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EDITORIAL

BREATHING FRESH AIR FROM THE AMAZON

We have just witnessed the celebration of the Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, who met in the Vatican from 6 to 27 October, with the aim of discussing issues common to churches within the Pan-Amazon region of South America. The Synod came at an opportune moment, when the world was condemning the uncontrolled burning of large tracts of virgin forest that, seen from space, sent shivers down the spine of all persons of good will. The Amazon is the lung of the planet. The immense forest is home to innumerable species of flora and fauna. The indigenous inhabitants who have been living in peace for countless centuries are now under threat from multinational companies who exploit land and resources for selfish gain, most of the time helped by politicians who show no scruple for corruption and greed.

Indeed, the Catholic Church is not engaged in a purely political debate on the fate of our ecosystem, since its message is another one. Yet, one cannot disregard the current situation that has to be read in the face of the biblical revelation on the sacredness of human life and on creation as an act of God. Pope Francis has certainly been a strong voice and a prophetic one as well, in order to speak out against all kinds of unjust exploitation of creation for the sole aim of gain and profit. He even admonishes the world, and justly so, that the current rate of disregard for the sacredness of creation will eventually bring the world to the brink of an ecological disaster of apocalyptic proportions.

The Synod, however, was not only an occasion to speak about this urgent matter that has drawn international condemnation and anger from all quarters. It was also an occasion to examine the Church in the Pan-Amazon region from within, to address current issues and problems that it is facing, to arrive at suggestions for new solutions to pastoral problems. The overall atmosphere during the Synod was certainly a positive one, but one cannot help to notice the underlying sense of tension within the Church itself regarding the concrete choices that it has to make in the future.

It is normal for social media to concentrate only on a marginal aspect of Church life, namely that which can make headlines. The top and most popular items on the list were the ordination of married men (*virī probati*) in order to address the problem of lack of vocations to the priesthood in the region, and the possible introduction of the ministry of female deacons within the remote communities that hardly ever see a priest. The same atmosphere of the Synod was one of close collaboration, but also of divergencies on these issues. This is understandable in a Church which struggles to come to terms with an ever-changing world in which Christian doctrine and morals cannot adapt so easily without an attentive

and careful analysis of how the Magisterium can continue to remain faithful to Gospel truth and open to pastoral care in situations which are not considered to be “regular” or “normal”. The scene of the image of the Pachamama, supposed to represent the Virgin Mary of the Amazon, which was thrown into the Tiber and later recovered, is a case in point. The Pope apologised for this gesture, but many eyebrows were raised as to the true significance of this image, and whether it conveys any “idolatrous” significance.

It is most probable that the Pan-Amazon Synod will continue to haunt the minds and hearts of many Catholics who cannot understand why certain problems can be solved simply by choosing ways and means which do not sound orthodox to a good number of believers.

The Amazon region is important also for the Franciscan Order. Many provinces of the region will certainly have to face, and maybe are already facing, these thorny issues, particularly the provinces in Brazil, and those in Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela and Bolivia. It was the Franciscans themselves who evangelised large sections of Latin America, together with other religious families like the Dominicans and, later on, the Jesuits. They were responsible for the conversion of thousands of Indios during a time of intense suffering and exploitation. The Franciscans, however, were instrumental in translating the sacred texts in the Guaraní tongue, and they were staunch defenders of indigenous peoples. Their sterling work in these remote regions is still continuing to this very day.

That is why it is important that the Order respond to the new needs and challenges emerging in this volatile region of the planet. It can do so certainly with an increased interest in the ecological and social aspect of the problem of exploitation of the natural resources of the Amazon. At the same time, however, Franciscans are there in order to evangelise and minister to the people, and therefore they also have to make a prophetic analysis of the current pastoral situation of the region and respond to it. Some have justly suggested that the lack of vocations is not to blame for the inadequate number of priests and deacons in the region, but rather that what is truly needed is a more intelligent distribution of pastoral ministers rather than simply the ordination of married men or of female deacons.

Respect for indigenous cultures and for their traditions is certainly a must in any pastoral choices that the Church will take in the case of the Pan-Amazon region. So is respect for the Church’s Tradition and Magisterial teaching, as well as for its liturgical norms. This does not mean that the liturgy should not respond to the cultural aspirations of regions like Africa or Latin America, but that it should avoid all resemblance to syncretism whereby “pagan” symbols and rites are “Christianised” for the sake of inclusion. The gesture of throwing sacred images in the Tiber is certainly one to be condemned, at least for the cultural and historical value of these same images. Yet it is not clear whether this image truly represents the Virgin Mary or a mother goddess of fertility. If this were the case, the goddess of Malta can also be mixed up with the Blessed Virgin Mary! As Franciscans we are called to be close to indigenous people, without however, confusing minds and hearts regarding the universal truth of Catholic teaching and morals. This duty binds every single Catholic, from the Pope downwards.

Noel Muscat ofm

DID SAINT FRANCIS VISIT CYPRUS IN 1219-1220?

Noel Muscat ofm

*Paper presented at the University of Cyprus
Nicosia, 9 May 2019*

The history of Cyprus is intimately linked with that of the Holy Land. In the Bible the island of Cyprus is known as the land of the “Kittim”, a reference to ancient Kition (Latin, Citium). The prophet Jeremiah denounces Israel’s idolatry by asking: “Cross to the isles of the Kittim and look, send to Kedar and carefully observe, see if anything like this has happened before! Does a nation change its gods?” (Jer 2:10-11). The prophet Ezekiel speaks against the riches and idolatry of Tyre and also mentions its famous fleet: “They built you a deck of cedar inlaid with ivory from the Kittim isles” (Ezek 27:6). Daniel 11:30 states: “The ships of the Kittim will oppose him,” referring to Antiochus Epiphanes. The First Book of Maccabees, when speaking about Alexander Great, states that “Alexander of Macedon son of Philip had come from the land of Kittim” (1Mac 1:1). These references are normally seen to refer in a general way to the islands of the Mediterranean, particularly the Greek islands of the Aegean. However, the fact that the name “Kittim” refers explicitly to Kition could be taken as referring particularly to Cyprus, which is the island closest to the shores of biblical Lebanon (207km) and Palestine (257km).

This relative closeness of Cyprus to the Holy Land was especially important during the Crusader era, particularly when the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem had to be transferred to Acre after Saladin took the Holy City on 2 October 1187, some months following the famous battle of Qarne Hattin of 4 July, which marked the defeat of the Crusades who had triumphantly entered Jerusalem on 15 July 1099. When Acre also fell to the forces of al-Ashraf Khalil on 18 May 1291, Cyprus was

the only place where the Crusaders could flee and where the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem and the military Orders could find a place of refuge.

After Saladin conquered Jerusalem, the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem had to retreat to the city of Tyre. There were still the principalities of Antioch and Tripoli. Just two years later after the fall of Jerusalem, in 1189, Guy of Lusignan, king of Jerusalem, decided to attack and capture Acre. The immediate effect of the loss of Jerusalem was to prompt Christian Europe to retake the Holy City. That is why the Third Crusade was organised in 1189-1192. It was led by three kings, namely Frederick I Barbarossa, Holy Roman Emperor (1152-1190); Philippe II of France (1180-1223); and Richard I ‘the Lionheart’ of England (1189-1199).¹

On 10 June 1190, while on his way to the Crusade, Frederick I Barbarossa drowned in the River Saleph in Cilicia. Richard I chose the sea route, capturing Messina in 1190, and after his ships had been dispersed by a storm and had to take refuge in Crete and Rhodes, he sailed on to Cyprus, which he captured from the Byzantine Isaac Komnenos in May 1191. The island became a strategic post for the armies on their way to the Holy Land, and could provide safe haven for the Crusader armies every time they had to withdraw from the Holy Land to take refuge elsewhere. Philippe II also sailed to the Holy Land, with the help of Genoese ships, and directed his attention to Acre.

The port of Acre on the Palestinian coast was an important place to capture for the Crusaders. As we have seen, it was already being besieged by Guy of Lusignan, nominally king of Jerusalem.

Soon he was joined by the forces of Richard I and Philippe II, as well as by the remains of the army of Frederick I, that of Duke Leopold of Austria, and a French force led by Henry of Champagne. With the able strategies of king Richard I of England, the Crusader armies captured Acre on 12 July 1191. It was to remain a Crusader stronghold and the effective capital of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem for another 100 years, until 18 May 1291.

In the meantime, Richard I had sold Cyprus to the Knights Templar, but these had soon relinquished the island. Guy of Lusignan bought the island and became king of Cyprus,² heralding the period of the Lusignan dynasty in Cyprus until the arrival of the Venetians in 1489.

The strategic geographical position of Cyprus in the political atmosphere of the Crusader era meant that the island was an important centre for supplying the Crusader armies with manpower from the west. Like the island of Crete, or Candia,³ as it used to be known, Cyprus was an obligatory stop-over in the journey from the ports of the western Mediterranean to the Holy Land. The Venetians conquered Crete after the sack of Constantinople of 12 April 1204 during the Fourth Crusade and the establishment of the Latin Empire of Romania.⁴ The sad events of the Fourth Crusade form part and parcel of the efforts by Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) to organise a Crusade which would effectively aim at regaining Jerusalem. That is why Innocent III announced a new Crusade in 19 - 29 April 1213 in the encyclical *Quia maior*.⁵ On 19 April 1213, Pope Innocent III issued his letter *Vineam Domini Sabaoth*, against the enemies of Christendom, the “beasts of many kinds that are attempting to destroy the vineyard of the Lord of Sabaoth,” and announcing a General Council of the Latin Church. The Fourth Lateran Council, which convened in 1215, was unprecedented in its scope and impact, and it called for the Fifth Crusade as what its participants hoped would be the final defence of Christendom.⁶

The last decree of the Council (14th December 1215), an addition to the 70 canons of the Council, which starts with the words *Ad liberandam Terram sanctam*, deals with a new Crusade to recover the Holy Land:

“It is our ardent desire to liberate the holy Land from infidel hands. We therefore declare, with the approval of this sacred council and on the advice of prudent men who are fully aware of the

circumstances of time and place, that crusaders are to make themselves ready so that all who have arranged to go by sea shall assemble in the kingdom of Sicily on 1 June after next (1217): some as necessary and fitting at Brindisi and others at Messina and places neighbouring it on either side, where we too have arranged to be in person at time, God willing, so that with our advice and help the Christian army may be in good order to set out with divine and apostolic blessing.”⁷

It is within this historical context of the Fourth and Fifth Crusade that we will speak about Saint Francis and his ardent desire to preach Christ to the Saracens. Francis was a son of his age and was brought up in the Crusader mentality. The early Franciscan sources are a proof of this.⁸ Even though he was to change his attitude towards the crusading spirit in a radical way, Francis still tried, more than once, to go to Saracen lands and did not hide his zeal for martyrdom. Francis tried to go three times to preach to the Saracens. The first attempt, in 1212, ended in failure when Francis boarded a ship from Ancona but ended up on the Dalmatian coast (probably in Zadar, Croatia). A year later, in 1213, he attempted to go to Morocco to preach to Muhammad al-Nasir, the Almohad ruler known as Miramamolín, from the Arab words “Amir al-Mu’minín”, meaning “Commander of the Believers”. While still in Spain he got ill and had to return to Assisi. The third time was in 1219, when he went to Damietta.⁹ He succeeded in his endeavour at long last in 1219-1220, when he went to Damietta in Egypt, and visited the friars Minor already present in the Crusader stronghold of Acre since 1217, under the leadership of brother Elias of Cortona. One of the principal chroniclers of the Order, Jordan of Giano, describes this first mission of the brothers in the East, as a direct result of the decisions taken during the general chapter of Pentecost of 14 May 1217. The brothers who were chosen had as their leader a prominent figure, namely brother Elias of Cortona. Jordan writes: “Brother Elias was appointed minister provincial by Blessed Francis for the territory beyond the sea. At his preaching there, a certain cleric by the name of Caesar was received into the Order.”¹⁰ On his way to and from the Fifth Crusade, Francis must have probably stopped in the island of Candia and also in Cyprus, which, as we have stated, were obligatory ports of call for the Crusader fleets. Our aim is that of trying to see what Francis did in Cyprus, from the scant

information we can gather in the contemporary sources for his life.

Francis' journey to Outremer in 1219

The Assisi historian, Arnaldo Fortini, gives us a description of how the voyage of Saint Francis to the East must have unfolded. He states that Francis left from Ancona, or one of the ports of Apulia (Bari or Brindisi) on 24 June 1219, taking with him 12 brothers, who included Peter Catanio, Barbaro, Sabbatino, Leonardo di Gislerio, Illuminato of Rieti (Fortini prefers the name "of Arce"). They set sail and made a stop on the island of Candia (Crete) and then proceeded to Acre. Fortini states that, maybe, Francis stopped in Cyprus, but that we have no proof of this in the early sources.¹¹

According to the historian of the Custody of the Holy Land, Girolamo Golubovich, Francis departed from Assisi after the general chapter of Pentecost, held at the Portiuncula on 26 May 1219, and with his companions boarded a Crusader ship from Ancona to go to Acre.¹² Golubovich follows Paul Sabatier,¹³ and both refer to some 13th and 14th century sources, namely Jordan of Giano,¹⁴ Bartholomew of Pisa,¹⁵ and Mariano da Firenze, who is the only chronicler stating that Francis stopped in Candia (Crete) on his way to Acre.¹⁶

The historian Luke Wadding outlined the journey of Saint Francis in his *Annales Minorum*.¹⁷ He states that Francis departed from Ancona, but does not mention Crete as one of the stop-overs of the Crusader ship, but rather Cyprus, adding the episode of Brother Barbaro, which we will be seeing later on. Wadding states that Francis stopped in Cyprus and arrived in Acre in mid-July 1219: "Ancona itaque solventibus, brevi demum tempore navis applicuit Cyprum, insulam Mediterranei maris notissimam."

The sea journey that Francis made was normally the one that the Crusader ships would follow. The land journey through the Balkans and on to Constantinople was dangerous, and the sea journey was hazardous because of weather conditions. However, the passage from Italy to Acre would normally be made during the period from late spring to early autumn, and the ships would hug the coasts of Crete, the islands of

Greece and Cyprus. Although, as we have seen, the sources normally speak about Francis leaving from Ancona, the Crusader armies would normally prefer the ports of Apulia, notably Bari or Brindisi, since they were much better suited to go across the Straits of Otranto and on to Corfu and Cephalonia. Francis did leave from Ancona in 1212, when he ended up on the Dalmatian coast in the port of Zadar. In 1219 he probably left from one of the Apulian ports.

From Bari or Brindisi, it is fairly easy to cross the Straits of Otranto towards Corfu and then hug the western coast of Greece, passing by Cephalonia and on to the coast of the Peloponnese peninsula. Past the island of Kithira, it was possible to cross the short distance to Crete. The island was a possible stopover for the Crusader ships, since it offers some good harbours on the northern coast, particularly Chania and Heraklion. Continuing to the easternmost point, at Kyriamadi, in an ENE direction lie the islands of Kasos, Karpathos, and then Rhodes. From Rhodes the direction would be due ESE, south of the Anatolian Peninsula and on to Cyprus. The easiest route would have been that of passing along the south coast of Cyprus, through Paphos and on to Lemesos (Limassol), which was a Crusader stronghold, as was the entire island of Cyprus, under Lusignan rule. From there the Crusader ships could depart to cross an open stretch of sea leading them directly to the Lebanese coast at Tripoli or Beirut, and then further south to Sidon, Tyre and finally Acre.

In Acre Francis arrived towards the end of July 1219, and he was welcomed at the Pisan port by Brother Elias and the other brothers who had settled in the Crusader capital since 1217 in the new quarter of Montmusard. "Montmusard was a new part of Acre located adjacent to the northern twelfth-century wall. Its new wall ran from a point just east of the *castellum* at the gate of St. Anthony to a point on the coast about 800 metres north of the wall, forming a triangular suburb."¹⁸ From Acre Francis again boarded a Crusader ship, which took him along the Palestinian coast to the Nile delta, where the Fifth Crusade was besieging Damietta.

The story of Francis' stay in the Levant and his encounter with Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil lies beyond the scope of our paper, although it is a relevant theme during the current celebrations of the 800 years of this unique event. We return to the theme of Francis' presence in Cyprus, which is the object of our analysis.

Francis of Assisi in Cyprus

Did Saint Francis land in Cyprus on his way to Acre? We have already seen that the Franciscan sources for his life are silent on this matter. With the exception of Luke Wadding, who states that Francis stopped in Cyprus, no other source speaks about his stay on the island.

There is, however, one episode which is noteworthy and could shed some light on the possibility that Francis might effectively have resided for a short while in Cyprus, either on his way to Acre in July 1219, or also during the return journey to Italy in 1220.¹⁹ It is difficult to know whether Francis actually stopped in Cyprus during the return journey. Wadding only mentions Candia as a stopover before Francis proceeded to Venice. “In navigatione prospere successit, nam brevi Candiam appulit, hinc Venetias, opulentissimam maris Adriatici Urbem.”²⁰ However, as we have already stated above, he also mentions Cyprus during the journey from Italy to the Holy Land, and thus implies that Francis must have stopped on the island on his way to Acre.²¹

The episode which forms the basis of our analysis is narrated by Thomas of Celano, the principal biographer of Saint Francis, in his *Memoriale in desiderio animae*, 155, written in 1246-1247 as a third attempt, after those of the *Vita beati Francisci* (1229) and the recently discovered *Vita beati Patris nostri Francisci*, or *Vita brevior* (1232-1239) to produce a detailed biography of Saint Francis:

“It happened that a brother named Barbaro once *threw out* an insulting word at another brother in the presence of a nobleman of the island of Cyprus. But, when he saw that his brother was rather hurt by the impact of that word, he took some donkey manure, and, burning with rage against himself, put it into his mouth to chew, saying: ‘Let the tongue which *spat the poison* of anger upon my brother now chew manure!’ The knight was thunderstruck at seeing this and went away greatly edified; from that time on, he freely put himself and all he had at the disposal of the brothers. All the brothers observed this custom without fail: if any of them spoke an upsetting word to another, he would immediately *fall to the ground* and embrace the feet of the one he had offended, even if unwilling, with holy kisses. The saint rejoiced over such behaviour, when he heard the examples of holiness which his sons themselves produced.”²²

The source for Celano is found in the material coming from the companions of Saint Francis, which provided also the basis for the composition of the *Compilatio Assisiensis* (*Assisi Compilation*) in 1310-1312.²³ It is found in a paragraph which speaks about how the brothers would inflict a penance upon themselves when they went against charity in their fraternal relations. The episode in the *Assisi Compilation* does not mention Brother Barbaro by name.²⁴ The same episode is again present in the Sabatier edition of the *Speculum Perfectionis*, and convinced Sabatier in his biography of Saint Francis that the place in which the event took place was truly the island of Cyprus.²⁵

This episode has been interpreted as having occurred in Cyprus, most probably during the outbound journey of Francis to Acre in June-July 1219. Wadding is of this opinion,²⁶ but other historians, like Nicolò Papini, have not accepted this location, but speak about a place close to Assisi.²⁷ If this is the case, the only time that Cyprus is mentioned in the Franciscan sources would not refer at all to Francis’ stopover in the island. Golubovich is definitely against this last interpretation, and holds on to what Luke Wadding states, namely that Francis did, in fact, stop in Cyprus, together with the brothers, including Brother Barbaro, about whom this episode speaks.²⁸

The fact that this episode occurred in the island of Cyprus, a famous island of the Mediterranean and at the time kingdom of the Crusaders, is proved by Mariano da Firenze, Wadding and Paul Sabatier in the *Vie de S. François d’Assise*:

“We do not know what itinerary they followed. A single incident of the journey has come down to us: that of the chastisement inflicted in the isle of Cyprus on Brother Barbaro, who had been guilty of the fault which the master detested above all others – evil-speaking. He was implacable with regard to the looseness of language so customary among pious folk, and which often made a hell of religious houses apparently the most peaceful. The offence this time appeared to him the more serious for having been uttered in the presence of a stranger, a knight of that district. The latter was stupefied on hearing Francis command the guilty one to eat a lump of ass’s dung with lay there, adding: ‘The mouth which has distilled the venom of hatred against my brother must eat this excrement.’ Such indignation, no less than the obedience of the unhappy offender, filled him with admiration.”²⁹

Sabatier adds that this episode could have occurred during journey of Francis from the Italy to the Holy Land. As we have seen, it is rather difficult to state precisely whether this episode occurred on the journey of Francis to Acre or during his return to Italy. Although Sabatier opts for the first possibility, the time that Francis would have spent on his sea journey from Italy to Acre was rather limited. Since he left Ancona (or Brindisi) on 24 June 1219 and arrived in Acre from the middle to the end of July, that would mean that his journey lasted from three weeks to one month. Considering that he stopped in Candia and also in Cyprus, that would mean that his stopovers must have been very short. If we consider the event to have occurred during the return journey this might have given Francis and the brothers more time to spend in Cyprus. But, as we have seen, Wadding only says that Francis stopped in Candia on his return voyage towards Venice.³⁰

The episode in Cyprus, the only one recorded in the Franciscan sources, is an indication of an early presence of the friars Minor on the island. It is obvious that we cannot speak of a stable presence when Francis was still alive. Francis himself might have stopped in Cyprus on his way to Acre in 1219, since, as we have seen, it was normal for Crusader ships to stop in Crete and Cyprus on their way to Acre. However, we are certain that Brother Barbaro was present on the island when the event of his self-inflicted penance took place. Francis was informed of the episode when he was in Italy. Could he have left Brother Barbaro in Cyprus on the way back to Italy? This could also be a possibility, but again, we can find no documentation to prove it in the Franciscan sources or in the writings of Franciscan historians. One thing is significant, namely, that the Franciscan presence in Cyprus goes back to the 13th century, when Cyprus was under Lusignan domination and its closeness to the Crusader capital Acre made it a convenient port of call for missionaries on their way to the Holy Land.

The early establishments and ministry of the Friars Minor in Cyprus

The thorough historical analysis of Paolo Pieraccini on the presence and ministry of the

Franciscans in Cyprus³¹ along eight centuries, gives a detailed and clear view of the efforts of the Franciscan Order to secure a foothold on the island. The Franciscans who came to Cyprus and settled there were always part and parcel of the mission of the Holy Land, and the establishment of Franciscan houses in Cyprus was a direct result of the need to have a place of refuge and a centre from where to organise a plan of action in the Holy Land during times when the Christian presence and the possibility of coming on pilgrimage to the Holy Places was very difficult.

The earliest presence of the Franciscans in Cyprus has been traced by historians to the arrival of Saint Francis himself on the island, and the earliest Franciscan establishment must have been in Limassol, given that this Crusader port was the closest port of call to and from Acre. Pieraccini begins his study by describing this possibility and documenting it with scholarly research.

“The Friars Minor settled in Cyprus from the earliest days of the Order. The famous historian of the island, Louis de Mas Latrie, dates their arrival to the years 1218-1223 (*Histoire de l'île de Chypre sous le règne des princes de la maison de Lusignan*, Paris, 1852, I, 189). Authoritative scholars such as Barnaba Meistermann hypothesize that it was friar Elia da Cortona - appointed Minister of the Franciscan Overseas Province at the General Chapter of Santa Maria degli Angeli (1217) - who sent the first friars to the island (MEISTERMANN, *Gli antichi conventi dei frati minori nella diocesi di Nicosia in Cipro*, Jerusalem, 1925, 3-4). St. Francis definitely stayed there during his journey to the Orient (1219-1220), as some ancient biographies such as the *Speculum perfectionis* (chapter 51) record (St. Francis is believed to have stayed in Limassol, Cf. A. FIERENS, *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique*, IX (1908) 709). Girolamo Golubovich presumes that the Saint stayed there with his companions both on the outward journey and on his return, as the island was ‘the only centre and point of commercial and military support, more than Acre itself’ (*Biblioteca bio-bibliografica della Terra Santa e dell'Oriente francescano*, edited by G. GOLUBOVICH, Quaracchi (Florence), 1913, II, 279). Therefore, even if Elia had not thought of organizing the mission, it was certainly Francis who let some of his friars there to expand it.”³²

Some of the suppositions that have been made regarding a possible presence of friars Minor in Cyprus even during the lifetime of Saint Francis,

like the affirmation we have seen by Pieraccini that Francis certainly stayed in Cyprus during his journey to the Orient, will necessarily remain a hypothesis of study, even though we can state that there is a possibility that Francis himself stopped in Cyprus.³³ It needs a bit of imagination to conceive of a lengthy presence of the Saint on the island that could warrant the establishment of a house for the friars. Maybe this could have been possible had Francis stopped in Cyprus on his way back to Italy, but the Franciscan sources are silent about this, and mention only Candia as the place where Francis stopped on his way back.

It could very well be that, during the time when Elias was *minister* of the Province of Syria, some friars could have settled in Cyprus,³⁴ since it was fairly easy to travel from Acre to Limassol, and Cyprus was a hub for merchants and Crusaders going to and from the Holy Land to Europe. It is certain that, in the decades following the death of Saint Francis, the friars Minor settled permanently in Cyprus, particularly in Nicosia,³⁵ where two friaries are documented to have existed, and later on in Limassol and Famagusta, where they had a friary very close to the cathedral of Saint Nicholas and to the royal residence of the Lusignans.

“The Franciscans had a friary in Nicosia, which some historians state was founded in 1226 at the end of Saint Francis’ life (others opt for 1237 or even 1251). They also had another friary in a place outside Nicosia, called “Belloloco”, which some historians consider to have been founded by the companions of Saint Francis present on the island, and thus as the first friary in order of time. Since the friary was found in a deserted place, the friars decided to sell it to the Cistercians. This place could very well have been closer to Larnaca, and in Greek it refers to the village of Kalo Chorio, on the road from Larnaca to Stavrovouni Monastery. GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca*, I, 231, presents a Papal rescript, *Ex parte Venerabilis*, by Innocent IV (29 January 1254) regarding the fact that the archbishop of Nicosia had protested that the sale of the friary was done illegally, and entrusting the bishop of Tripoli and archdeacon of Acre to decide on the matter.”³⁶

During the Chapter of Pisa in 1263 the Province of Syria was divided into two, namely that of the Holy Land and that of Romania. The Holy Land Province, in turn, was divided into the Custodies of Syria and Cyprus, and thus the four friaries on the island formed the Custody of Cyprus.³⁷ This period of time, however, lies beyond the scope of our analysis, since

we are dealing with the beginnings of the Franciscan presence in Cyprus. It is, however, interesting to say some words about the later development of the Cyprus mission, since it was intimately linked with the attempts to regain the Franciscan presence in the Holy Land after the fall of Acre and during the early years of the 14th century.

Golubovich documents the early Franciscan presence in Cyprus. He quotes a manuscript compiled by an anonymous friar Minor around 1335 and conserved in the Sacro Convento in Assisi, with the title *Liber memorialis diversarum ystoriarum*, which states that, before the fall of Acre on 18 May 1291, the Guardian and other friars who resided in Acre escaped to Cyprus for safety, because they were afraid of being compelled to renounce their faith if they fell into the hands of the Saracens, whereas the other fourteen friars who remained all suffered martyrdom on the tragic day when the Crusader capital was taken by al-Ashraf Khalil.³⁸ By the end of the 13th century there was, therefore, a numerous Franciscan presence in Cyprus, having as its principal aim the possibility of waiting for better times to go back to the Holy Land and to officiate the Holy Places.

In the meantime, towards the end of the 13th century, in 1288 Pope Nicholas IV elected the Minorite Giovanni d’Ancona as Archbishop of Nicosia (1288-1295), whereas in 1289 a certain friar by the name Roberto de’ Minori was bishop of Paphos.³⁹ Golubovich also mentions a certain Brother Velasco, who was promoted to the episcopal see of Famagusta in 1265. In 1286 a certain Brother Matteo is mentioned as bishop of Famagusta.⁴⁰

On 9 August 1328, the *minister* of the Holy Land, Federico de Monte Vico (Mondovi), resident in Cyprus, received permission from Pope John XXII, residing in Avignon, to send two friars from Cyprus annually to reside temporarily in Jerusalem. From 1310 chroniclers record the *innumerabiles peregrini* who flocked to the Holy Places. The Franciscan presence in the Holy Land was documented in 1323-1327, when some friars officiated in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, through a privilege that King Jaime II of Aragon had acquired.⁴¹

Concluding remarks

The event of Saint Francis who came to the Orient in 1219 during the Fifth Crusade, and met

Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil of Egypt in Damietta, is being marked by special celebrations in the Holy Land Custody. Indeed, the presence of Francis in these regions marked the beginning of a permanent new Latin presence in the lands of *Outremer* after the era of the Crusades.

The Franciscan sources, as well as the important sources that come from the pen of the chroniclers of the Fifth Crusade, concentrate largely on Saint Francis' visit to Damietta. They hardly mention anything regarding the Franciscan presence in other areas of the Levant. With our knowledge of the history of the Crusades and of the missionary spirit of the first friars Minor, we now conclude that, after the general chapter of 1217, some friars arrived in the Crusader capital of Acre, under the direction of Brother Elias, and settled there. It was also in Acre that Francis landed in 1219, when he came together with twelve brothers from Italy.

The sea journey that brought Francis from Ancona or Brindisi to Acre, made some obligatory stopovers that were customary in the era of the Crusades. Two islands are normally mentioned as being singled out during the journey, namely Candia (Crete), under Venetian control, and Cyprus, which had passed under the Latin control of the Lusignans at the end of the 12th century, after the loss of Jerusalem. The documentation we possess mentions Candia as the island where Francis stopped over on his way to Acre. Regarding Cyprus the sources are not so explicit, except for one single episode that mentions one of Francis' companions, namely Brother Barbaro, as being present in Cyprus.

The spontaneous question therefore presents itself. Did Francis visit Cyprus on his way to Acre in 1219, or at least during his return journey to Italy in 1220? No decisive answer can be given, but the indications that Francis did stop are very convincing. For one thing, we know of a very early Franciscan presence in Cyprus. The island was a natural haven for merchants and Crusaders alike who plied the Mediterranean during the good season. It was in Cyprus that the Christians could find not only safe harbours, but also an island with an ancient Christian Byzantine tradition, in a region that now became the sole hegemony of Islam, except for the coastal enclaves of the Crusaders on the Palestinian and Lebanese coasts, and further north at Antioch. The confining of thousands of persons in the limited and overcrowded space of Acre, with the complexity of a cosmopolitan city

in which royalty, ecclesiastical hierarchy, military Orders, monastic Orders, mendicant Orders, lived in the midst of daily feuds between Pisans, Genoese, Venetians and in face of the constant menace of the Saracen armies in the hinterland, necessitated an open space where they could find more freedom and safety. Cyprus was precisely this place. Situated some 287 kilometres from the shoreline of the Crusader states, it was a blessing and proved to be a safe haven when Acre fell to Saracen hands in 1291.

It was in Acre that the Franciscans flourished, and that is why their presence in Cyprus was immediately seen as a providential element in the unfolding of the history of their presence in the Holy Land. If Francis did indeed visit the Holy Places, as Angelo Clareno states,⁴² and his brothers could desire to go on pilgrimage and to celebrate the liturgy in the same Sanctuaries, it was important to have a foothold in Cyprus, from where they could organise their missionary activities in the hope of returning on a permanent basis to Jerusalem and the other holy sites.

We know that this possibility became reality in the first half of the 14th century with the acquisition of the Cenacle. However, such a story could not happen without the long and arduous efforts to settle in the Levant on the part of the friars Minor. Such efforts can be traced back to the founder Saint Francis, who spared no energy to be a messenger of evangelical peace "among the Saracens and other non-believers." To accomplish such an ideal he must have certainly looked at the strategic importance of Cyprus. It is our belief that he did set foot on this island. But even if he did not, he made sure that his brothers would be present on this island, which has always been a holy island for Byzantine monasticism and for its praiseworthy Orthodox tradition of faith, and which for us Franciscans has always been part and parcel of the Custody of that Land we call Holy.

NOTES

- 1 J. RESTON, *Warriors of God. Richard the Lionheart and Saladin in the Third Crusade*, Anchor Books 2001; P.W. EDBURY, *The Conquest of Jerusalem and the Third Crusade*, Routledge 2017; H.J. NICHOLSON, *The Chronicle of the Third Crusade. The Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi*, Routledge 2017; *Cyprus under Richard I*, in www.cypnet.co.uk (accessed 02/12/2018).
- 2 P.W. EDBURY, *The Kingdom of Cyprus and the*

- Crusades, 1191-1374*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, 7-8: "The sixteen months during which Richard was active in the Holy Land were crucial for Cyprus. Once his conquest was complete, he left the island in the custody of two of his men, Richard of Camville and Robert of Thornham, and appointed castellans. However, the precise nature of his disposition is unclear. One writer asserted that Richard established a Greek as the titular ruler and associated Robert of Thornham with him to look after the royal interests and subject Cyprus to this new puppet government. But although Robert of Thornham was able to quell a rebellion led by a monk said to be one of Isaac's (Comnenos) relatives, the king's arrangements proved short-lived. Within a few weeks of his departure and before the fall of Acre, Richard sold his rights in the island to the Templars. A period of Templar domination then ensued, lasting until April 1192. It was rapacious and unpopular, and the Order sent insufficient troops to keep the populace under control. On 4 April, the day before Easter Sunday, the Cypriots in Nicosia attempted to rise and massacre the garrison. The small force of Templars in the town made a sally and cut down a substantial number of the insurgents. Although this incident might have appeared as a victory, the master evidently decided that Cyprus was more than the resources at his Order's disposal could manage and surrendered the island to Richard. Richard promptly sold it again, this time to Guy of Lusignan, on terms similar to those by which the Templars had held it. The sale of Cyprus to Guy of Lusignan marked the beginning of the Latin regime which was to continue for three centuries."
- 3 The name Candia was applied to Crete after it was conquered by the Venetians during the Fourth Crusade (1205-1212) and until the conquest of the island by the Ottoman Turks during the Cretan War (1645-1669). The name derives from the capital Chandax, the modern Heraklion. *A Companion to Latin Greece*, edited by N.I. TSOURARAKIS and P. LOCK, Leiden-Boston, 1949, 1-22; K.M. SETTON, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204-1571)*. Vol. 1, *The Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Memoires of the American Philosophical Society, number 114), Philadelphia, 1976.
 - 4 J. PHILLIPS, *The Fourth Crusade and the Sack of Constantinople*, Pimlico, London, 2005.
 - 5 T.W. SMITH, *How to Craft a Crusade Call: Pope Innocent III and «Quia maior» (1213)*, in www.academia.edu (accessed 02/12/2018). Latin text in *Patrologiae cursus completa, series Latina*, ed. J.P. MIGNE, vol. 216, cols. 817-822. In the encyclical Innocent III thunders against the menace of the Saracens who were overlords of lands that were rightly to be called Christian: "Et quidem omnes pene Saracenorum provincias usque post tempora beati regerti Christiani populi possiderunt; sed ex tunc quidam perditionis filius, Machometus pseudopropheta, surrexit, qui per saeculares illecebras et voluptates carnales multos a veritate aeduxit; cujus perfidia etsi usque ad haec tempora invaluerit, confidimus tamen in Domino, qui jam fecit nobiscum signum in bonum, quod finis hujus bestiae appropinquat, cujus numerus secundum Apocalypsin Joannis intra sexcenta sexaginta sex clauditur, ex quibus jam pene sexcenti sunt anni completi. Certe praeter priores injurias grandes et graves Redemptori nostro pro nostris offensis a perfidis Saracenis illatus, nuper in monte Thabor, ubi discipulis suis futurae glorificationis speciem demonstravit, iidem perfidi Saraceni quamdam munitionis arcem in confusionem Christiani nominis erexerunt, per quam civitatem Accon sibi valde vicinam de facili cogitant occupare, ac deinde sine omni contradictionis obstaculo residuum terrae hujus invadere, cum sit viribus et opibus pene penitus destituta." [col. 818].
 - 6 *Crusade and Christendom: Annotated Documents in Translation from Innocent III to the Fall of Acre, 1187-1291*, edited by J. BIRD, E. PETERS, J.M. POWELL, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2013, 106-129.
 - 7 *Conciliorum Oecumenorum Decreta. Edizione Bilingue*, a cura di G. ALBERIGO et alii, Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna, 2013, 267: "Ad liberandam Terram sanctam de manibus impiorum ardenti desiderio adspirantes de prudentum virorum ardenti desiderio adspirantes de prudentum virorum consilio qui plene noverant circumstantias temporum et locorum sacro approbante concilio diffinimus ut ita cruce signati se praeparant quod in calendis iunii sequentis post proximum omnes qui disposerunt transire per mare convenient in regnum Siciliae. Alii sicut oportuerit et decuerit apud Brundisium et alii apud Messanam et partes utrobique vicinas ubi et nos personaliter Domino annuente disposuimus tunc adesce quatenus nostro consilio et auxilio exercitus christianus salubriter ordinetur cum benedictione divina et apostolica profecturus." English translation in www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu (accessed 02/12/2018).
 - 8 In 1203, after having been freed from prison in Perugia and after a period of illness at home, Francis came to know that a knight from Assisi (known as Count Gentile) was going to Apulia to join the forces of Guatier de Brienne to defend Pope Innocent III's interests in southern Italy. Francis hoped thus to be able to join a crusade and attain the glory of knighthood. The main sources are THOMAE CELANENSIS, *Vita beati Francisci*, 4, in *Fontes Franciscani*, a cura di E. MENESTÒ e S. BRUFANI e di G. CREMASCOLI, E. PAOLI, L. PELLEGRINI, S. DA CAMPAGNOLA. Apparati di G.M. BOCCALI (Medioevo francescano. Testi, 2), S. Maria degli Angeli – Assisi 1995, 279: "Nam nobilis quidam civitatis Assisii, militaribus se non mediocriter praeparat et inanis gloriae vento inflatus, ad pecuniae vel honoris augenda lucra, iturum in Apuliam se spondit. Quibus auditis, Franciscus, quia levis animo erat et non modicum audax, ad eundem conspirat cum illo, generis nobilitate impar sed magnanimitate superior, pauperior divitiis sed profusior largitate." *Legenda trium sociorum*, 5, in *Fontes Franciscani*, 1377: "Post paucos vero annos, quidam nobilis de civitate Assisii militaribus armis se praeparat ut ad pecuniae vel honoris lucra augenda in Apuliam vadat. Quo audito, Franciscus ad eundem cum illo aspirat, et ut a quodam comite Gentili nomine miles fiat, pannos pro posse praeparat pretiosos, concive suo pauperior divitiis sed profusior largitate."
 - 9 Francis tried to go three times to preach to the Saracens. The first attempt, in 1212, ended in failure when Francis boarded a ship from Ancona but ended up on the Dalmatian coast (probably in Zadar, Croatia). A year later, in 1213, he attempted to go to Morocco to preach to Muhammad al-Nasir, the Almohad ruler known as Miramamolin, from the Arab words "Amir al-

- Mu'minim", meaning "Commander of the Believers". While still in Spain he got ill and had to return to Assisi. The third time was in 1219, when he went to Damietta. Cfr. THOMAE CELANENSIS, *Vita beati Francisci*, 55-57, in *Fontes Franciscani*, 329-331.
- 10 One of the principal chroniclers of the Order, Jordan of Giano, describes this first mission of the brothers in the East, as a direct result of the decisions taken during the general chapter of Pentecost of 14 May 1217. The brothers who were chosen had as their leader a prominent figure, namely brother Elias of Cortona. Jordan writes: "Brother Elias was appointed minister provincial by Blessed Francis for the territory beyond the sea. At his preaching there, a certain cleric by the name of Caesar was received into the Order." JORDAN OF GIANO, *Chronicle*, 9, in *XIIIth Century Chronicles. Jordan of Giano. Thomas of Eccleston. Salimbene degli Adami*, Translated from the Latin by P. HERMANN, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, 1961, 24-25. Latin text in *Analecta Franciscana sive Chronica aliaque varia documenta ad historiam Fratrum Minorum spectantia*, edita a Patribus Collegii S. Bonaventurae, Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi), 1885, Tomus I, 1-19: "Frater autem Helias minister provincialis est institutus ultre mare a beato Francisco. Ad cuius praedicationem quidem clericus, nomine Caesarius, ad Ordinem est receptus." Brother Caesar of Speyer was later to lead the mission of the friars to Germany in 1221. On Brother Elias of Cortona, cfr. R. B. BROOKE, *Early Franciscan Government. Elias to Bonaventure*, Cambridge, 1959, 83-122, 137-177; G. ODORARDI, *Elia di Assisi*, in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, III (1976), 1094-1110; S. VECCHIO, *Elia d'Assisi (Elia da Cortona nel secolo Buonbarone)*, in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, XLII, Roma, 1993, 450-458; G. BARONE, *Brother Elias Revisited*, in *Greyfriars Review* 13 (1999), 1-18. On the foundation of the friary of Acre and the presence of Brother Elias as minister of the Province of *Outremer*, or Syria, or *Terrae Promissionis*, cfr. F. SEDDA, *Frate Elia e il Capitolo del 1217: una provincia d'Oltremare?*; G. LIGATO, *Acri al tempo di frate Elia da Cortona*, papers presented during the Study Days held in the Monastery of Saint Saviour, Jerusalem, in October 2017.
- 11 A. FORTINI, *Nova Vita di S. Francesco*, Vol. I, Parte II, Tipografia Porziuncola, Santa Maria degli Angeli, Assisi, 1959, 43-109. For an English translation: A. FORTINI, *Francis of Assisi*, Translated by H. MOAK, Crossroad, New York, 1981, 395-439.
- 12 G. GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca bio-bibliografica della Terra Santa e dell'Oriente Franciscano*, Tomo I (1215-1300), Collegio S. Bonaventura, Quaracchi presso Firenze, 1906, 92 (Regesto cronologico de' fatti principali della vita e del viaggio di S. Francesco in Oriente, dell'assedio di Damietta, ecc.).
- 13 P. SABATIER, *Vie de Saint François d'Assise*, Librairie Fischbacher, Paris, 1894, 258: "François quitta la Portiuncule à la mi-juin et se dirige vers Ancône, d'où les Croisés devaient partir pour l'Égypte, le jour de la Saint-Jean (24 juin)."
- 14 IORDANUS A IANO, *Chronica*, 10, in *Analecta Franciscana*, I, 4.
- 15 *De Conformitate vitae beati Francisci ad vitam Domini Iesu*, auctore fr. BARTHOLOMAEO DE PISA, Liber I, Fructus X, Pars II, Franciscus praedicator, in *Analecta Franciscana*, Tomus IV, Quaracchi, 1906, 480-481: "Tertio tandem ad partes infidelium accessit, ut et fidem praedicando eisdem converteret et si non ad palmam gloriosi martyrii perveniret. Verum cum se tertio decimo anno a sua conversione ad partes Syriae, ut soldano praedicaret, disponderet adire, multi fratres eum usque ad partes Anconae sunt secuti, volentes cum ipso illuc accedere. Sed ipse hoc considerans, ac quod grave esset tot fratres simul navibus deducere, nec ipse vellet aliquem inconsolatum dimittere eos, dum esset in portu Anconae, sic est allocutus: «Carissimi fratres, omnes vos vellem pro vestra consolatione ducere mecum; sed nautae non sinunt; et quia unum ego eligendo et alium dimittendo, vobis materiam praeberem scandali et divisionis, ideo super hoc placeat vobis velle consulere Domini voluntatem, quam sic sciemus.» Nam vocavit unum parvum puerum, qui neminem illorum agnoscebat, et dixit fratribus: «Interrogemus hunc puerum, si vobis placet;» et cum eum omnibus placuisset, dixit beatus Franciscus puero: «Estne, puer, voluntas Dei, ut omnes [isti fratres] transeant mecum?» Respondit quod non. «Et quos vult Deus transfretare mecum?» Respondit tangendo fratres: «Iste et iste et ille;» et sic tetigit undecim fratres de illis, et dixit beato Francisco: «Isti tecum ibunt, quia sic est voluntas Dei.» Et tunc omnes fuerunt contenti, qui tacti non fuerant per puerum, Dei voluntatem agnoscentes. Beatus autem Franciscus, dictis fratribus assumptis, navim intravit et ad partes Syriae cum eisdem pervenit."
- 16 MARIANO DA FIRENZE, *Libro delle vite di Sancti Fratri Minori* (c. 1480), c. 17, in GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca I*, 77: "Et essendo nel porto di Anchona per entrare in mare... Navigò S. Francesco cho' predetti chompagni che desiderava, et in breve tempo venne nell'isola di Chandia, dove alquanti giorni fu et predichò la penitentia et la passione di Christo. Dipoi navigando in Siria feciono porto nella famosa cipta di Aciri."
- 17 L. WADDING, *Annales Minorum seu Trium Ordinum a S. Francisco Institutorum*, Tomus I, Romae, 1731, ad an. 1219, n. 57, 322, who states that Francis stopped in Cyprus and arrived in Acre in mid-July 1219: "Ancona itaque solventibus, brevi demum tempore navis applicuit Cyprum, insulam Mediterranei maris notissimam."
- 18 J. FOLDA, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land. From the Third Crusade to the Fall of Acre 1187-1291*, Cambridge University Press, 2005, 125: "Montmusard was a new part of Acre located adjacent to the northern twelfth-century wall. Its new wall ran from a point just east of the *castellum* at the gate of St. Anthony to a point on the coast about 800 metres north of the wall, forming a triangular suburb." In page 400 the author also describes the presence of religious Orders in Acre, including the house of the friars Minor: "Because of the presence of the numerous religious houses in Acre, there were Christian schools in Acre. Theology was taught here since 1218. Besides the likelihood of a school connected with the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, the Franciscans and the Dominicans must have had *studia* in Acre. William of Rubruck had been assigned to the Franciscan convent (established c. 1219) as *lector* in 1255, and the Dominicans with their emphasis on study, preaching, and missionary work surely had a similar *studium* in their establishment (founded c. 1229). Certainly both the Franciscans and the Dominicans were actively involved in the study of oriental languages, including Arabic and Armenian, for their missionary activities. These three places would have been centres of study in Acre,

- each with some kind of library. Other major orders were present in the city as well, such as the Carmelites, the Benedictines, and the Cistercians, but we know very little about their intellectual activities there.”
- 19 GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca*, 2, is of the opinion that Francis returned to Italy at the end of 1220 or even in the spring of 1221: “Laddove noi vedremo passo passo, con più precisione, che Francesco, dopo aver visitato il Soldano, cui e alla cui corte predicò *per dies aliquot* (Vitry *Histor.*); e dopo aver fatto lo stesso negli accampamenti saraceni *multis diebus* (id. *Epist.*), vedremo che egli si fermò in Egitto, non solo fino alla caduta di Damietta (5 nov. 1219), ma fino all’ingresso solenne che vi fecero i Crociati nel 2 febbraio 1220. Da lì lo rivedremo ritornare in Siria, e ivi fermarsi per un pezzo di tempo (Éracles), prima di far vela per l’Italia col famoso fr. Elia e con altri compagni; lo vedremo quindi in Oriente certo fino quasi alla fine del 1220, e con tutta probabilità indicheremo il suo ritorno in Italia entro il marzo o entro l’aprile del 1221.” The reason for this time-frame is that Golubovich insists that Francis must have had enough time to visit the Holy Land and pray in the Holy Sepulchre. L. WADDING, *Annales Minorum*, I, ad an. 1220, n. 2, 332, prefers the year 1220: “Misso Fratre Stephano, sancti Viri olim Socio, in Syriam curarunt ut omnia ei exponerentur, et revocaretur in Italiam.”
- 20 WADDING, *Annales Minorum*, I, ad an. 1220, n. 4, 333: “In navigatione prospere successit, nam brevi Candiam appulit, hinc Venetias, opulentissimam maris Adriatici Urbem.”
- 21 WADDING, *Annales Minorum*, I, ad an. 1219, n. 57, 322: “Ancona itaque solventibus, brevi demum tempore navis applicuit Cyprum, insulam Mediterranei maris notissimam, in qua dum haerent per unum atque alterum diem, evenit ut secundum humanam conditionem, quae irae impatiens compositos quosque homines extra se saepius, rapit, frater Barbarus durius aliquod verbum in unum ex Sociis, praesente ed audiente nobili quodam Viro, effutiret. Statim vero in se reversus, confiderans malum a se ministratum exemplum, excremento vilis animalis ore apprehendo et dentibus comminuto, in ipso commotionis loco coram Fratribus et Saeculari: justum est, inquit, ut stercore repleatur os, quod in Fratrem peccavit. Quo facto et Fratri ultra condignum satisfacit, et Herois animum ita devicit, ut sua et semetipsum in Fratrum obtulerit obsequium. Cypro tandem venerunt Acon, alias Ptolomaidam dictam.”
- 22 THOMAS DE CELANO, *Memoriale in Desiderio Animae*, 155, in *Fontes Franciscani*, 581: “Accidit quemdam fratrem Barbarum nomine, quam quodam nobili viro di insula Cypri, semel in fratrem alium verbum iactare iniurare. Qui cum ex verbi conflictu laesum aliquantulum cerneret fratrem asinino stercore sumpso, in suimet accensus vindictam ori proprio illud conterendum immittit dicens: «Stercus commasticet lingua, quae in fratrem meum iracundiae venenum effudit.» Accipiens hoc miles stupore attonitus, nimium aedificatus discessit, et ex tunc se et sua liberaliter fratrum voluntati exposuit.” The Quaracchi edition of what used to be called the *Vita Secunda* by THOMAS OF CELANO, forms part of the Franciscan sources in *Analecta Franciscana*, Tomus X, Collegii S. Bonaventurae, Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi), 1941, 127-268. The most recent critical edition is: THOMAS DE CELANO, *Memoriale. Editio critico-synoptica duarum redactionum ad fidem codicum manuscriptorum*, curaverunt F. ACCROCCA - A. HOROWSKI (Subsidia Scientifica Franciscalia, 12), Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, Roma, 2011.
- 23 F. ACCROCCA, *Un Santo di Carta. Le Fonti Biografiche di San Francesco d’Assisi*, Edizioni Biblioteca Franciscana Milano, 2013 (Biblioteca di S. Francesco, 13), 47. Accrocca states that the *Compilatio Assisiensis* is the fruit of the documentation of the companions of Saint Francis, which an anonymous writer, who had access to the same documentary material in the archives of the Sacro Convento, compiled after 1276, and which was reproduced in 1310-1312 in Assisi in the form we have it today.
- 24 *Compilatio Assisiensis*, 41, in *Fontes Franciscani*, 1514.
- 25 *Speculum Perfectionis*, 51, in *Fontes Franciscani*, 1829-2076. The first critical edition of this work, originally mistakenly dated 1227 by Sabatier, but later confirmed as being compiled in 1318, is entitled: *Speculum Perfectionis seu S. Francisci Assisiensis Legenda Antiquissima auctore frate Leone*, nunc primum editit Paul SABATIER, (Collection de documents pour l’histoire religieuse et littéraire du Moyen Âge 1), Librairie Fischbacher, Paris, 1898.
- 26 As we have already seen, in note 17, L. WADDING, *Annales Minorum* I, ad an. 1219, n. 57, 322, states that Francis stopped in Cyprus: “Ancona itaque solventibus, brevi demum tempore navis applicuit Cyprum, insulam Mediterranei maris notissimam.”
- 27 N. PAPINI, *Storia di S. Francesco*, Foligno, 1827, Libro II, 35, nota 3: “Il nome suo d’origine fu *Insula*. Al tempo che scriveva il Celano chiamavasi *Insula Cippii*, probabilmente per attenersi a’ Signori Cijp, o Cifi (Vedi Libro I. Capitolo VIII. Nota 4) nobili d’Assisi, della qual Famiglia fu Santa Chiara. Nelle aggiunte fatte circa il 1260, al Censuario di Cencio Camerlingo presso il Muratori *Antiq. Ital. Mediaevi*, è indicata *Insula Vetus*: in seguito si trova detta comunemente *Insula Romana*, perchè dipendente dalla Camera Apostolica; fu circa il 1318 che lasciò il nome d’*Isola*, e si disse *Bastia*, mediante un bastione eretovi dagli Assisiati per far argine alle inondanti Perugine squadre. Ma queste nel 1320 il presero d’assalto colla Terra. Il P. Waddingo scrive ciò avvenuto nell’Isola di Cipro; è compatibile; nulla seppe di questa *Insula Cippii*, e pensò doversi leggere Cipro. Quindi probabilmente inserì, o lo scrisse, che fra Barbaro fu uno de’ compagni del Santo nel viaggio in Levante, ed altre cose analoghe, che vi si leggono *ad Annum 1219*.” The thesis that Clare’s family belonged to the noble family of Cipi or Scifi, is now discarded.
- 28 GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca*, I, 19, note 2: “Il Papini (*Storia di S. Francesco*, I, 75; II, 35), tenendosi alla lezione del testo edito dal Rinaldi (Roma 1806) pretese correggere il Waddingo ed altri che lessero *insula Cypri* surrogandovi *insula Cippii*, col quale nome volle intendere *Bastia*, borgo presso Assisi, così denominata da una certa famiglia de’ *Cipi* o *Scifi*. Anche il P. Panfilo (*Storia di S. Francesco*, I, 415) senza tanto badarvi, seguì il criterio del Papini. Il Sabatier (*Spec. Perf.* p. 88. n. 2) invece osserva che, lungo il sec. XIII *Bastia* fu sì denominata or *insula romana*, or *insula vetus*, ma che fin

qui non si ha traccia che a que' tempi avesse mai avuto il nome datole dal Papini di *insula Cypii*. Del resto, il Cod. 686 Assisano della Celanense, come il testo edito dal P. Lemmens (*Documenta antiqua franciscana*, III. n. 54) nonchè i Mss. Conosciuti e le edizioni dello *Speculum*, tutti hanno chiaramente *Cypri* o *Cipri*, e non *Cipi*. - Che poi il fatto sia realmente accaduto in Cipro, nota isola del Mediterraneo, e regno allora dei Crociati, lo dicono Mariano, il Waddingo (ad an. 1219, n. 57) e il citato Sabatier tanto nella *Vie de S. François*, c. XIII, p. 259, come nell'edizione dello *Speculum Perfectionis*, p. 88. Dal contesto infatti risulta molto verosimile che il fatto sia avvenuto lungi dall'Italia, dicendovisi che il Santo gioiva «cum sanctorum fratrum per orbem distantium audiebat magnalia», o come si esprime il capitolo dello *Speculum* (in massima parte una delle fonti del Celanense): «quum sanctorum fratrum qui erant per orbem dispersi audiebat magnalia»; e quindi, come un esempio de' fatti lontani, segue il caso accaduto «*coram quodam milite de insula Cypri (qui) ex tunc se et sua liberaliter fratrum voluntati exposuit.*»

- 29 SABATIER, *Vie de Saint François d'Assise*, c. XIII, 259: "Nous ignorons l'itinéraire suivi. Un seul souvenir de ce voyage nous est parvenu: celui du châtement infligé dans l'île de Chypre à frère Barbaro." English translation in SABATIER, *Life of St. Francis*, 227-228.
- 30 There are various local traditions along some coastal towns in the Adriatic that indicate stopovers of Francis on his way to Venice. One of them is linked with the town of Lezhë, where the ancient Franciscan church of Zoja Nunciata, dating from 1240, is said to mark the place where Francis landed on his way to Italy.
- 31 P. PIERACCINI, *The Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land in Cyprus*, (Studia Orientalia Christiana, Monographiae, n. 22), Edizioni Terra Santa, Milano, 2013.
- 32 PIERACCINI, *The Franciscan Custody*, 15: "The Friars Minor settled in Cyprus from the earliest days of the Order. The famous historian of the island, Louis de Mas Latrie, dates their arrival to the years 1218-1223 (*Histoire de l'île de Chypre sous le règne des princes de la maison de Lusignan*, Paris, 1852, I, 189). Authoritative scholars such as Barnaba Meistermann hypothesize that it was friar Elia da Cortona - appointed Minister of the Franciscan Overseas Province at the General Chapter of Santa Maria degli Angeli (1217) - who sent the first friars to the island (MEISTERMANN, *Gli antichi conventi dei frati minori nella diocesi di Nicosia in Cipro*, Jerusalem, 1925, 3-4). St. Francis definitely stayed there during his journey to the Orient (1219-1220), as some ancient biographies such as the *Speculum perfectionis* (chapter 51) record (St. Francis is believed to have stayed in Limassol, Cf. A. FIERENS, *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique*, IX (1908) 709). Girolamo Golubovich presumes that the Saint stayed there with his companions both on the outward journey and on his return, as the island was 'the only centre and point of commercial and military support, more than Acre itself' (*Biblioteca bio-bibliografica della Terra Santa e dell'Oriente francescano*, edited by G. GOLUBOVICH, Quaracchi (Florence), 1913, II, 279). Therefore, even if Elia had not thought of organizing the mission, it was certainly Francis who let some of his friars there to expand it."
- 33 MEISTERMANN, *Gli antichi conventi dei frati minori nella diocesi di Nicosia in Cipro*, 4: "Nessun documento contemporaneo parla della presenza di S. Francesco in Cipro. Pure non si può dubitare che, nel suo soggiorno di venti mesi in Oriente, vi sia andato o per visitare i conventi, se fr. Elia ne avea già fondati, o per installarvi egli stesso qualcuno de' suoi discepoli. Il noto aneddoto d'uno de' compagni di viaggio, frate Barbaro d'Assisi, che, mentr'era in Cipro mortificò tanto eroicamente la sua lingua, certamente non prova che il serafico Padre allora vi abitasse, ma dà a credere che sia stato nell'isola." The fact that Meistermann extends Francis' stay in the Orient until 1221 seems to be far-fetched. Even if Francis returned to Acre after the solemn entry of the Crusaders in Damietta on 2 February 1220, he would have had enough time to visit Jerusalem and other holy places before returning to Italy for the celebration of the general chapter of 29 September 1220, St. Michael's day, when Pietro Cattani was hand picked by Francis to be his vicar. Cattani died at the Portiuncula on 10 March 1221. He certainly was chosen some months before that date, when Francis presided over the chapter in Assisi, which was celebrated on 29 September 1220, since for the occasion of Pentecost Francis was still away from Italy in the Levant.
- 34 MEISTERMANN, *Gli antichi conventi dei frati minori nella diocesi di Nicosia in Cipro*, 4: "Pure non è inverosimile che fr. Elia, genio organizzatore e zelante, e savio fondatore d'un convento a Costantinopoli nel 1220, abbia mandato alcuni de' suoi compagni nel regno franco tanto vicino a Tolemaide."
- 35 PIERARRCINI, *The Franciscan Custody*, 17. The Franciscans had a friary in Nicosia, which some historians state was founded in 1226 at the end of Saint Francis' life (others opt for 1237 or even 1251). They also had another friary in a place outside Nicosia, called "Belloloco", which some historians consider to have been founded by the companions of Saint Francis present on the island, and thus as the first friary in order of time. Since the friary was found in a deserted place, the friars decided to sell it to the Cistercians. This place could very well have been closer to Larnaca, and in Greek it refers to the village of Kalo Chorio, on the road from Larnaca to Stavrovouni Monastery. GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca*, I, 231, presents a Papal rescript, *Ex parte Venerabilis*, by Innocent IV (29 January 1254) regarding the fact that the archbishop of Nicosia had protested that the sale of the friary was done illegally, and entrusting the bishop of Tripoli and archdeacon of Acre to decide on the matter.
- 36 PIERARRCINI, *The Franciscan Custody*, 18.
- 37 PIERARRCINI, *The Franciscan Custody*, 18-19: "The four convents represented the old 'Custody of Cyprus'. At the General Chapter of Narbonne (1265) (*sic*) presided by St. Bonaventure, the large province of the Orient was divided into two provinces: that of Romania (or Greece) comprising the convents within the borders of the Byzantine Empire and the Holy Land, embracing the convents of the Crusader and Muslim territories of Syria and Palestine. The latter was in turn divided into the custodies of Syria and Cyprus. The Franciscan convents on the island, like those in Palestine - although forming a separate custody with a superior of their own - continued to be under the jurisdiction of the Provincial of the Holy Land, resident in Acre. This form of ecclesiastical

organization remained unchanged until 1291, when Acre fell into Muslim hands and the Crusaders were expelled from the Holy Land for good. This time, only some of the Poor Clares and the Friars Minor of the Latin kingdom were able to seek safety in Cyprus. For some time, the Franciscan Custody of the island was the only one in the Orient. The seat of the Provincial Minister of the Holy Land was transferred to the convent of Nicosia, where both the Superior of the Custody of Cyprus and the Provincial lived.” The general chapter which divided the Province of Syria into two was not that of Narbonne (celebrated in 1260 and not in 1265), but the chapter of Pisa in 1263. No general chapter was celebrated in 1265, since Bonaventure celebrated chapters regularly every three years: Narbonne (1260), Pisa (1263), Paris (1266).

- 38 GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca*, I, 351-352: “...Quatuordecim fratres Minores de Ordine S. Francisci: Guardiani cum aliis fratribus recedentibus de civitate [Acon] ante excidium, et in Ciprum navigantibus cum multis aliis clericis, religiosi et laici, timentes ne fragilitate sua vincerentur in martiriis recipiendis a saracenis; et sicut ad negandum fidem, sacrificia Christi, timore poenarum et tormentis, inclinarent, non nihil, elegerunt potius ad aliam fugere civitatem, sicut Salvator dixit debilibus adhuc discipulis, et in terra pacis regem pacificum Christum venerari et colere. Ipsi vere praedicti XIII fratres, constantes in fide, pro Christi nomine et confessione verae fidei, dum immobiles permanerent, intra suam ecclesiam et locum, a saracenis martirizati fuerunt, et a Christo in gloriam adsunt et adiuncti sanctis martiribus...”
- 39 GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca*, I, 325-326.
- 40 GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca*, I, 393.

- 41 GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca*, Tomus III (dal 1300 al 1332), Quaracchi, 1919, 344: “Ioannes XXII: Ministro fratrum Ordinis Minorum Provinciae Terrae Sanctae. Sperantes quod zelum habeas animarum, et ad eas lucrificandas Domino tua studia dirigantur, ut **duobus** tui ordinis fratribus, probatae vitae et expertae scientiae, quos duxerit eligendos, visitandi Sepulcrum Dominicum et alia loca Terrae Sanctae quae Salvator noster Jesus Christus sua corporali praesentia illustravit, secum ducendi unum famulum ad obsequendum sibi, **annis singulis**, quibuscumque constitutionibus et prohibitionibus Apostolicae Sedis contrariis nequaquam obstantibus, valeas licentiam elargiri, plenam tibi concedimus auctoritate praesentium facultatem. Datum ut supra [v idus augusti anno duodecimo = 9 agosto 1328].” Quoted from Reg. Vaticano t. 114, fol. 156v. ep. 1588.
- 42 ANGELO CLARENO, *Chronicon seu Historia septem tribulationum Ordinis fratrum Minorum*, Prologue, 395, quoted in GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca*, I, 55-56: “Tercio post multa obprobria, vincula, verbera et labores ad Soldanum Babilonie Xto, ordinante, perductus est. Stansque in conspectu eius, igne Spiritus Sancti totus ardens, in tanta virtute, et viva et efficaci predicatione Xtum Yhesum et eius sanctam fidem evangelii predicavit eidem ut amiretur Soldanus, et omnes pariter qui astabant. Nam ad virtutem verborum que Xtus loquebatur in eo, Soldanus in mansuetudinem conversus, auditum verbis eius contra sue nephande legis decretum libenter prebebat, et ad moram contrahendam in terra sua instanter invitavit, **et ipsum et omnes fratres suos libere ad Sepulcrum et absque tributi solutione accedere posse mandavit.**”

THE ORIGINS OF THE FRANCISCAN PRESENCE IN THE HOLY LAND [4]

Noel Muscat ofm

The enduring legacy of Francis in the Holy Land

During the course of the 13th century the Franciscan presence in the Holy Land was not limited to Acre. The friars Minor established themselves in all the Crusader strongholds of the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese coast, starting from Antioch¹ and Tripoli in the north and going down to Sidon, Tyre, Acre and Jaffa. But the most interesting presence was that in the holy city of Jerusalem. It was short-lived, lasting only from 1229 till 1244, but it is a proof that, just three years after the death of Saint Francis, the friars Minor were living in Jerusalem, where they would eventually settle on stable basis during the first half of the 14th century.

On 7th September 1228 Emperor Frederick II landed in Acre and went up to Jerusalem in order to receive the gift of the holy city from al-Malik al-Kamil of Egypt, who established with him a peace treaty in Jaffa on 18th February 1229. On 17th March Frederick II entered the holy city, and the following day he placed upon his head the crown of king of Jerusalem in the basilica of the Holy Sepulchre. Frederick had concluded with al-Kamil a truce of 10 years, which would mean that he received the city of Jerusalem, except the *Haram al-Sharif* where Muslims pray in the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock, and he also received the town of Bethlehem. This was a political strategy on the part of al-Malik al-Kamil in order to weaken the power of the Sultan of Damascus, an-Nasir Dawud, son of al-Mu'azzam. In the meantime Pope Gregory IX had excommunicated Emperor Frederick II for having established a peace treaty with the Sultan of Egypt without the Pope's authorisation. For this

reason the Pope sent two friars Minor to Acre with letters to the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Gerald of Lausanne, to announce publicly to all Christians that the Emperor had been excommunicated.² Before leaving Acre the Emperor punished the Franciscan and Dominican friars of Acre on 8th April 1229, before he left and went to Cyprus.

The truce established between the Sultan of Egypt and the Holy Roman Emperor, however, had its positive aspects. It meant that Jerusalem became a Christian city and that Christians could live peacefully within its confines. Taking advantage of the truce the Patriarch entered Jerusalem in March 1229, and the clergy and regulars took possession of their ancient churches and other properties. The historian Matthew Paris does not mention that the Franciscans were among the regulars who went to live in Jerusalem. However, we know that on 1st February 1230, Gregory IX had published a letter, *Si Ordinis fratrum Minorum*, and sent it to the Patriarch of Antioch, Albert de Rezato (†1245) and to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Gerald of Lausanne (†1239), in which it is evident that the Friars Minor had a friary in Jerusalem in 1229, and the Pope was defending their rights.³

This document is a proof that the Franciscans were given a special privilege by Pope Gregory IX, namely that of accepting money offerings, in their exceptional status as missionaries in Saracen lands, as long as they respected the parochial rights of the clergy. The Franciscan Rule, in fact, prohibited friars to receive money offerings. The fact that the letter mentions dwellings and oratories for the friars is an indication that, during the truce established between Frederick II and al-Malik al-Kamil, the Franciscans could very well have had a friary in Jerusalem.

The presence of the Franciscans in Jerusalem

is documented by Ricoldo of Montecroce, who visited Jerusalem in 1288-1291. When describing the place where the soldiers compelled Simon of Cyrene to carry Jesus' cross in the Via Dolorosa, this Dominican friar and pilgrim states that it is to be found at the junction of Jehoshapat and the street leading from Saint Stephen's Gate, and adds: "Next to that place is the house (*locus*) that formerly belonged to the Friars Minor."⁴

According to Denys Pringle, this house would certainly have existed in the period 1229-1244, when Jerusalem was under Christian control during the truce established between Frederick II and al-Malik al-Kamil.⁵ We do not know where the Franciscan friary exactly stood, since the present Fifth Station of the Via Dolorosa was only established in 1850. It must have been in the area, although we are not even aware on which side of the street it would have stood. One of the friars who lived in this house in 1230-1234 was Brother Ardizio Corradi, who died in Senigallia in November 1235.

We know nothing else about this convent, except that in 1244 the Franciscans in Jerusalem were massacred during the raid of the Khwarizmian Turks, that ended the Christian presence in the holy city.⁶ There are some indications of a sporadic presence of friars Minor in Jerusalem, as in the case of the friars present for the Holy Fire in 1267. The idea that the Franciscans were present in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre already in 1240 has been shown to be incorrect by Golubovich.⁷

The Franciscan presence in Acre came to an end on 18th May 1291, during the siege of Acre, when Sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf Khalil massacred the 14 friars Minor still present in the city, as well as the entire monastery of 74 Poor Clares. In 1266 the Mamluk Sultan Bibars had already destroyed the Franciscan friary of Safed in Galilee and massacred the friars. In 1289 the city of Tripoli in Lebanon was taken, and the Franciscan friars killed, and the same happened after the fall of Acre in 1291 to the friars in Tyre and Sidon.

The fall of Acre marked the end of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem and of the Latin presence in the Holy Land.⁸ It was also to mark the temporary end of Franciscan presence, but only for three decades, although the friars Minor could remain in Cyprus, like the military Orders and all the other nobles who sought refuge in the island to escape the horrors of the Saracen invasion of the city. Golubovich presents the account of the

Chronicle of the XXIV Generals, concentrating particularly on the massacre of the Poor Clares in their monastery.⁹

The first half of the 14th century marks the period when the Franciscan presence in the Holy Land becomes stable and permanent. In 1292-1294 the Dominican pilgrim Ricoldo di Monte Croce found only ruins on Mount Zion, where the Byzantine basilica of *Hagia Sion*, destroyed by the Persians in 614, and rebuilt by the Crusaders, once stood. The church housed the *Coenaculum*, or Upper Room of the Last Supper, with the place of the descent of the Holy Spirit and the chapel of the Washing of the Feet, and the *Dormitio Virginis*, in memory of the house where the Virgin Mary lived in Jerusalem. The story of the settlement of the Franciscans in the Cenacle is a complex one. We will just present some bare outlines, with reference to the detailed analysis by Golubovich.¹⁰

From 1310 chroniclers record the *innumerabiles peregrini* who flocked to the Holy Places. The Franciscan presence in the Holy Land was documented in 1323-1327, when some friars officiated in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, through a privilege that King Jaime II of Aragon had acquired. On 9 August 1328, the *minister* of the Holy Land, Federico de Monte Vico (Mondovi), resident in Cyprus, received permission from Pope John XXII, residing in Avignon, to send two friars in Jerusalem to assist the local Christians.¹¹

The first documented account regarding the Cenacle comes from the *Chronicle of the XXIV Generals*. In 1332-1333 a certain friar by the name of Roger Guerin, from the province of Aquitaine, was sent by the minister general Gerard Eudes (Odonis) to the Holy Land, and this friar succeeded in acquiring the Cenacle.¹²

In his efforts Roger Guerin found a valid help from the noble lady Margherita di Sicilia, who directed the *hospitium peregrinorum* of Saint John in the Muristan, close to the Holy Sepulchre, the birthplace of the Knights Hospitallers (Knights of Malta). Golubovich documented this information from the *De Terra sancta et itinere Iherosolomitano* by Ludolph von Sudheim (1350).¹³ Donna Margherita helped brother Roger in two acts of buying of property in Jerusalem. On 15th May 1335, "Margherita, daughter of Giovanni, brother Roger son of Stephen and brother Giovanni di Francesco" acquired from Qâdi Sharraf ed-din Muhammad, the administrator of the public treasury of Jerusalem, a plot of land close to the ancient church of Mount

Zion, with the sum of 1000 silver drachmae. On 19th September Donna Margherita sold to brother Roger her third part of the property with a value of 400 silver drachmae. It is curious how Roger Guerin could effectively buy property when he was a friar Minor. However, in *Ex parte vestra* (17th March 1226),¹⁴ Pope Honorius III had authorised missionaries preaching in Morocco to make use of money acquired as alms to buy their necessities of life. The reason was that these Franciscans were living *in partibus infidelium*, and therefore it was licit for brother Roger to handle money in the Holy Land.

The final act of acquisition of the entire property of Mount Zion was that accomplished by King Robert of Anjou, king of Naples and Jerusalem (1309-1343), and his wife Sancia of Majorca, daughter of Jaime I, king of Majorca. This royal couple showed a particular affection towards the friars Minor. They died as Franciscan penitents and were buried in the church of Santa Chiara in Naples, where Sancia also founded a monumental monastery of the Poor Clares. These royals bought the property from Sultan en-Naser Mohammad. The official act of the buying of the property existed until 1427 in the archives of the Franciscans in Jerusalem, and exists in Cod. Lat. 558 of the Vatican Secret Archives. This is a document written by an anonymous German friar who visited the Holy Land. This gesture by the royals of Naples meant that they had acquired the right of perpetual *juspatronatus* on the Holy Places, particularly on the Cenacle, to support twelve friars Minor who were to live there and to officiate the other Holy Places, particularly the Holy Sepulchre and Bethlehem.

On 22nd May 1363, Queen Joanna I of Naples and Aragon, niece of Robert of Anjou and wife of Jaime III of Majorca, sent letters to the Mamluk Sultan al-Malik al-Mansur, in which she requested him to confirm the rights of the Franciscans on the Holy Places, and also to let them officiate and build a friary close to the Tomb of the Virgin Mary, where there is the crypt of the Crusader church of *Sancta Maria in Vallis Josaphat*. She also mentions that the friars were officiating the Nativity Basilica in Bethlehem since 1347.

By now the Franciscans had become established in a stable way in the Cenacle and in the other Holy Places just mentioned. The most tangible proof of this comes in the two *Bullae* of Clement VI, which are considered to mark the foundation of

the *Custodia Terrae Sanctae*, entrusted to the friars Minor by the Church. The *Bullae* were published in Avignon on 21st November 1342, with the titles *Gratias agimus* and *Nuper carissimae*.¹⁵ They mark the official recognition by the Church of the deeds of property by the royals of Naples in favour of the friars Minor. *Gratias agimus* is addressed respectively to the *dilectis filiis generali et Terrae Laboris Ordinis fratrum Minorum Ministris*. It is the seal of a lasting presence that continues to this very day in the regions “beyond the sea” where Saint Francis came as a herald of peace 800 years ago.

NOTES

- 1 GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca* I, 66-69, documents the presence of a Franciscan friary on the famous *Montana Nigra* above Antioch, founded in 1229-1230 on an ex-Benedictine monastery. He quotes the *Chronica XXIV Generalium*, in *Analecta Franciscana* III, 281: “Erat tunc in partibus ultramarinis prope Antiochiam ad octo milliaria quidam conventus in loco, qui dicitur Montana Nigra (eo quod densissima silva bene lata ad duo milliaria cingebatur), sanctis fratribus populatus, cuius principium fuit tale. Erat ibi enim antea ab antiquo monasterium monachorum Ordinis Sancti Benedicti, cuius Abbas et monachi mores et vitam Fratrum Minorum, quod ad illas partes venerant, contemplantes, divino spiritu inflammati, omnes possessiones ipsius monasterii Patriarchae Antiocheno resignantes, monasterio tantum pro sua et aliorum fratrum habitatione retento, Fratrum Minorum omnes habitum et Ordinem assumpserunt.” Golubovich also mentions brother Benedetto Sinigardi di Arezzo, who is referred as *Minister Antiochiae*, or *Minister Antiochiae et Romaniae*, or even as *Minister Graeciae* (1221-1237). During the chapter of Pisa (1263), the issue of the Province of the Holy Land was discussed. It was decided to limit it to Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, dividing it into Custodies, among which the Custody of the Holy Land, which included the friaries of Saint Jean d’Acre, Antioch, Sidon, Tyre, Jerusalem and Jaffa. Cfr. GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca bio-bibliografica*, Tomus II [Addenda al Sec. XIII, e Fonti pel Sec. XIV], Quaracchi 1913, 230-237; 261; 271; 398-399. F. SEDDA, *Frate Elia e il capitolo del 1217*, proposes a new thesis, namely that the region of *Outremer* had, in fact, two *ministri*, namely one in Acre (for the *Provincia Syriae*) and one in Constantinople (for the *Provincia Romaniae*) already in 1221, even though the juridical division into two provinces occurred only during the Chapter of Pisa in 1263.
- 2 GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca* I, 156-158.
- 3 GREGORIUS IX, *Si Ordinis Fratrum Minorum* (1 February 1230), in *Bullarium Franciscanum*, ed. SBARALEA, I, 58-59, quoted by GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca* I, 160: “Gregorius Episcopus Servus servorum Dei: Venerabilis Fratribus Antiochensi, et Jerosolymitano Patriarchis Apostolicae Sedis Legatis, ac universis

Archiepiscopis, et Episcopis, et dilectis filiis Abbatibus, Prioribus, Praepositis, Decanis, Archidioconis, et aliis Ecclesiarum Praelatis ad quos litterae istae pervenerint, salutem, et Apostolicam Benedictionem. - Si Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Religionem attenditis, poteritis plene cognoscere, quod temporalia bona non cupiunt, cum ex eorum institutione sufficientiam suam in paupertate posuerint, et eam praecipue sint professi; sicque sibi favorem Vestrum, cum expedierit eo facilius impenderitis, quo minus praesumitur, quod ipsi quaerant vel ambient commodum temporale. Quapropter Universitatem vestram monemus, et hortamur attente, districte Vobis per Apostolica scripta praecipiendo mandantes, quatenus si aliquis fidelium, vel iidem ad opus ipsorum construere voluerint oratoria in Vestris parochiis, cum ipsi salutem quaerant animarum, et earum lucris intendant, favorem eis super hoc benevolam praebeatis, libere permittentes quibus permissum est a Provinciali Ministro, viros idoneos in Vestris parochiis proponere verbum Dei. Volumus tamen quod non percipiant decimas, primitias et oblationes, nec habeant ecclesiasticam sepulturam, nisi pro Fratribus Ordinis praedicti. Praeterea cum fueritis requisiti, coemeteria ad opus ipsorum ab Apostolica Sede sibi concessa, benedicere procuretis, nullatenus compellentes eodem in aliquam interdicti, vel excommunicationis sententiam promulgare sine mandato Sedis Apostolicae speciali: mandatum, et praeceptum Nostrum taliter impleturi, quod Religionis comprobemini zelatores, et Nos Vobis magis reddatis inde favorabiles, et benignos, nec cogamur in eis in hac parte per alios providere. Datis Perusii, kalendis februarii Pontificatus Nostri anno tertio.” This *Breve* is conserved in the Archives of the Custody of the Holy Land as the first papal document regarding the presence of the Franciscans in *Outremer*.

- 4 GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca* I, 356-357.
- 5 D. PRINGLE, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. A Corpus*, Vol. III, *The City of Jerusalem*, Cambridge University Press, 2010, 97 (no. 290).
- 6 GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca* I, 189-190.
- 7 GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca* I, 185-187.
- 8 S. RUNCIMAN, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. III, *The Kingdom of Acre and the later Crusades*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, 404-548; J. FOLDA, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land*, 481-491.
- 9 *Chronica XXIV Generalium*, in *Analecta Franciscana* III, 651-654. GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca* I, 351.
- 10 GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca*, Tomus IV (dal 1333 al 1345), Quaracchi, 1923, 9-11, 13-20, 24-28, 52-73.
- 11 GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca*, Tomus III (dal 1300 al 1332), Quaracchi, 1919, 344: “Ioannes XXII: Ministro fratrum Ordinis Minorum Provinciae Terrae Sanctae. Sperantes quod zelum habeas animarum, et ad eas lucrificandas Domino tua studia dirigantur, ut **duobus** tui ordinis fratribus, probatae vitae et expertae scientiae, quos duxerit eligendos, visitandi Sepulcrum Dominicum et alia loca Terrae Sanctae quae Salvator noster Jesus Christus sua corporali praesentia illustravit, secumque ducendi unum famulum ad obsequendum sibi, **annis singulis**, quibuscumque constitutionibus et prohibitionibus Apostolicae Sedis contrariis nequaquam obstantibus, valeas licentiam elargiri, plenam tibi concedimus auctoritate praesentium facultatem. Datum ut supra [v idus augusti anno duodecimo = 9 agosto 1328].” Quoted from Reg. Vaticano t. 114, fol. 156v. ep. 1588.
- 12 *Chronica XXIV Generalium*, in *Analecta Franciscana* III, 506, quoted by GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca*, IV, 10: “Frater Rogerius Garini dictae Provinciae (Aquitaniae) ad Terram Sanctam pergens, obtinuit a Soldano Aegypti locum sacrum montis Sion, ubi fuit illud «coenaculum magnum stratum», in quo Coenam cum discipulis Dominus manducavit, et illud, ubi «Spiritus Sanctus» super Apostolos in die Pentecostes in igneis linguis descendit. In quo loco fratrum conventum aedificavit; et ex tunc ibi et in «Sancto Sepulcro», fratres nostri habitaverunt usque in hodiernum diem.” Gerard Eudes was minister general between 1329-1342 and then became Patriarch of Antioch on 27th November 1342. The *minister* of the Holy Land in 1333 was Federico di Monte-Vico, who resided in Cyprus.
- 13 LUDOLPH VON SUCHEM, *Description of the Holy Land and of the Way Thither, Written in the Year A.D. 1350*, edited and translated by A. STEWART, Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- 14 HONORIUS III, *Ex parte vestra*, in *Bullarium Franciscanum*, I, 26.
- 15 The Latin texts of the *Bullae* with an explanation of the contents are found in GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca* IV, 52-59.

MENDICANT FRIARS ON JOURNEYINGS (XIII-XIV CENTURIES)

47th Congress of the International Society of Franciscan Studies
Assisi-Magione, 17-19 October 2019

The itinerant character of Franciscan life can be described as the distinguishing note of the way of life of Francis and his brothers from the very beginning. The theme for this year's Congress of the International Society of Franciscan Studies was: *Mendicant Friars "in itinere"*, literally, Mendicant Friars in journeyings. It touched one of the fundamental aspects of Franciscan life, since the followers of Francis were recognised by the fact that they were not part of the monastic establishment based upon the *stabilitas loci*, but rather showed a tendency to resemble the popular movements among the laity, which were born as a result of the desire to be itinerant preachers of the Gospel. This meant that the friars were privileged in their freedom of movement, which took them not only beyond the Alps and beyond the Sea, but even to the remotest regions of the Far East, during the same century in which they were born as a mendicant Order in the Church.

The first lecture of the Congress was given by Duccio Balestracci (University of Siena) on the theme: "Typologies of *fratres in itinere*: students, preachers, beggars, pilgrims, *vagantes*". As the title shows, the notion of itinerant brothers can be taken in a very wide sense, and not only as referring to the notion of itinerant preachers or missionaries. Indeed, we know from the 13th century chronicles of the Order, that the friars who ventured into the university towns of Europe (Paris, Oxford, Cambridge, Bologna, Cologne) soon began to attend the lectures in the same universities, within the faculties of theology. Although they were poor they did not refrain from travelling on foot every day to become students of philosophy and theology. Thus, even in the very early stages, when they were living as itinerants in Greyfriars

in Canterbury, for example, the friars ventured to proceed to London and Oxford, although they still did not have their own houses and many a time were welcomed on a temporary basis by the Dominican friars already present in the same university towns. This academic preparation was important for them in order to become preachers and lecturers in their own right. This brings us to the second and obvious result of Franciscan itineracy, namely that of preaching. The mendicants, particularly the friars Preachers and the friars Minor, constituted a new force of enthusiastic young preachers, each with their own particular characteristic: the Preachers as itinerant dogmatic preachers against the Cathar and Albigensian heresy, the Minors as itinerant moralistic preachers among the crowds in the open spaces of the towns and market places. The whole concept of preaching was revolutionised by Saint Francis, when he admonished the brothers to preach, first of all, with the example of their life. This approach is very evident in the early Franciscan legislation, particularly when the founder addresses the missionaries who were to go "among Saracens and other non-believers." The third category of mendicant friars was that of the *questuanti*, or beggars. This was a familiar and not too popular category of persons. The presence of many pauperistic movements who depended upon alms for their daily sustenance was creating big problems in the towns and cities, particularly because many of these movements were not approved by the Church and were acting on the sidelines of orthodoxy. The Franciscans were not immune from this danger. From Jordan of Giano's *Chronicle* we come to know that they suffered humiliation and beatings in Germany and Hungary, since they could not speak the local languages and

were mistaken for heretical preachers who roamed barefoot begging alms from door to door. The very notion of the Latin term *mendicantes* has often been linked with this idea of the Franciscan friars begging for alms. Francis of Assisi commends his brothers to the local population and states that the brothers could beg for alms for the love of God when they received nothing for their kind services of ministering and serving. The fact of depending upon almsgiving necessitated an itinerant way of life, but placed the brothers in a very insecure position. They soon became more stable as the years passed, but we know from later history that the problem of itinerant beggars who disguised themselves as Franciscans landed the Franciscan family in trouble with society at large and even with the ecclesiastical institution. The notion of pilgrims is also part and parcel of itineracy, and was common among the lay penitential movement of the Middle Ages. In the Franciscan Order we know that personages like Brother Giles (Egidio) were widely known for their courageous initiatives to go on pilgrimage. The ideal centres for pilgrimage included Rome, Santiago de Compostela, Canterbury and even the Holy Land. This last region was obviously the most difficult and dangerous, but we know that Brother Giles did visit the Holy Sepulchre in 1215, being the first Franciscan friar to do so. The way of life of pilgrims was obviously one of precarious itineracy, which exposed them to multiple dangers and hazards. Francis himself tried to go on pilgrimage more than once, and even made it to join the Fifth Crusade as a pilgrim who ventured to cross the battle lines into enemy territory to preach to the Sultan of Egypt. The last category of itinerants which are mentioned are the *vagantes*, or roaming friars. This is certainly a negative picture of Franciscan life in the first decades of the existence of the Order. The problem concerns the distinction between those brothers who were given permission to roam about (like Brother Giles) and many others who took the initiative with their own hands. This practice would lead them into all kinds of trouble and they were at the mercy of being accused of all kinds of misdeeds. The Church certainly condemned the vagrant way of life as unorthodox and unethical. Unfortunately many heretical movements which led a vagrant life made it a point to look like the Franciscans, and the common people would mix up the two ways of life which, in practice, were quite different.

The second talk was delivered by Maria Pia Alberzoni (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore), and had as a theme: “Mendicants and itinerants. An inseparable combination.” Indeed, the phenomenon of the Mendicant Orders is intimately connected with their new style of life. As we have already noted, the term Mendicants indicates all those Orders which were born during the 13th and 14th centuries as a response to the new needs of a changing society and Church. After several centuries of monastic life, which also had its own reforms adapted to the ever-changing circumstances, the emergence of the laity and its quest for a more simple and Gospel-like way of Christian life led to the birth of new movements that were marked with the note of poverty and mendicity. It is true that some of them were suspected of heresy and indeed created problems for the ecclesiastical institution, but others were more moderate in their approach and ended up being bulwarks of the Catholic faith, supported energetically by Popes such as Innocent III, who was, in truth, a very juridically-minded pontiff. So was Gregory IX who canonized Francis and Dominic. The fact that the friars Minor could possess nothing of their own neither individually nor as a community, led them to be free from the bonds of earthly possessions, but at the same time placed them in the precarious situation of needing to move about in order to gain a livelihood and in order to be able to spread the message of the Gospel. Indeed, the phenomenon of itineracy can also be seen against the backdrop of the mediaeval change of the social fabric, in which the middle class of merchants and artisans began to take responsibility in the government of the Italian communes, to the detriment of the nobility, which was more relegated to its feudal possessions and castles in the countryside. The opening of new roads crossing over the Alps brought with it a revolution in the way of new ideas and exchange of goods, never before experienced in European society. The birth of the Mendicant Orders responded in full to this new trend, since the friars were never tied to a particular place but could move about freely. The new pulpit was transferred from the interior of cathedrals to public places and markets, where the common people met and lived their normal lives. Even when the great Mendicant Orders, like the friars Preachers and friars Minor, established themselves on more solid and rather conventual-monastic settings, with the building

of conventual churches and friars in the towns, the note of itinerancy never waned, and famous preachers were often seen going from one town to another and from a city to another, even venturing to hitherto unexplored regions. The example of the Observant movement in the Franciscan Order is an eloquent one. Even in this setting, although mendicacy waned since the friars were now more well-off and secure in their material needs, a new form of mendicacy was born, which saw the friars receiving money offerings through benefactors and syndics in order to respond to their ever-growing needs of apostolate and study.

The birth of Mendicant Orders was also seen as an asset by the ecclesiastical institution. Since the friars were not tied to a particular region or place, the ecclesiastical hierarchy could easily request certain qualified services from them, which went beyond the simple ministry of preaching and missionary enterprise. The third conference touched this particular aspect of Franciscan life. Pietro Silanos (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore) spoke about the theme: “At the service of the Apostolic See: friars who became nuncios and papal legates.” The fact that friars were now fully qualified jurists, philosophers and theologians, and were very much at home in the university chair as they were in the pulpit, made them likely candidates for delicate papal missions. The Popes were aware that they could capitalise on the mendicant nature of Franciscan (or even Dominican) friars by asking them to take hazardous journeys in order to establish diplomatic relations or to solve feuds and disputes between the Popes and other princes or even entire towns. The 13th century provides many examples of friars who were entrusted with delicate missions or reconciliation and diplomacy. Brother Elias himself is one of these examples, since he was sent as legate to the Byzantine emperor in Constantinople, and was often entrusted with delicate missions of reconciliation between Pope Gregory IX and Emperor Frederick II. Later on we find the famous Franciscan missionaries to the Far East, sent by Pope Innocent IV to the Mongol Emperor. They went as missionaries, but even more as papal envoys to establish good diplomatic relations in these distant regions, since the Pope was preoccupied that the dangers coming from the spread of Islam were enough for Europe and that it would be a wise idea to have allies on the eastern flank of the Islamic empire, even going so far as to try to convert them to the Christian faith, which

was already present among them in the form of the Nestorian tradition.

The same legates and missionaries to the Far East were also the subject of two talks given during the Congress. Paolo Chiesa (University of Milan) spoke about “Giovanni di Pian del Carpine and William of Rubruck: the foundation of a new style.” Andrea Tilatti (University of Udine) spoke about “Giovanni da Montecorvino and Odorico da Pordenone.” These names are well known in Franciscan history. All four were enthusiastic missionaries and papal emissaries to the Mongol emperor. They travelled either by the sea route to India and China, or else along the famous silk road across Turkey, the Caucasus and the Himalayas down to the desert of Mongolia and to the steppes of northern China. Their written records of their journeys and adventures are cherished as a reminder of the great missionary initiative of the Franciscan Order during the first century of its existence. Giovanni da Montecorvino was to become the first bishop of Khambalik (modern Beijing), and heralded a golden era of Franciscan evangelisation in the Far East. Their long and hazardous journeys go to show the importance attached to the ability of the Franciscan legates by the Popes, and their great trust in the Order as a driving force of missionary evangelisation to the remotest corners of the globe.

The other three lectures centred upon more particular themes of a professional nature. Alvisè Andreose (Università degli Studi e Campus) spoke about “The fortunate nature of the *volgare* language in the descriptions of latin journeys: notes of methodology.” Maria Luisa Meneghetti (University of Milan) spoke about “Iconography of friars in journeys: miniatures, frescoes, paintings and reliefs.” Francesco Surdich (University of Genoa) and A. Cantile (University of Florence) spoke about “Maps and instruments of journeys: towards distant lands.” All these talks dealt with specific details of the friars’ ability to embark on adventurous journeys to distant lands. The friars were at the forefront in translating sacred texts from Latin in the indigenous languages (*volgare*). They mapped their journeys, and provided us with a geographical description of the regions they crossed which is a precious source of material. Many of them wrote about the *Historia Mongolorum*, the history and customs of the Mongols, who were in a certain way a new race still to be discovered. They were pioneers in travelling, even before the

famous journey of the Venetian merchant Marco Polo, who is normally regarded as having been a pioneer in travels to the Far East.

The Franciscan family has thus been one of the powerful forces of evangelisation since its very beginning, thanks to the mobility of its members. The friars professed voluntary poverty and had no fixed abode. They were not incardinated into any particular monastery, like the Benedictine monks. They were members of an international Order that could transfer the brothers according to the emerging needs of the time. Thus it was normal for a minister general to transfer a brother from the post of provincial minister to that of a *lector*, or lecturer, at the faculty of theology in Paris, with the reasoning that it was easier to find ministers for the provinces than teachers of theology for the brothers. This was precisely the secret of success of the Franciscan family, that made it a precious instrument in the hands of the Popes to make the friars embark upon dangerous and delicate missions that no one had hitherto undertaken.

The themes of mendicacy and itineracy of the friars Minor are important in order to understand the birth and development of the Franciscan Order within the social fabric and the ecclesiastical milieu in which it prospered. The limitations of a historical analysis of the Franciscan Order departing only from its religious dimension have

to be corrected by a more holistic approach to the various factors which contributed to its success. These included the fact that the brothers were a product of their times. They came from a society in which rich and poor alike were searching for new initiatives and opening their eyes to the ever-more complex web of social and political integration that was shaping Europe. Indeed, the novelty of the Franciscan life did not reside in the fact that Francis founded a *novus ordo*, but rather in that he understood the signs of his times and responded to them in a new way. The Order was simply the result of this prophetic gaze.

The opening to new ventures and the mobility of the friars in the times we have examined remain a sign also for our times. We live in a society that is increasingly built around a hub of social, ethnic, political, cultural and religious integration, but which, at the same time, is building unsurmountable walls to exclude from its fold all those who are seen to be a threat to its economic security. The early friars energetically fought against this temptation and succeeded in opening up a new way of life that was truly inclusive. Maybe the time is now ripe to start all over again along the same lines, in order to avoid the temptation to close ourselves in a false sense of security which can never breathe new life in the old and aging continent in which we live.

CONCLUDING THE CELEBRATIONS OF THE 800TH ANNIVERSARY OF FRANCISCAN PRESENCE IN THE HOLY LAND

The celebrations commemorating the 800th anniversary since Saint Francis came to the East during the Fifth Crusade and met the Sultan of Egypt al-Malek al-Kamel in September 1219 drew to a close last 30 September - 4 October, with a Congress celebrated by the Custody of the Holy Land in the friary of Saint Saviour in Jerusalem. The Congress saw the presence of eminent scholars of Franciscan history, as well as of Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect for the Congregation of Oriental Churches.

During the proceedings of the Congress a new publication was presented as a result of the celebrations of the 800 years since the arrival of the Franciscans in the Holy Land, when Brother Elias of Cortona and a group of brothers were sent

by Francis to the province of Outremer during the general chapter of Assisi of 1217.

The new publication, which is in Italian, is entitled *800 Anni di Presenza Franciscana in Medio Oriente* (800 Years of Franciscan Presence in the Middle East). It is volume 29 of the Monographiae series of the *Studia Orientalia Christiana*. The themes treated in this volume have already been amply described in many issues of our Franciscan Cultural Review, but we shall summarise them here in order to provide a fitting conclusion to this year dedicated especially to Francis' visit to the East and to the Franciscan presence in the Holy Land.

The volume features a talk given by the scholar and historian Stefano Brufani regarding Brother



OTTOCENTO ANNI DAL PELLEGRINAGGIO DI PACE DI
SAN FRANCESCO **IN** TERRA SANTA

Giles (Egidio) of Assisi, who visited the Holy Land in 1215. Brother Giles was the first Franciscan to set foot in the Holy Land, and he also visited the Holy Sepulchre. Given the great difficulties of travel and the near-impossibility of setting foot in the Holy Sepulchre for Christians after the fall of Jerusalem in 1187, the adventure of Brother Giles certainly remains one of the outstanding achievements of early Franciscan history.

Another talk by the same Stefano Brufano centred upon the theme “*Ordinem secundum sua statuta reformavit*”. *Francesco d’Assisi nella crisi del ’20*. The talk dealt with the great crisis that Francis faced when he returned from the East to Italy, and decided to resign from his post as head of the Order in favour of Pietro Cattani (most scholars opt for 29 September 1220 as the date when Cattani was appointed vicar of the saint during the chapter of Saint Michael at the Portiuncula). According to Jordan of Giano in his Chronicle, this crisis was heralded by the sad news that Francis received while he was still in the East regarding the abuses committed by the two vicars he left behind in Italy (Matteo da Narni and Gregorio da Napoli). Brufani makes a detailed study of the motives behind the resignation of Francis and the crisis that the Order was facing. The thorny problem however, is not examined, within the light of what Francis actually did during the first half of 1220. Many historians have been strangely silent about these months, stating simply that, after meeting the Sultan of Egypt in September 1219, Francis returned in haste to Italy because of troubles in the Order. Modern and contemporary historians have never accepted the possibility that Francis could have stayed on until the capture of Damietta on 5 November 1219 and even maybe until the solemn entrance of the Fifth Crusade in the city on 2 February 1220. They are even more sceptical about the possibility of Francis being able to visit the Holy Sepulchre, as Angelo Clarenò states in his *Chronicon Septem Tribulationum Ordinis Minorum*, written in 1325. However, an important question does remain. If Francis did return to Italy as early as the autumn of 1219, what did actually happen between that time and the chapter of Saint Michael on 29 September 1220? Why is there no clue as to whether, in 1220, the Order celebrated, as was customary, the chapter of Pentecost, which would have been the ordinary venue for Francis to resign as head of the Order? According to our way of seeing things, all these factors point to the impossibility of Francis



having been present in Italy during the first half of 1220, and therefore of the probability that he did remain in the East during that time, and maybe returned during the spring of 1220, when shipping lanes in the Mediterranean were again open after the winter.

Narcyz Klimas, the historian of the Custody, presented a paper entitled *Il primo secolo della storia della Provincia di Terra Santa: 1182-1291*. The paper is the result of Klimas’ dedication to lecturing the Franciscan seminarians in Church History and the History of the Custody of the Holy Land. That is why the paper is structured very much upon the form of academic notes for study, but it provides important information and lists of Franciscans who settled in the Holy Land ever since the time of Saint Francis, and particularly of the ministers of the Province of the Holy Land, or of Syria, or of Outremer, as it was known during the first decades of its existence.

An interesting paper was presented by the historian Filippo Sedda, entitled *Frate Elia e il Capitolo del 1217: una provincia d’Oltremare?* This historian presented the enigmatic but lively figure of Brother Elias of Cortona, or of Assisi, who before becoming vicar of Saint Francis (1221-1227) was minister provincial of the Province of

Outremer, or of Syria, from 1217 to 1220, with residence in Acre, the Crusader stronghold on the Palestinian coast, and the only place possible for Christians to settle in the Holy Land after the fall of Jerusalem in 1187. The scholar devotes into the figure of Brother Elias, who has already been the subject of intense studies by various scholars, but tries to delve deeper into the role of this famous Franciscan as minister in the Holy Land. The problem he then touches upon regards the name “province” of the Holy Land or of Outremer. What do Franciscan historians of the 13th century mean when they use the term “provincia”? Do they imply that it is a province, or an entity of the Order, in the same way that modern provinces are nowadays? The answer of this historian is that the term province referred more to a group of friars who went on a mission to a particular place. Hence the term did not refer to a juridical entity as we know it today, but rather to the fraternity of the brothers residing, but never in a stable way, in a particular region.

Giuseppe Ligato presented a paper entitled *Acri al tempo di Frate Elia da Cortona*. This study on the city and port of Acre is particularly important because of the fact that, for 100 years, namely from 1191 to 1291, Acre became the *de facto* capital city of the Crusader Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. The city was a hub of commercial, political and military activity, with the presence of the Latin King, the military Orders of the Templars and Hospitallers, the Republics of Venice, Genoa, Pisa, as well as of religious activity with the presence of the Latin Patriarch, the Bishop, the monastic and mendicant Orders. The Franciscans had their own friary in the new quarter of the Crusader city, called

Montmusard. That is where Elias and the first brothers would have settled. Saint Francis himself visited Acre when he came to the East in 1219 and it was in the Pisan port that he was welcomed by Brother Elias on his brief stop-over while on his way to Damietta during the Fifth Crusade.

A specific theme was addressed by Lorenzo Cappelletti in his talk regarding the Theological-Spiritual reading of some frescoes of the Franciscan cycle in the Upper Basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi. As is well known, the frescoes, by Giotto, were the result of the reflection upon the life of Saint Francis as it is presented in the *Legenda Maior* by Saint Bonaventure. One interesting feature is the fresco representing the trial by fire of Saint Francis in front of the Sultan of Egypt. Another scholar of Franciscan history, Monsignor Felice Accrocca, nowadays Archbishop of Benevento in Italy, later on discovered the figure of a serpent in the flames in which Francis offered to throw himself in front of the Sultan and his dignitaries, in order to prove his faith in Christ.

The last paper of this volume is another study by Narcyz Klimas on the Early History of the Custody of the Holy Land, particularly with reference to the first friaries of the Franciscans in the East, including those of Damietta, Montagna Nigra, Nazareth, Tripoli, Nicosia, Corinth, Sidon, Tyre, Jaffa, Limassol, Paphos, Beirut, Sis, Famagusta, Aleppo, Damascus, Saphet, Tortosa and Ramleh.

It is to be hoped that the acts of this year’s Congress, which concluded the celebrations of the 800 years of Franciscan presence in the Holy Land, will be published in order to have a clear and global view of the early Franciscan history of this important mission of the Order.

Listening to the voices of the poor

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We come now to the prayer of the poor person. This prayer, says Sirach, “will reach to the clouds” (35:21). While the prayer of those who presume that they are righteous remains earthly, crushed by the gravitational force of egoism, that of the poor person rises directly to God. The sense of faith of the People of God has seen in the poor “the gatekeepers of heaven”: the sense of faith that was missing in [the Pharisee’s] utterance. They are the ones who will open wide or not the gates of eternal life. They were not considered bosses in this life, they did not put themselves ahead of others; they had their wealth in God alone. These persons are living icons of Christian prophecy. In this Synod we have had the grace of listening to the voices of the poor and reflecting on the precariousness of their lives, threatened by predatory models of development. Yet precisely in this situation, many have testified to us that it is possible to look at reality in a different way, accepting it with open arms as a gift, treating the created world not as a resource to be exploited but as a home to be preserved, with trust in God. He is our Father and, Sirach says again, “he hears the prayer of one who is wronged” (v. 16). How many times, even in the Church, have the voices of the poor not been heard and perhaps scoffed at or silenced because they are inconvenient. Let us pray for the grace to be able to listen to the cry of the poor: this is the cry of hope of the Church. The cry of the poor is the Church’s cry of hope. When we make their cry our own, we can be certain, our prayer too will reach to the clouds.

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*Pope Francis
Homily of the Mass at the conclusion
of the Synod on the Pan-Amazonian Region
Vatican
27 October 2019*

Abbreviations

Writings of St. Francis

Adm	Admonitiones.
CantAudPov	Cantico Audite Poverelle.
CantSol	Canticum fratris Solis.
LaudDei	Laudes Dei Altissimi.
BenLeo	Benedictio fratri Leoni data.
EpAnt	Epistola ad sanctum Antonium.
EpCler I	Epistola ad Clericos (Redactio prior).
EpCler II	Epistola ad Clericos (Red. posterior).
EpCust I	Epistola ad Custodes I.
EpCust II	Epistola ad Custodes II.
EpFid I	Epistola ad Fideles I.
EpFid II	Epistola ad Fideles II.
EpLeo	Epistola ad fratrem Leonem.
EpMin	Epistola ad Ministrum.
EpOrd	Epistola toti Ordini missa.
EpRect	Epistola ad populorum rectores.
ExhLD	Exhortatio ad Laudem Dei.
ExpPat	Expositio in Pater noster.
FormViv	Forma vivendi sanctae Clarae data.
Fragm	Fragmenta alterius RegulaeNB.
LaudHor	Laudes ad omnes horas dicendae.
OffPass	Officium Passionis Domini.
OrCruc	Oratio ante crucifixum.
RegB	Regula bullata.
RegNB	Regula non bullata.
RegEr	Regula pro eremitoriis data.
SalBMV	Salutatio beatae Mariae Virginis.
SalVirt	Salutatio virtutum.
Test	Testamentum.
UltVol	Ultima voluntas S. Clarae scripta.

Sources for the Life of St. Francis

1C	Tommaso da Celano, Vita Sancti Francisci.
LCh	Celano, Legenda ad usum chori.
2C	Celano, Memoriale in Desiderio Animae.
3C	Celano, Tractatus de Miraculis S. Francisci.
LJS	Julian of Speyer, Vita Sancti Francisci.
OR	Officium Rhythmicum S. Francisci.
AP	Anonimo Perugino.
L3C	Leggenda dei Tre Compagni.
CA	Compilatio Assisiensis.
LMj	S. Bonaventura, Legenda Maior S. Francisci.
LMn	S. Bonaventura, Legenda minor S. Francisci.
SP	Speculum Perfectionis.
SC	Sacrum Commercium S. Francisci.
ABF	Actus Beati Francisci et Sociorum Eius.
Fior	Fioretti di San Francesco.

Sources for the Life of St. Clare

BICl	Blessing of St. Clare.
1-4LAg	Letters to St. Agnes of Prague..
LCl	Legend of St. Clare.
PC	Acts of the Process of Canonization.
PrPov	Privilege of Poverty.
RegCl	Rule of St. Clare.
TestCl	Testament of St. Clare.

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Cover picture:

Chapel of St. Michael at Fonte Colombo