



*Dear brothers and sisters of OFS, I had the opportunity to take part in V Chapter Under Ten OFM in Taizé, France. I would like to share with you all some of my unique experiences during the chapter. I am sure the reality of all of us as a Franciscan family is not that different from each other. Hope sharing of my experiences would bring some inspiration to you all...*

### **Friars in Dialogue (V Chapter Under Ten OFM, Taizé)**



July 7-14, 2019, Friars Minor Under Ten years of solemn profession, from all over the world (178 friars from 5 continents, 15 conferences, 86 entities, 52 Nationalities) gathered with the Minister General and definitors and the organizing committee in Taizé (France) to reelect on the theme “Friars in Dialogue.” For me the chapter was the first of its kind to experience the presence of friars minor from all over the world. The sense of “belonging” to an order, to one brotherhood was the ultimate experience. As I reached the hill of Taizé, I felt a sense connection with the friars whom I had never met before. Even though it was the first hand meeting with friars from all over the world except for few known faces, it did not seem that we were strangers to one another. Throughout the week I felt a strong sense of belonging to one family; the family of St. Francis of Assisi. Though, coming from different provinces, places, languages and traditions, we were able to dialogue with the language of love and spirit of brotherhood. Friars stranger to one another, yet willingness and openness not only to speak about each other’s vocation and ministry but also great

interest to share beer and pizzas with one another at ‘Oyak’ the only place where a glass of wine or beer could be bought and consumed were remarkable.

Dialogue and sharing in small language groups was another big platform to strengthen my bond with the friars. I found friars to be genuine and open in their sharing and dialogue. Friars shared and dialogued not only the blessings and good things of one’s community and province but also the negatives and the dirty politics that friars get succumbed to. It was acknowledged that generally there is good dialogue within and outside the fraternity.



Ministries offered to people of God are similar in nature across the provinces. Good works are being done by the friars in their own real situations and common people are well engaged in dialogue for the common good of all. There were some points for improvement that were noticed among the groups like; few friars have no interest to enter into dialogue and they keep to themselves in spite of great effort made by the other. Age gap between the friars is another factor that weakens the dialogue among the friars. The kind of formation received by different age groups, tendency to hold on to old glory and past based on the formation received are some concerns that need to be addressed by the provinces. Relationship between younger friars and the older friars need to be improved and importance of bridging the gap between them was highlighted. Lack of trust among the friars, lack of transparency and not maintaining the confidentiality is high in many fraternities. Guardians are unable to notice and help the inner struggles of the friars. Even if the inner struggles and point of concerns about one’s vocation is brought forward, not much help is received from friars specially the guardians. There is lack of accompaniment by guardians and minister provincials in many entities which leave a friar with only option to walk out of the Franciscan life.



The presentation of Minister General Br. Michael A. Perry on “Vocation to Fraternity: Dialogue in the life of a Friar Minor” was so timely. He based himself mainly on the papal encyclical, *Laudato Si*: “Human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with

our neighbor and with the earth itself.” He invited all of us enter in dialogue with Trinity, with others and entire creation. He also presented on “Recovering our Franciscan Hope: Dialogue and the Experience of Crisis and Suffering.” Again, this brought to light the present situations of our friars especially younger ones who because of many reasons but more importantly fear to enter into dialogue land up in crisis. Friars young and old at times



have closed the door to fraternal dialogue. General Secretary of formation and studies Br. Cesare Vaiani



stressed on the model of dialogue exercised by St. Francis of Assisi and early friars. Acceptance of each other with strengths, weakness and conflicts is the key in dialogue. Dialogue can lead the way to overcome our differences. Model of 'perfect joy' is to be kept in mind while entering into dialogue with each other.

Moving forward as action plans groups suggested that each one of us need to make dialogue as the part and partial of one's life. Each one need to cultivate the willingness and openness to enter into dialogue and not just caught up in one's world. Provinces could organize chapters under different ages (Under 3, Under 5, and Under 10) of solemn profession as per the needs of the province and provide more platforms for friars to come together to dialogue. House chapter and its importance should be emphasized as it is another great stage to inter into dialogue with the various aspects of life as a friar minor. Stress on the need for training of friars to be guardians so that they are in better position to lead and accompany the friars. Consciously establishing the new fraternities in places and situations where there is need of dialogue with the world and choosing the ministries accordingly that paves the way for dialogue in promoting the common good for all.

### **Taizé-A Pilgrimage of Trust on Earth**

The brothers of Taizé community live for decades have been living and embodying ecumenical dialogue and reconciliation among people. They are an ecumenical community and have made a lifelong commitment to follow Christ in community life and celibacy, with a simple lifestyle. The year 2019 reflects the on theme "Let us not forget hospitality!" with its 5 proposals; discover the source of



hospitality in God, be attentive to Christ's presence in our lives, welcome our gifts and our limitations too, find in the Church a place of friendship and practice a generous hospitality. The hill of Taizé hosted around 2000 people (mostly young) from all over the world for the week that we had our Chapter. Taizé Community lives the reality of dialogue specially in three simple ways; *community prayer*, *simple life style* and through their *ministry to the people* who come to the hill. Coming to Taizé is an opportunity to seek communion with God through *Community Prayer* (morning, midday and evening) and song, personal reflection and sharing.

Community prayer is the heart of their daily life. Prayers are simple in nature but uplifting. At each prayer, brothers as well as the young people get completely immersed in praise and worship. There is enough time for silence and personal meditation. Perfect blend of voices and musical instruments make the prayer angelic and heavenly. Use of different ethnic language makes the participants at home while praying. Young people leading songs and ushering the people in the Church and doing all that is needed to maintain the prayerful atmosphere was remarkable to see.

*Simple life style* of the brothers of Taizé is another factor that bring people to the hill. The Prior Br. Alois says “We are on this hill not get self-sufficient but to offer our services to the people of God that come on this hill as brothers of the ecumenical community. Even in our in-sufficiency there is joy in bearing witness to hospitality



and love of God.” He presented on the theme of dialogue basing on 4 points; dialogue with Christ in prayer and praise, listening and accompanying those whom God entrusts to us, the ecumenical journey and the search for unity, dialogue with the world and especially with believers of the other religions. As observed, sharing with others what they have and

they can to make everyone welcomed and lead them to experience God is their priority. The brothers of the community live solely from their own works which is sold at the “Exposition”. They do not accept any donations and they do not accept even family inheritances- the community gives these to the poor. Brother of Taizé exist to serve and to listen to people who come to the hill. They acknowledge that accompanying the young people in their joys and sorrows is big undertaking and as well as very rewarding. Young people are also given the opportunity to show hospitality by taking part in activities in the campus. They also have opportunities for Bible reflection with others of a similar age, time of silence and small group sharing. They are also asked to help with the practical work (cleaning, washing up, Kitchen team, general maintenance team, etc.).

Everyone is there to discover or rediscover a meaning to their life and to find new vitality. Being in Taizé also helps to prepare for taking on responsibilities at home and to become bearers of peace and trust. Truly, there is the constant need of dialogue with God who is the source of life, with each other in our fraternities and with entire creation in order to nurture and nourish our Christian, Human and Franciscan vocation.