient to get professed, Fr. Giuseppe would say, “Why are you in such a rush? Formation is for life.” Giovanna and Lucio journeyed with the

friar as cooks on camping trips and other trips for children, and served as marriage encounter leaders, catechists at the local parish, witnesses at other local churches, and in the diocese as secretaries for Family Services at the Curia in Latina. As Fr. Giuseppe would say, “As Franciscans, we owe obedience to the bishop and should offer our service to the Church.” Giovanna and Lucio took that message to heart.

Along the journey, Giovanna was able to use her artistic talents to create large posters with religious themes and

spiritual messages. Many of her pieces were displayed in the church on the altar, and especially for the children during their religious education classes. Her inspiration is sometimes a picture or another painting on the same theme, or sometimes it is determined by the message she wants to give. In one poster for a marriage preparation course for engaged couples, she drew a large poster of Adam and Eve – and between them was an elderly man with a white beard. She and Lucio used this poster to emphasize that there is a person  
*Continued on next page.*



by GIOVANNA CENTIONI

*‘Rebuild my church’ graced the cover of a CIOFS liturgical book.*

# Formation as a work of art

by ROBERT STRONACH, OFS

Good formation thrusts us into the Franciscan charism. It spurs us to follow Jesus in the footsteps of St. Francis. It challenges us to bring the Gospel to life and life to the Gospel, through daily conversion.

**It turns out that for some, good formation also is a work of art -- with creativity pouring out of the Secular Franciscan journey.**

Witness Howard Schroeder, OFS, of St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity in Oakdale, Missouri, USA.

His introduction to the Franciscan Family was somewhat of a happy accident. He had been a fallen away Catholic. Or as he puts it: "After wandering in the desert, I rediscovered my Catholic faith at age 30." He returned to the church on the same day as the Gospel reading of the Prodigal Son. It was a definite sign. Then he saw a notice in the church bulletin that the Poor Clares at the nearby Monastery of St. Clare were collecting items for a raffle fundraiser.



**Canticle of the Sun** © HOWARD SCHROEDER, OFS.

## *Art as service to the order*

*continued from previous page*

who will always be with the married couple – God. Lucio is quick to quip, “Yes, we would tell the young men, there’s a man between

you and your wife.” It got the couples’ attention. They laughed but they also could see the importance of God in their married lives.

Giovanna often goes with Lucio to the Presidency office when he works on financial matters... and you’ll often see her at the

Presidency meetings, joyfully welcoming, joyfully serving, joyfully living her Franciscan charism, thanks to Fr. Giuseppe.

“I showed them my artwork (painted tapestries) and they liked them so much that they asked me if they could just keep them!”

The Poor Clares immediately told Secular Franciscans about Howard. They commissioned him to do a fraternity banner, and in the process he ended up painting images of St. Clare, St. Francis, and a re-creation of the San Damiano Cross.

“By the time I completed these three artworks, I was ready to join my ‘Band of Brothers’ – the Secular Franciscans.”

His artwork had often dabbled in spirituality, including Native American and nature motifs, so discovering St. Francis provided a new spiritual focus, especially as he entered initial formation. He spent a year creating 12 images, dubbed, “Lifeline of St. Francis: 12 Wonderful Stories.”

“I produced one a month... it served greatly as part of my formation in my first year as a Secular.”

He took as his inspiration the sculptures that a deceased fraternity member, Mujana Darian, OFS, had created and were on display at the Poor Clare monastery. “My first 12 artworks paralleled her sculptures.”

So, another member of the fraternity had been an artist, too. But it didn’t



*Francis embraces a leper, titled, ‘Clothed in Splendor’ ©HOWARD SCHROEDER, OFS.*

stop there. Others in the fraternity were inspired to get involved. They decided to produce a book. It would include photos of the sculptures, Howard’s paintings, stories around each image based on the Omnibus and provided by then-Minister Gary Haller, and poems inspired by each image, composed by a poet who also happened to be the formation director, Rita Baughman, OFS.

Furthermore, Howard notes, “the Poor Clares at our monastery even provided a Forward!”

Formation Director Rita

likes to point to a higher inspiration, noting: “The Holy Spirit wants to stir us up...” In fact, the fraternity’s formation program reflects a quote from scripture (Hebrews 10: 24-25): “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another.”

As Rita puts it: “We rely on each other to ‘form’ one another in our Franciscan journeys.”

Initial formation includes a ‘Lifeline’, where “members create a display and

share the story of their spiritual journey thus far.”

The fraternity at large also participates in what she calls “Sharing Our Gifts,” where “members contribute stories for our newsletter, revealing God-given gifts and talents such as artistry, poetry, carpentry, knitting, etc.”

Thus, Howard notes, a creative Franciscan journey blossomed and “grew into a fraternity-wide endeavor.”

*See more of Howard Schroeder’s artwork at [paintedpsalms.com](http://paintedpsalms.com).*

# Daily Conversion

Plan a  
**celebration**  
of the 40th  
anniversary  
of the Rule  
some time  
during the  
year starting  
June 24, 2018.



## **Seraphicus Patriarcha – Our Rule of 1978 Celebrates 40 Years**

Secular Franciscans follow the Rule of St. Francis which reminds us that our conversion is daily – we change, we grow, we come closer to the vision the Lord has for us. In a sense, our rule has experienced conversion, too. Through our 800-year history, our rule has changed and grown to become the rule our Seraphic Father Francis envisioned for us.

Our present rule was approved by Blessed Pope Paul VI on June 24, 1978. It took 12 years of editing and re-editing before it was accepted and approved. And, today, it inspires us to live as true Franciscans, joyfully serving the world, joyfully reaching out for the cause of peace, justice and integrity of creation, joyfully embracing our families and our work, ensuring the dignity of all, joyfully living a life of prayer, going from Gospel to

life and life to the Gospel.

What a treasure we have in the Rule. Have we read it recently? Are we living it as we could? We should continuously re-visit it. Read it carefully and thoughtfully. Let it inspire us to action as Secular Franciscans.

To celebrate the anniversary of the present rule, the Formation team is producing a video. It shares the history of the OFS rule with all its twists and turns from the beginning to today. It will become available in all four languages – English, Italian, Spanish and French. Go to the CIOFS website and it will link you to it as soon as it's available. Enjoy it! Let us appreciate its message and Live the Rule!

*-- by the Formation Commission*