



# International Franciscan Conference – TOR Responding IN THE MARGINS OF SOCIETY

February 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Peace and all good!

We continue the theme of our 2017 PROPOSITUM, *Responding in the Margins of Society*, with further reflections on the part of the 2013 General Assembly Statement which says:

*We reach out to the people on the margins of society and Church, especially women, and we pledge ourselves to defend their cause.*

Sister Angelyn Dries, OSF, wrote in her article, "Mission and Marginalization: The Franciscan Heritage:

Francis and Clare chose marginalization and by doing so were able to relate to those on the edge. They acted as goads to the ecclesial institution, the social structure, the prevailing economic patterns, and even to the missionary pattern of "persuasion" by force. Their point of identification with others, their own marginalization, was Jesus' intersection point with humanity. The Franciscan heritage reminds us that in the transformation of marginalization, we need to go throughout our world and to remain in the center, as we humbly but joyfully witness the gospel, the mission of Jesus, *a life*, a person, the love of God enfleshed in time and place.

Her words continue to challenge us as we reach out defending the causes of the people at the margins, especially the voiceless and vulnerable. Our brother, Joseph Chinnici, OFM, expresses this call of the Gospel very succinctly. "Solidarity occurs when people see and believe, that is, when they link the action of God with unexpected places, put grace together with a sinful world, see spirit in the midst of matter, and then begin to live with the consequences." Let us take inspiration from our sisters and brothers as we continue to bring the Good News of God's love to all in need, remembering a special care for those at the margins. May we have eyes to see and hearts to understand the inbreaking of the reign of God in the unexpected places of our lives, especially those at the margins.

May we live the consequences of our General Assembly Statement as we announce the Good News by lives in solidarity and love.

Sr. Deborah Lockwood, President IFC-TOR  
Sr. Celestine Giertych, Vice-President  
Sr. Klara Simunovic, Councilor  
Sr. Maria do Livramento Melo de Oliveira, Councilor  
Sr. Sinclair, FCC, Councilor



# *We commit to reach out to the people on the margins Of the society and Church, especially women*

Sr. M. Ester Rinaldi  
Franciscan Nuns of the TOR-Montello – Bergamo, IT  
Original Language: Italian

The Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order 'love the Lord with all their heart, with all their soul and mind, with all their strength and love their neighbor as themselves'.

For us contemplative Sisters, to witness the Franciscan charism starts everyday by the incessant search for God in prayer in which mainly we express our love to God and our neighbor.

The door of our church opens in the early morning and closes late at night to allow people outside to participate with us in the daily Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours, the Adoration, reflection, and silent devotional prayers.

Every Saturday night we propose a vigil of prayer in harmony with the liturgy and ecclesial initiatives, such as the Christian Unity in January, consecrated life in February, the missionary martyrs in March and so on.

Four times a year we offer a day of retreat to the women of all ages and we remain open and available to the various demands of our parish, in the vicariate of the Diocese and beyond, always respecting the papal enclosure.

There are people who contact us every day in the lodge, by telephone call, or by mail entrusting us their troubles, concerns, needs, expectations. We listen to them, to all we give attention, comfort, and assurance of our intercessions to God.

The corporal works of mercy depend more on circumstances than our own initiatives. Anyone who comes to us with a request for food, furniture, tools or anything else available to us do not returns empty-handed; all we receive for this purpose returns to the needy. Yes, we feel in the heart of the Church and in solidarity with our world.

The relationship with those who are closest does not make us forget the distant suburbs in every sense, to which we believe we can reach with a hidden apostolic fruitfulness, with love which is the fruit of the Spirit who inspires God in the hearts of man and women: where, how and when He alone knows, without boundaries. The One only just, that will save us by His mercy alone, and that will be all in all, be always with us, dear Sisters and Brothers.



# The Canticle of Creation

By Br. Tom Barton, OSF  
Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn  
Original article in English

This magnificent work of Francis was an opus in process for his entire life. We know he sang for the brothers and sisters. We know he preached to the birds and celebrated the vibrancy of the wind, the light of sun and moon. Toward the end of his days we know he effected a reconciliation between the bishop of Assisi and the mayor who had engaged in bitter and acrimonious discourse with the words of stanzas 10-11. Finally, on Oct. 3, 1226 around sunset he welcomed Sister Death, stanza 12. The Sources tell us about this canticle and even suggest that it did at one time have music attached to it. Music composed by Francis himself.

For myself that canticle was the subject of study, something I knew about, and which I could describe to anyone who wanted some information. The Canticle however became for me a way of prayer and a way to enter into the spirituality and affectivity of Francis in a most unexpected, and yet, very welcome way.

In the month of March 1993 I was visiting a monastery of the Poor Clares of Perpetual Adoration, Mymensingh, Bangladesh, to teach some classes on Francis and Clare. The nuns are very cloistered there, and for the classes as well as the prayers I stayed at the grill. On a particular morning, it was a Sunday, one of the sisters handed me a sheet of music and said: instead of praying "The Canticle of Daniel," we will sing this. What was to be sung was Francis's Canticle of Creation. Of course, I went along with what was suggested; afterwards I asked her why we had sung that song. Sister Michael was surprised. She said: simple, in Daniel we witness that all creation is giving God praise. Yes, I thought, I agree. Then she said: in this Canticle, we are put alongside each of the elements who are giving praise and blessing, and we call each one , each aspect, a sister or brother. Awesome words, I thought. And now, I totally agree.

Great theologians such as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Thomas Berry ,Brian Swimme and Matthew Fox, Ilia Delio have given us beautiful thoughts and words about creation. ...But lately, it seems we may be becoming more attentive to what our sisters and brothers are saying to us. We may be learning how they sister and brother us...

A number of years ago, a very good friend had her mother in a skilled care facility which allowed cats in residence. There was one particular feline who had a particular gift. That cat seemed to know that a resident was in the process of actively passing away. In fact, the only time the animal entered a room was when a resident was dying, and the cat remained with that person until after death.

Quite recently I was involved in a conversation (as a listener) between several oncology nurses who were discussing the fact that some leading medical centers in the USA were employing the services of canines who could detect the presence of cancer in a person when tests results had not indicated that cancer was growing.

Are our sisters and brothers finally getting their own voice?

Also quite recently on Public Radio there was a program about seismic activity in the State of Oklahoma, USA. It seems that in that state the number of earthquakes have increase remarkably in recent years, due, it was suggested, to the inauguration of the process known as "hydraulic fracking". Is Mother Earth speaking? Are we listening?

"The heavens are telling the glory of God" we sing. Brother Sun and Sister Moon are showing us the light of the Light. Are we now developing eyes and ears and tongues which allow us to know what our sisters and brothers are saying to us?

# The participation of women in society and in the Church

Delir Brunelli, CF - Brazil  
Congregação das Irmãs Catequistas Franciscanas  
Original language: Portuguese

The history of the *Congregação das Irmãs Catequistas* reveals enriching and interesting aspects of the work done with the women. Specific ministry of the Congregation consists in education for living the faith and participation in society. The consciousness of inequalities between men and women emerged with force since 1980. Such awareness gave a start to significant changes in the governance of the sisters' mission in the various areas where they are located.

Since then, an increasing number of Sisters began working with poor women of color and indigenous, the outskirts of cities or in the villages, in the slums; with women working in the fields, in the extension of sugar cane, laundresses, small craft, women who join in solidarity economy groups and mothers followed by the Pastoral Care of the family. These ministries all have an educational approach; the intention is to help women to form and to organize themselves, to support them in their struggles in favor of a more dignified life for them and for their families, for communities and for the entire population.



Quebradeiras de coco



Padaria comunitária

The sisters who work in the North East of Brazil write: "The work of the sisters has as main purpose the creation of communities, the rapprochement between the various ethnic groups. In these areas we privilege groups where women are in a situation of greater social vulnerability". (Www.cicaf.org - Articles - Nossa presença junto às Mulheres).

In a society still strongly patriarchal, where the violence against the women continues to be strong, the work in the Franciscan dimension of Peace occupies an important place. Many Sisters are dedicated to this work and are part of the "Network: A Cry for Life". This network is supported by the Conference of Religious of Brazil.

Some Sisters have academic training in theology, spirituality and the human and social sciences, in order to make known the reality lived and suffered by women in many areas; Sisters activate

efforts to seek together ways for greater inclusion of women in the social, cultural, religious and economic fields.

As for the theology and spirituality, with the leaders of the ecclesial communities and popular groups, other issues affecting the relations between men and women also were addressed. In particular, we have tried to explore the theme that Jesus is able to make us free, reflecting on the images of God and the figure of Mary; the concept of sanctity and liturgical expressions; Church organization and intra-ecclesial relations.

It is gratifying to hear the progress made by many women who find themselves in a position to accept the personal story/history as well as organized groups. Grow in their self-esteem, conquer the human and social rights, shaping a new culture and eliminate preconceived ideas. But we know that the road is still long and difficult. The current moment requires many efforts together to provide hope and articulate actions that give greater historical concreteness to the dream of more friendly relationship, more equality among all, just as Francis and Clare of Assisi.



Lavanderia comunitária

# Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity

by S. M. Victorine Ida Nursanti, OSF  
Semarang, Indonesia  
Original language: English

## “Hospital without Walls”

Our Commitment to Social Responsibility  
at one of the Christian Spiritual Health Care Centers in Central Java



Our commitment to social responsibility stems from the commitment to serve all people in the community, as we are dedicated to providing the best in health care. We embrace causes that most affect people’s lives every day, such as health, the environment, community development, cultural activities and education, while empowering people through offering activities that promote healthy living, not only in the hospital, but also outside the hospital, especially in the community.

Our hospital has been recognized as one of the Christian and Franciscan spiritual health care centers in Central Java. So we serve the people, especially those marginalized, as we have the

belief that we are a part of the communities we serve. This make us serve God, both in the hospital and out of hospital; we call it “*Hospital Without Walls.*”

This is one of the our social activities in the hospital. This outreach program provides health services for people in poverty, such as minor surgery and needed health education in supervised areas. We believe that faith is a key that helps us to see how illness can be the way to draw us nearer to Jesus. We can be the hands, arms and hearts which help God perform his miracles.

In our serving the people, we always will draw inspiration from Mary, the Mother of Mercy. As a Franciscan hospital, we try to be a visible sign and setting in which to promote the culture of encounter and peace where the experience of illness and suffering, along with professional and fraternal assistance, helps to overcome every limitation and division. God will provide for everything...



# WE ARE GOING TO MEET PEOPLE AT THE MARGINS OF SOCIETY AND THE CHURCH

Fray Herald Maria I.F.P.  
Minister General Brothers of Peace, Ecuador  
Original language: Spanish

The International Franciscan Conference of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular has asked for article for **Propositum**. This is a beautiful instrument of communion which allows us meet as brothers and sisters. This publication is a kind of hidden current which vitalizes our fraternal relations. Despite the distance we feel close and partakers of life of many brothers and sisters who live in many places and realities within the great common house that God has prepared for us. The theme proposed offers itself great challenges.



Nuestra Capilla  
(Replica de la porziuncola)

Biblical spirituality is steeped in encounters, from Genesis when, man created to receive the "RUAH" opens his eyes and finds the close God full of love calling him to life, up to Revelation where the Spirit and the bride say "come" and later concludes: "Yes, I am coming soon." This "come" is a sign of the call to the meeting. I was always shocked by the fact that our TOR spiritual journey is a way of searching and encounter, to seek and be sought.

Under the Christological aspect, our spirituality and our following both develop in the field of **encounters**/meetings. God came to meet the human kind with the simplicity of a young virgin. He makes alliance with her and restores the dignity of women so discriminated in social and religious aspects. God through Mary carries out his plan of salvation for the human kind.

We may ask ourselves as brothers and sisters of the TOR.: How are our encounters with the discriminated today? In Jesus, the eternal Word, God comes to meet men and women incarnated in their reality of poverty, at the margins with their story among the poor and excluded. Borrowing Francis' words, we would say that the Lord surrounds himself with "**minors**". God himself, in Jesus, becomes the minor of all. He, in doing this, calls us that our presence among the poor be lived in minority.

In the Gospel we find wonderful encounters: **John 1, 45-51**: The encounter in the truth with Nathanael; **Mark 1, 29.3**: God heals and releases and impels us to serve; **John 8: 1-11**: The encounter with the adulteress. Ask ourselves: do we accept in our personal life the words said by Jesus "**neither do I condemn you?**" Like Zacchaeus, **Luke 19,1-10**, do we accept the salvation that comes to our home, in our life, in our history? One more question, we, brothers and sisters of the TOR, have been signs of salvation for those who are far away and feel even further by being excluded socially or for religion sake?

In the experience of the poor man of Assisi with the leper, we can see the action of God who comes to meet man, and in the kiss of Francis we can see God's availability toward the human kind. The constant output of Francis in searching for the other is a sign of his evangelical radicalness; he only wants to live the Gospel, "sine glossa"; he is dedicated to meetings, to move in the direction of the other who is his brother and sister and is a leper, a priest, a cardinal or pope, the condition does not matter, what is important is the encounter. It is clear that without the departure and the mutual encounter of Francis and Bernardo could not have been the foundation

of our Order. It is then necessary to reach out the others in order to give birth to new realities in our personal lives, congregational and ecclesial aspects.

In our vocational journey as Friars of Peace, we have been continuously driven by the Lord to answer to specific realities of pain and marginalization. A meeting that only happens if we leave our area of comfort. Communion with the poor and their pain heals us, it takes us out of our vanities, our selfish and self-referential criteria of our areas of dissatisfaction and self-pity that prevents us from living the reality.

To live the option "**Exit for meeting**" should lead us first to meet with the brother or sister who lives with us. There are times in which we fail to discover the poor in the religious who lives with us, next to me, a poor who is crying for emotional distress and needs help. We must go toward the marginalized starting with the marginalized and hurt one who is in each of us, who lives in ourselves; to meet the marginalized who lives in my own house with me, so we can go together to the existential peripheries of so many that await us. The Lord calls us, the Friars of Peace, to the evangelical values and to live them as a service for the needy, in the encounter with poor people living with HIV -AIDS with the abandoned elderly and sick, exploited or prostituted women who do not have the resources to support their children, indigenous excluded, people morally lost. Only meeting others allows us to see reality, in the perspective of the Gospel values and act accordingly; only the encounter with the other allows us to celebrate life. I am a friar and priests; I assist spiritually religious and priests. I realize that there are more and more evidence of increasingly complex problems; there is an urgent need for support, I have been called out to meet the consecrated wounded; I have often seen in the lives of so many religious and laity the healing power of listening and accompaniment. The healing power of the encounter.



Nuestra custodia (La Virgen con el niño Jesús y en su corazón el Santísimo Sacramento).

Finally, I wish to stress the urgency of going out to meet people with a heart full of God, to meet those who are the reason of our life and to donate it like Jesus, and to announce it from the own experience that: "He first loved us "(1 John 4:19).

# Toward the ideal life and Environment

Written by: Sister Jackie McCracken, O.S.F., USA  
Original Language: English

In 1990, only 26 short years ago, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was enacted in the United States to prohibit unjustified discrimination based on disability. Since then individual states have established departments to serve the many needs of people with disabilities. And since then adults with disabilities and their families continue to work toward the ideal life and environment they hope to live -- no longer on the margins of society but an integral part of the societies and neighborhoods in which they live and work.



Toward that objective, a small group of parents met in Indianapolis, Indiana in 2005 to discuss the possibility of a residential program for their adult children with developmental disabilities. They founded The Village of Merici named for St. Angela Merici, patron saint of the disabled who became well known for her ministry of service to the marginalized: the displaced, the poor, the orphaned, and the sick. Guided by her vision, these families developed collaborations with other Indianapolis organizations to

remodel a former army barracks at Fort Benjamin Harrison into 20 affordable housing apartments known as The Merici Village Apartments for adults with developmental disabilities. Twenty-one residents moved into the apartments in September 2014 with the goal of becoming more independent and integrated into the community—working and spending time with other people who do not have disabilities. These residents have full or part-time employment, volunteer at various nonprofits, participate in athletics through Special Olympics, and have mentors through the Best Buddies program.

I was hired as the Community Facilitator to foster relationships with neighbors, to encourage residents in their involvement within the Lawrence (a suburb) and Indianapolis communities, and to build a sense of community among residents. I am also responsible for planning educational opportunities that promote health, wellness, self-advocacy, and spiritual development for residents. As a Sister of St. Francis, my involvement enables me to minister in today's world as a reflection of the caring St. Francis offered to marginalized people in his 12<sup>th</sup> century world.

While historically those with developmental disabilities have been relegated to the periphery and in many cases hidden from society, the Village of Merici community of families, residents, staff, Board, and neighbors live each day the reality that Pope Francis speaks of in *Misericordiae Vultus*. "Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life." Pope Francis's words are lived each day as we minister to one another in the belief that those with developmental disabilities indeed contribute to our world by their very being and their love for life.



Special olympics events

## GIVING OURSELVES THE PEOPLE WITH OIL OF HOPE AND FRAGILITY OF ANY CONSOLATION

(Proclaim, 75)

*Sr. Cecilia Pasquini, TC  
Suore Terziarie Cappuccine della Sacra Famiglia  
Original Language: Italian*

The story of the Congregation begins in the region of Valencia (Spain) in May 1885. A small group of women committed themselves to a life style according to the Constitutions written by Father Luigi Amigo and Ferrer (1854-1934), a young Capuchin priest, untiring promoter and assistant of the Third Franciscan Order (SFO today); a man always attentive to those living in the "periphery." Father Luigi constantly showed attention and care to the most fragile people but his commitment becomes particularly significant when he begins to visit prisons/prisoners and meet with those who suffered exclusion and treated harshly. Fr. Luigi gives birth to initiatives that only the creativity of the Spirit may move.

Within the walls that restrict the area of freedom and close again the detainees in the solitude, he finds also many young people, in minor age, serving their sentence for petty crime. He realized that living with people more seriously involved in crime and delinquency young people were facing a bad school of life for them. He made the impossible to ensure that prisons are not only prisons, but human and social rehabilitation centers that offer children an educational journey that will redeem their lives. Children, adolescent, young people and anyone living on the margins of society or is likely to incur in it are always at the center of Father Luigi, who with observant eyes is able to identify their needs and how to help them. He is able to transmit this particular charism to the congregations he founded: the Capuchin Tertiary Sisters of the Holy Family, 1885 and the Brothers of Our Capuchin Tertiary, 1889.

As a religious family, the Capuchin Tertiary Sisters, we have always tried to make fruitful the spiritual heritage of Father Luigi. We are committed almost everywhere, in fact we are present in 34 countries of the world. Our commitment is expressed in the field of education, re-education or protection of minors, we were and we are present in other areas of social exclusion.

Look at the past, I remember our mission in China, from which we had to leave in 1949 and today, thanks to some Chinese Sisters, we are starting again. Sisters there, even amid so many difficulties and dangers, they give care to the girls rejected by family only for the fact of being females; they "buy" from parents that otherwise they would discard and give to them maternal care.



Looking at the present, in other missions, particularly in Latin America, the Sisters have tried and are trying to defend the cause of ethnic minorities sharing the simple and often difficult and risky life. In 1987, in Ecuador, Sr. Inés Arango paid with her life for her dedication to minority Tagaeri, when in an attempt to get close to them, not without having carefully prepared the ground, she was shot

to death along with the Capuchin Bishop Mgr. Alejandro Labaka. Probably, the tribal people mistook them for members of the oil companies that were invading their areas and reducing the lands reserved for them.

In Latin America, some of our communities are in guerrilla zones. Our community is the place where women come to mourn their husbands or sons killed, abducted or deported to make the guerrillas. Sisters there seek to support their pain by sharing faith and prayer and feeding hope.

In Africa, projects in favour of women tend to promote school education but also try to steer the African culture, which already in itself gives great value to motherhood, toward a greater appreciation of women; it involves a balanced integration with the man within the family and socio-labor.

In Europe, we collaborate with several organisms in projects in favour of street people and immigrants; we care for marginalized with projects in favour of children, adolescent, youth in difficulty. We believe that they will be a better future although presently they suffer because of unjust choices of our society. Our task is to try to give them love and reasons for hope, for positive values on which to build their lives with serenity and confidence.

At this time, we are experiencing the major structural changes in our religious family. The aging of the members, and in some areas once rich in vocations, is decreasing the number of young people who choose our form of life. We want to be vigilant and *“be careful not to surrender to intimism and giving ourselves to the people, active and responsible, with the oil of hope and consolation, of every fragility and unrest, disappointment and joy; we become aware that moving away from the central position of calmness and peacefulness it allows us to better understand ourselves”*. (cfr. CIVCSVA, **PROCLAIM** 75).

This is a bit Francis' experience, who once had left Assisi city to meet the lepers who lived out of the city. He was able to better understand and find his way, the necessary strength to follow it, free from clothing but dressed anew with the Gospel of Jesus.