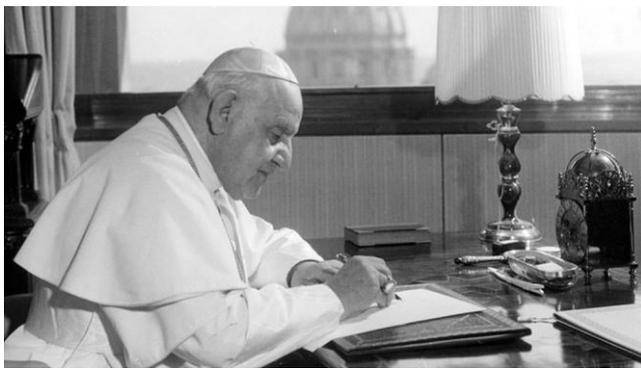


CCFMC – A Fascinating Project

For many this sounded like a liberation, for others it also sounded like a threat -“Open wide the windows of the Church!” Pope John XXIII announced an ecumenical Council for the entire Church on 25 January 1959 in Rome. He demanded a renewal, an “aggiornamento”, an approach of the Church to meet the needs of our time.

The Council from 1962 to 1965 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, 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 Curias of all branches as well as the local communities showed great interest in this new training programme.

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



Assisi '94

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.

We found open doors in many places and the readiness for cooperation. Otherwise it would not have been possible for this project to take on a worldwide dimension within the period of ten years with translation into 15 languages. A unique feature of the CCFMC is that it attempts to establish a global, intercultural and Inter-Franciscan programme of renewal where expertise and concrete experience are undergoing an open dialogue.



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 un-complicated interaction with people, his obvious sympathy towards the poor and the

marginalized, his commitment in the searching 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.

During his trip to Sri Lanka and the Philippines Pope Francis acknowledged this in an impressive way. He literally became the "People's Pope", as he was called by the daily newspapers. The Pope was able to unfold his lectureship of open speech in an inspiring fashion. He repeatedly emphasized the issues of poverty, social inequality, and corruption.

Also the European Catholics – and many others outside the Church – are vastly inspired by this man, who leads such a modest life and who has begun to break up the hardenings of his Church. But what does the adoption of a perspective of the poor for Europe's rich Christians and Churches? This Pope is not only remarkable because he chooses to be driven in a medium-sized car. With his help, the Catholic Church has reached the era of globalization.

Pope Francis can be comprehended as a gift by the Holy Spirit, who has come from the outside, and not from ancient European Christianity. He does not act like a pedantic theologian, but like a shepherd implementing what Jesus had asked of Saint Peter: "Strengthen Your Brothers" (Luke 22,32). Pope Francis brings along the experiences from the Churches in third world countries, and especially those in Latin America. So now we are slowly getting closer to the simple facts. Christianity today is a third world religion as the theologian Johann Baptist Metz has repeatedly emphasized. Only 25 % of Catholics live in Europe, 72.56 % live in the continents of the south (48.75 % in Latin America). As Europeans we will have to learn and accept that the Church in Europe is not the mother of all churches any longer, yet it is merely a (small) part of the many-voiced and colorful universal church.

Therefore, we should get provoked by this Pope. We should get provoked to regard refugees as messengers of a new era of mutual dependency. Whether we like it or not: all of humanity is in it together. We will be able to permanently maintain our prosperity and security, when *all* people on this earth have the chance to live in dignity and to be able to do so within the ecological boundaries

of our planet. This is an appeal of the Pope's globally renowned Encyclical Letter "Laudato si" in which he summons us to preserve the common home for future generations.

For those who are invoked by Francis and Clare or who are inspired by them, this is always a new and challenging question of identity. If we do not want to betray the Franciscan-Clarean idea, we have to stand at the side of the poor and the marginalized.



Bangkok 2008



Latin America 2008



Young Franciscans Uganda 2010



Romania 2010

A fascinating project, although it does not offer concrete solutions for the pressing problems of our times, yet it provides the spiritual power and phantasy for us to take on the necessary renewal process. What we need is passion and dedication, affection and power that Francis and Clare embody like hardly anyone else in history. This requires rediscovery and needs to be translated into the circumstances of our time; then we will have clear guidance through the turmoil of our time.

Andreas Müller OFM