

Using the right moment

All their lives people are searching for happiness and for the fulfillment of their dreams and in doing so, they always fear to miss out on something. Therefore, "you have to seize the opportunity", as the saying goes. If you have missed the opportunity you will no longer be able to make use of it. The Greek language uses the term **Kairos**. It is a religious-philosophical term and it stands for the right moment to take a decision. Biblical texts speak of **Kairos** as a God-given point of time, a special chance and the opportunity to fulfill a mission.

The life of Francis shows us a number of occurrences that the poor man of Assisi understood as signs of God, which he immediately put into practice.

In **1205** he meets a leper. What had been unbearable to him before, was then changed into sweetness he confesses later on in his Testament. Enlightened by the Spirit of God he recognizes in the deformed face of the leper the face of the suffering Christ. From then on he sees things from a different perspective. The poor move into the centre of his life. He shares their life.

In **1206** he publically gives back his clothes to his father in the presence of the Bishop. He splits up with his family, turns his back on the wealthy center of Assisi, and henceforth puts himself totally under the authority of his Father in Heaven.

In **1207** he hears the words from the San Damiano Cross "Can't you see my Church is completely falling into ruin?" He takes these words literally and rebuilds three chapels

On **24 February 1208** Francis listens to the message of the mission speech in the Chapel of Portiuncula. Excitedly and deeply moved he exclaims: "This is what I want, this is what I'm looking for, and this is what I want to do from the bottom of my heart!" (1 Cel I,22)

It was an inner light, giving him the certainty from this day onward, as he confesses in his Testament later on: "No one could show me what I should do, (no Pope, no Bishop, and no Abbot) God Himself revealed it to me."

These important events in the Saint's life are Signs of God (Hours of Grace) that change his life and that lead to the renewal of the Church. The poor could find a home again in the Church and in society. It was a **Kairos**, which Francis lived with great intensity.

The unique history of the development and the effect of the CCFMC in the Franciscan Family was also such an Hour of Grace, which would not have been possible at a later point of time. It is unique not in the sense of quality and profoundness. The documents and books serving to renew the Franciscan spirituality fill entire bookshelves all over the world. But what is unique about the CCFMC is the attempt to establish a global, intercultural and inter-Franciscan renewal program.

The International CCFMC in Karukutty, Kerala/India from 18 to 28 October 2010 now also falls into this category. 57 participants from 14 countries came together for 10 days for reflection and also to exchange ideas on how to promote and implement the CCFMC under current situations and circumstances. The most important result is the regionalization of the CCFMC in Asia. This will delegate more responsibility to smaller units.

The region of South Asia is on its way and is breaking first ground. Others will follow. It was remarkable that younger Brothers and Sisters were prepared to get involved. We can only hope that this enthusiasm will persist and other regions will follow the example.

Andreas Müller OFM

Asia / Oceania

India: CCFMC Seminar as source of inspiration and encouragement

From 18 to 28 October 2010 a ten-day international CCFMC Seminar took place at the Franciscan Centre Assisi Shanthi Kendra in Karukutty, in the Indian State of Kerala. The main purpose of this event, which is held in Asia every two years, "is a response to requests for more indepth study of the lessons, for incorporation of new impulses arising from changed situations in our fast changing world and for the use of language intelligible to the present generation." It is also to strengthen the commitment and collaboration of the regional CCFMC Coordinators and Animators. This seminar offers already experienced coordinators and animators the chance to gain more insight into the contents and spirituality of the CCFMC; for new participants it is the chance for an in-depth introduction into the subject matter.



Prominent participants/animators share in the following reports their impressions of the most important issues of this seminar:



Sister Stella Baltazar FMM is a member of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Coimbatore/India. Apart from her role as a widely recognized theologian, she is a member of the Indian Theological Association and the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians. During her 20 years of activity in her country, she has especially stood up for the concerns and empowerment of women from the poorest layers of the population.

Sr. Stella begins her report by acknowledging the efforts of those that have made this seminar possible, which was attended by 57 participants who had come to India from 14 countries. "It was a unique and grace-filled moment, for it has given us as members of the Franciscan Family the chance to meet with each other." This seminar has been a tremendous opportunity to deepen our Franciscan spirituality, to learn together, and to assess and revise the lesson units in the light of the current conditions in our surroundings. "The global vision and the essence and focus of the lesson units have to be maintained as an overarching understanding of the Franciscan spirit, on the one hand; at the same time, new insights and information could be added to enrich the text", Sr. Stella emphasizes. The effectiveness of the CCFMC is demonstrated by its ability to incorporate our prophetic mission in today's world as a challenge and to live it as well.

The following lesson units were presented and reviewed:

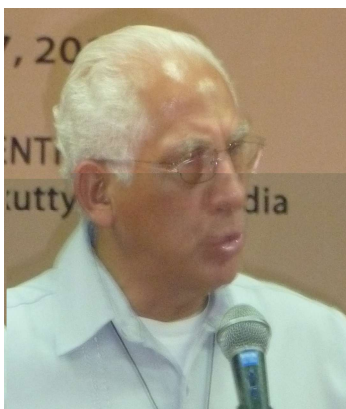
1. The Franciscan Family and Inter-Franciscan Cooperation
2. History of the Franciscan Movement
3. Franciscan Mission in the early Sources

4. Biblical Prophetic Foundation of Franciscan Mission
5. Franciscan Mission according to Modern Sources
6. Theological Basis of Franciscan Mission
7. Encounter with Muslims
8. Dialogue with Other Religions
9. Inculturation as a Franciscan Commitment
10. Challenges by a Secularized World
11. Our Relationship with Science and Technology
12. Prophetic Criticism of Social Systems: Capitalism and Marxism.
13. The Option for the Poor
14. As Male and Female God Created them: A Franciscan Challenge
15. St, Francis and the Overwhelming Goodness of God
16. Commitment to Peace based on Justice and Integrity of Creation
17. Contemplation and Mission
18. A Special Franciscan Insight: All Creatures make up One Family of Creation

The Franciscan movement has created the opportunity to question injustice – wherever it might exist. It has created new consciousness among people. The status quo, i. e. the existing values and norms have been overthrown and everything was called into question. Francis, Sister Stella emphasizes, was a prophetic man who denounced evil and injustice, who untiringly proclaimed the Good News to those who were willing to change and to become partners of God. The Franciscan orientation – deep love for the Lord, love for the life in poverty, simplicity and minority, but also the courage to denounce evil and injustice and to proclaim God's Good News – must run through all lesson units like a golden thread.

However, there are deficits when presenting some of the lesson units. Sometimes God is depicted as up in the clouds, far from the real problems on earth. In the poor Jesus of Nazareth, however, we experience a God that does not ignore any kind of hardship: he is the God of the Poor and the Suffering. If the Franciscan charism does not get adequately translated into contemporary language and into today's context, we could soon get out of touch with the present time, Sister Stella emphasizes. That is exactly what the lesson units are trying to do. However, this has not always been clear. The CCFMC must certainly not be the place to proclaim an outdated theology of a God who is not interested in the world. The Old Testament and especially the Book of the Exodus state that God stands on the side of the Poor. Right from the Book of Genesis to the Book of Revelation we experience the God of the Poor, who liberates people from degradation, bondage, and suffering. As active messengers of God it is our task to bring God's message to the poor.

Finally, Sister Stella thanks the CCFMC Center in Würzburg as well as the CCFMC Office in the Philippines for their active contribution to make this event a success.



Father Enrique Montero OFMConv from Costa Rica, studied, *inter alia*, at St. Bonaventure University in New York; he participated in the international Inter-Franciscan Meeting of Matli/1982, Assisi/1994 and Pattaya/1998; currently he is the Vice Chancellor of the Inter-African Formation Center in the Kenyan Capital of Nairobi. In his presentations Fr. Montero dealt with the issue of the Franciscan movement and how prophetic it is today. The following are excerpts from his presentation:

"... It is certainly not easy to give an answer to the question of how prophetic the Franciscan movement is today, knowing the vastness and complexity of reality we have to deal with. Yet, it is very important to have some clarity when we have to explain ourselves today in front of God, in front of our founder

Francis, and in front of our 800-year history.

It would be naive and hypocritical to say that the Franciscan movement has always been faithful to its prophetic vocation. If being a prophet means being a clear sign of God's presence among

His people ... we have to admit with sadness that Franciscans have often rather been counter-signs throughout history. Our institutional history is marked by many contradictory views of Francis and his ideal of life - there were many reforms and divisions that have left deep wounds in the very heart of our Franciscan Family; some of them are still alive today in some areas of the world. If Franciscan charism means to witness simplicity of life, minority and solidarity with the poor, we have to acknowledge that reality often fell short of a life in poverty...

Fortunately, our Franciscan Family can rejoice today, that the Lord has richly awarded many of our members with holiness. This holiness can also be regarded as a clear sign of renewal, as e.g. the study and research of the Sources and the propagation of courses, seminars, academic centers, Franciscan institutes etc.; this shows the real hunger and thirst for a better knowledge of our specific charism. The prophetic character in our Family is clearly visible in the commitment of Franciscans for the cause of the poor, for peace, and reconciliation, for the integrity of creation..."



Father Baltazar Obico OFM, currently the Provincial of the OFM in the north of the Philippines, is one of the well-known and recognized Franciscan tutors, renowned and acknowledged also outside his own country. These tutors have taught or are still teaching at various Franciscan education facilities and theological faculties. Furthermore, he is a vital member of the CCFMC list of speakers and has travelled to several countries in this capacity. In his presentation on the "Asian Context of Inculturation" during the seminar in Kerala, Father Baltazar Obico deals with the Eurocentric ecclesial structures in Asia:

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), the speaker comments at the start of his presentation, has pointed out how much Eurocentric ecclesial structures have permeated Asia. The Church remains foreign to the believers in Asia regarding its style, its institutional structures, its worship, its western-trained leadership, and its theology. There is a gap between Church leaders and the ordinary believers. Obico quotes a Korean colleague who said that the studies of European theologians like Barth, Tillich, and Bultmann etc. did not help him to feel God's presence in the struggle of his own people.

Father Baltazar regards the first task for Asian inculturation to be the strengthening of local churches, together with a simultaneous unity with the universal church. This local church must be self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating and self-theologizing.

The Asian people take pride in their religious cultural values such as love of silence and contemplation, simplicity, detachment, harmony, non-violence, hard work, respect for life, compassion, love of nature, reverence for the parents, and a strong sense of family and community.

Inculturation in Asia needs an epistemological break, allowing for the emergence of an Asian Church. Western epistemology exalts in discursive reasoning, logical analysis and has a tendency to judge truth or error hastily. It is characterized by rigidity, result orientation and domination of the subject. However, a holistic, specified, and complementary approach is required. The statement made in Assisi is a clear sign that the Church has shifted and it has realized that no religion can be reduced to another one and that not all religions need to reach a consensus in all aspects in order to collaborate and to support one another in doing good work on the way to God.



CCFMC Lesson Units are now also available in Tamil

Father Divakar Mota OFMCap and Sister Venantia FSJ came up with a huge surprise during the Seminar in Karukutty: They presented the complete translation of the CCFMC into Tamil language to the audience. Tamil is the native language of about 70 million members of the Tamil population, especially in the south-Indian State of Tamil Nadu and also in Sri Lanka. It can look back at 2,000 years and is one of the seven ancient global languages.

The extremely elaborate and laborious translation goes back to an agreement reached during the continental CCFMC Seminar in Sri Lanka four years ago between Fr. Andreas, Sr. Reginarda, and Fr. Divakar. It required a lot of commitment, endurance, and patience to translate the somewhat 1,000 pages of the course.



Apart from the surprise, there was also big joy about the presentation right at the time of the seminar. This was especially welcomed, as, on this occasion, the participants from India and some of its neighboring countries distinctly favored the establishment of a separate coordination team. This could be a great opportunity for a restart filled with new energy for this intercultural and inter-Franciscan project, since many interested people are now able to study the course in their native tongue.



Note:

This is the first report on a successful CCFMC Seminar. Further comments and impressions will follow.

Signs of the Times

Once again the World Community promised to tackle vigorously the task to put into practice the realization of the 8 Millennium goals of fighting poverty. Up to now the action plans are still far from their goal. For all of us would have had to feel it in our own behaviour and life-style.

Summit on the Millennium Development Goals 20-22 September 2010



The UN Summit on the Millennium Development Goals concluded with the adoption of a global action plan to achieve the eight anti-poverty goals by their 2015 target date and the announcement of major new commitments for women's and children's health and other initiatives against poverty, hunger and disease.

[Visit the Summit website!](#)

UN-backed initiative aiming to eliminate tuberculosis launched

A new initiative – [Global Plan to Stop TB 2011-2015](#) – designed to combat tuberculosis, which claims the lives of nearly two million people across the world every year, could lead the way towards eliminating the disease if governments and donors commit enough funds, the [World Health Organization announced](#). "There is an urgent need to scale up action against TB – 10 million people, including 4 million women and children, will lose their lives unnecessarily between now and 2015 if we fail," said Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of the WHO, which hosts the Stop TB Partnership.



Donors pledge billions to help UN-backed fund combat AIDS, TB and malaria



Donor countries, foundations and corporations [meeting](#) at the UN on 4-5 October pledged \$11.7 billion in new funding over the next three years to support the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The largest-ever pledge for the collective effort to fight the three pandemics will allow the Global Fund to further support countries as they work to meet the Millennium Development Goals related to health. "At a time when so many Governments are tightening their belts at home, these commitments send a powerful message: It shows how

seriously world leaders want to do the right thing beyond their borders, too, [said](#) UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Read a [statement](#) by some of the [MDG Advocates](#).

