

# INTER-FRANCISCAN FORMATION PROGRAM FOR MISSIONARIES



Photo of the group of participants in the course, along with their Formators

## The inter-Franciscan Formation Program For New Missionaries

has been sought by the Ministers General of the Franciscan Order since 2005

is coordinated by the General Secretariats for missionary animation of the four Order

is organized by the Friar companions from each Order, with the collaboration of the International Fraternity of Our Lady of Nations of Order of Friars Minor in Brussels

“A radical conversion in thinking is required in order to become missionary, and this holds true both for individuals and entire communities”.



“People today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories. The witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission: Christ, whose mission we continue, is the "witness" par excellence (Rv 1:5; 3:14) and the model of all Christian witness.

Redemptoris Missio 49

## What is that course about?

The Franciscan Family's Missionary Formation course aims first of all to create an international, interobediential and intercultural fraternity. The brothers and sisters who can live together in mutual respect and understanding can truly be a "fraternity in mission."

## Why has this course been organized?

In 2000 the Friars Minor understood the need for missionary preparation given the impact of globalization on Gospel life. In the light of all the developments in missiology, the need to discover the "Franciscan" dimension of Gospel Mission was essential.



## For whom is that course?

The course is structured for those who have received the calling of the Spirit to go "among other people". These brothers - and eventually sisters - will have to be approved by their ministers so that good and open missionaries will represent the Order and not those who were having problems in their own provinces.



“The Friars who go on mission” can live spiritually(...) in two ways. One way is not to engage in arguments or disputes but to be subject to every human creature for God’s sake and to acknowledge that they are Christians. The other way is to announce the Word of God, when they see it pleases the Lord, in order that (unbelievers) may believe in God (...) and to be baptized”

(Rnb XVI, 5-7)



## What is the purpose of the course?

- to increase our faith by contact with God's Word
- to form a true intercultural fraternity of Franciscans from all branches of the family;
- to provide an intercultural experience that will enable participants to understand the values and limits of their own cultures and of others;
- to provide everything that is needed to discern one's missionary vocation; to provide a place of reflection on Franciscan tradition, theological developments, cultures (Africa and Asian), culture shock, and on the country of mission destination.

## Who is the charge of the course?

Each branch of the Friars Minor, Conventuals, Capuchins and Franciscans, has named a Mission Secretary who is responsible for the program. The mission secretaries approve the planning done by the local fraternity which at present is made up of one Togolese, two Vietnamese,

one Congolese, two Americans and one German. This team is reinforced during the sessions by another friar from each of the branches who contributes to the program and to the planning.

“The missionary methodology of Saint Francis (and therefore Franciscan) (...) not to force the souls of men but to attract them, not to judge them, but to raise them, not to impose from above, but to lower oneself and serve them even by means of the cross”. Vincenzo Marcolli OFMConv

## Where does the course take place?

Brussels has become like a new capital of Europe because of the presence of the European Union. This is one of the factors that influenced the choice of Brussels for our missionary formation. It is well known that the European Union has a great impact on all the mission countries where we work and in Brussels we can discover how to deal with that reality.

Secondly, Brussels has always been a country that has furnished thousands of missionaries to the world, and our presence among them enriches the course. Thirdly, the Franciscans have space available for the program which enables to missionaries to live in the midst of the Franciscan family of Belgium.

part of our program in order to help the missionaries consolidate their Franciscan identity.

“Missionary activity is nothing other and nothing less than the manifestation or epiphany of God's plan and its fulfillment in the world and in history; in this history God, by means of missions, clearly accomplishes the history of salvation.”

Redemptoris Missio 41

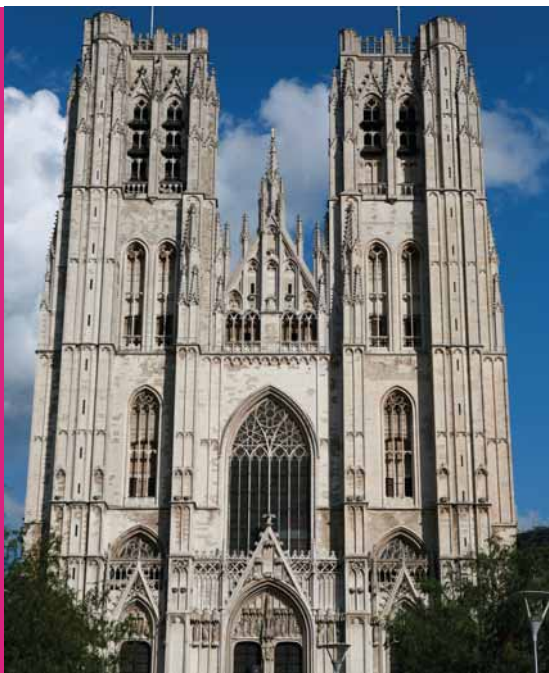
## When does it take place?

At present there are two courses each year: from the first of September to the end of November is reserved for English speaking missionaries and from March to May for the French speaking.

Why Europe? Much of the world's missionary activity in the past has come from Europe. Besides in Europe we are close to the holy places of the Church (Rome) and of the Order (Assisi-Rieti Valley-LaVerna) which we visit as



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## Which Airport should be chosen in Brussels?

The team prefers the National Airport (Zaventem) for the other airport is far from the city. Buses however can bring the missionaries into the city if they prefer the low budget airlines. For Europeans, Brussels can also be reached by Eurolines.

## How to come from the airport to the Friary?

Ordinarily someone from the teach will be at the National Airport if they have received the flight information. In case we miss one another, one can come by taxi (30 euros) and if they are with little baggage by train or bus. Precise indications will be given for the asking.



## What kind of visa does the participant need?

Each missionary needs a 3 month Schengen visa which will require a letter of invitation on the part of the Formation Team in Brussels. Brothers come from EU countries do not need any kind of visa.



## Why Europe?

Much of the world's missionary activity in the past has come from Europe.



# A short description of the animators

The Guardian is **Jean-François Nguyen**, a Franciscan who has lived under the Communist regime, who has created and worked in a large parish among the poor, and who is professor of theology.

**Damien Isabell**, American, member of the Province of St Benoit Africain in the RDCongo, professor of theology, former animator of the franciscan study pilgrimages, former pastor in the Congo and formator.

**Benoît-Michel Amoussou**, Togolese, expert in African culture, researcher in Franciscan studies, trained in Interreligious dialogue.

**Jean Lan Nguyen**, a Vietnamese who is now a Belgian citizen, former director of the center for Vietnamese refugees and expatriates, pastor of the pastoral unit in Woluwe St Pierre.

**Benjamin Kabongo**, Congolese, former assistant burser of his province St Benoit Africain, assistant pastor, animator of the youth and retreats, preacher and poet.

**Our Lady of Nations-  
OFM's Friary  
Av. Du Chant  
d'Oiseau 2  
1150 Brussels  
Belgium**

“Today we face a religious situation which is extremely varied and changing.

Peoples are on the move; social and religious realities which were once clear and well defined are today increasingly complex. We need only think of certain phenomena such as urbanization, mass migration, the flood of refugees, the de-Christianization of countries with ancient Christian traditions”



The Team:

Permanent:

**Fr Jean François Nguyen (Vietnam/Myanmar), Guardian, Responsible for the Asian Formation.**



**Benoît-Michel Amoussou (Togo/Europe), Vicar, Responsible for African Formation and Culture, Apostolates of the missionaries.**



**Damien Isabell (USA/ RDCongo), Coordinator of the Program, Courses on Franciscan Mission Spirituality**



**Jean-Lan Nguyen (Vietnam/Europe), Pastor of the Parish, responsible for intercultural contacts of the missionaries.**



**Benjamin Kabongo (RDCongo/Europe), Parish Vicar, co-responsible for pastoral insertion of the missionaries.**

# A short descriptions of the Visitors in 2008

**Larry Webber** (USA/Panama), OFM Capuchin, Professor of Interculturality, Representative of the Capuchin Order

**Jarek Wysoczanski** (Poland/Latin America, Africa), OFM Conventual, Representative of the Conventual Order

**Begona Inarra** (Spanish/Africa), Secretary of Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network. Advocacy, Recollection

**Philippe Yates** (England), OFM, Director of Canterbury Center of Franciscan Studies, Professor of Franciscan Missionary History

**Anselm Prior**, OFM (England/South Africa), Responsible for the Pastoral Formation of the Interregional Seminary in Pretoria, South Africa. Professor of "Missionary Leadership"

**Vincenzo Marcoli** (Italy/Africa), OFM Conventual, General Secretary for the Conventual Franciscans, Professor of Franciscan Missionary Theology

**Mr Yao** (Africa/Geneva), Representative of Franciscans International (Geneva), Professor of Justice-Peace-Integrity of Creation, Advocacy, Non-violence

**Aubert Bertrand** (Quebec/Africa), OFM Capuchin, Expert in "Fraternal Economy" and "Economic Administration"

**Heinrich Gockel** (Germany/Africa), OFM, former missionary in Nairobi, bursar for the community of the Antonianum (Rome), Spiritual Director, the Guided Retreat

**Joy Prakash** (India/Italy), OFM, assistant secretary at the service of the Poor Clares, Spiritual Director, Guide of the Retreat

**Sister Maddalena**, guide for the retreat

**Antonio Eiguren** (Spain/Asia), author of True Confucians, Bold Christians. Transforming Kenotic Mission (2005), Conference on mission methods



"...contemporary Africa can be compared to the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho; he fell among robbers who stripped him, beat him and departed, leaving him half dead (cf. Lk 10:30-37). Africa is a continent where countless human beings — men and women, children and young people — are lying, as it were, on the edge of the road, sick, injured, disabled, marginalized and abandoned. Ecclesia in Africa 41



# Summary Description of the Program of Missionary Formation

September

**First week:** Group dynamics to create fraternity and intercultural sensitivity. Introduction to Franciscan Missions of the Friars Minor, Friars Minor Conventuals, Friars Minor Capuchins (Team)

**Second week:** Intercultural Dynamics (Larry Webber): Explanations and exercises in intercultural life with a view to accept and understand other cultures.

**Third week:** Mission Spirituality (Damien Isabell): Explains how Francis and the Franciscan tradition understand its God-given role in the Mission of the Church. Pilgrimage of Reconciliation with the European Union.

**Fourth week:** History of Franciscan Missions (Philippe Yates)

**Fifth week and First week of October:** Missionary Leadership (Anselm Prior): Helps each missionary discover his own style of leadership, its strong and weak points, discover how to create a basic Christian community around the Word of God.

October

**First and second week:** Feast of St. Francis. Franciscan Missionary Leadership (continues). All day visit to the European Union.

**Third week:** Mission Theology (Vincenzo Marcoli): an overview of contemporary

**“By now you Africans are missionaries to yourselves. The Church of Christ is well and truly planted in this blessed soil (cf. Ad Gentes, 6). One duty, however, remains to be fulfilled: We must remember those who, before you, and even today with you, have preached the Gospel in Africa”**

**Pope Paul VI**

theological trends in mission studies and description of a Franciscan approach.

**Fourth Week:** Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation, Advocacy and Non-violence in Franciscan mission (Mr. Yao and team)  
**Fifth week:** Inculturation, African Culture (Benoît Michel)

November

**First week:** Economic administration: (Aubert Bertrand) How to understand the role of money in Franciscan and missionary life, how to use it responsibly. At the end of this course we go to Germany to Missionszentrale to see concretely how Franciscans aid their missionaries. We visit also missionaries in the inner city who work with Turkish immigrants.

**Second week:** Asian Culture (Jean-François Nguyen): An introduction to some aspects of the Asian mentality and to South East Asian Buddhism. At the end of this week we go to Italy for a guided retreat in the Franciscan Holy Places.

**Third week:** Retreat in the Franciscan places. The program ends after the retreat.





## Special activities

European Union pilgrimage of Reconciliation to Kranenberg on the Dutch-German Border: Meditation on Auschwitz, Northern Ireland, Taizé.

Weekly apostolate with the poor here in Bruxelles.

Participation in an African-style liturgy

Visit Bruges and Leuven

Meetings with the parishioners of Notre Dame des Grâces, visits to their homes

Visit of the Generals of the Franciscan Orders

Feast of St Francis with the whole Franciscan Family and a Dominican preacher

Two days of Recollection: "The Social Dimension of the Missionary Vocation" (Begona Inarra), "Being a Franciscan in Another Culture" (Benjamin Kabongo)

Visit Köln, Bonn, Missionszentrale Franciscan guided retreat in the Franciscan holy places Italy (November 14- Nov 22)

Visit Tervuren museum, lecture on Africa Conference on Mission Methods (Antonio Eiguren)

## Project for the End of the Session

Each missionary will prepare four presentations, with or without other personal or audio-visual aids, to be presented one week before the retreat, according to the

## Required Reading

(text provided for each participant)

For those going to Asia: **Ecclesia in Asia**

For those going to Africa: **Ecclesia in Africa**

For all missionaries: (Texts found in personal dossiers)

- **Evangelii nuntiandi**
- **Redemptoris missio**
- **Francis of Assisi, Rule of 1221, 16**
- **H. Schalück, "Our Identity is Mission"**
- **What is Culture Shock?**
- **Damien Isabell, Franciscan Missionary Spirituality**
- **CCFMC, How Francis sent the Brothers into the World**
- **Vincenzo Marcoli, Theology of Mission**
- **J.Mattam, SJ, "Efficiency and Effectiveness in Mission"**
- **"Lectio divina: Heart of the Religious Life"**
- **"What is an individually directed retreat?"**
- **CCFMC, Dialogue with other religions: a Franciscan Way**
- **Robert Schreiter, "Challenges today to Mission 'Ad Gentes'"**

schedule of our program. The structure of the presentation should be:

1. The Missionary Encyclicals: Evangelii nuntiandi, Redemptoris missio  
Goal of Mission  
Role of the Missionary  
Missionary "methods"
2. Introduction to the Country of Destination:  
Geography, History, Particularities  
Christianity in the country: origins, characteristics.  
Franciscanism in the country: origins, characteristics
3. Pastoral Plan of the Diocese/country of Destination  
Priorities of the Mission  
How Ecclesia in Africa or Ecclesia in Asia are received and put into practice  
Challenges of the mission
4. Personal Mission Method  
Personal talents and interests  
The Franciscan Way of Mission



# We are unable to hide what we have seen and heard (Acts 4, 20)

## Letter to All the Friars of the Order

Dear Confreres,

We send you our greeting of peace and all good in Jesus Christ and in our Seraphic Father St. Francis from Cochin in the State of Kerala, India, where we are gathered with our Minister General and his Definitory, for the first International Mission Congress.

We have reflected at length on the theme: "Forming Friars Minor Conventual for interculturality and for mission at the beginning of the third millennium." At the conclusion of the work of the Congress, we feel both the duty and the joy of thanking our confreres of the Provincial Custody of the St. Maximilian Kolbe Custody in India who were so solicitous in making our stay in India a pleasant one and in facilitating our work in every way possible, without failing to show us some significant features of their culture and their land. We marvelled at the rapid growth of the Custody apparent in all dimensions of Franciscan life: the vitality, freshness, lively sense of belonging to the Order. We felt truly welcome as brothers.

We are grateful to God for allowing us to meet in so large a number (we were 68) coming from five continents, diverse in language and culture, but united in our objective: to foster a renewed missionary commitment and to offer suggestions for an updated missionary methodology in the Order. The conferences, the sharing of experiences, and the fraternal exchanges were focused on the themes: fraternity, Gospel, multiculturalism and interculturality, mission. All the participants were attentive and involved in the process.

The pilgrimage to places associated with St. Thomas the Apostle, who, according to tradition, was the first evangeliser of India, the meetings with the Cardinals, Ivan Dias, Archbishop of Mumbai and Varkey Vithayathil, Archbishop of Ernakulam and Primate for the Syro-Malabar rite, the Sunday celebration of Mass in the Syro-Malabar rite, the visit to significant places in the Custody such as the postulancy and the major seminary, as well as the boat-trip in very beautiful surroundings completed in a most special way this experience of being together.

**During the Congress we reflected on a series of topics, which we would like to recall here in a synthetic manner:**

- The world in which we live is marked by the phenomena of secularism, indifference and above all of globalisation which makes evident the deep crisis in human, religious, social and cultural values;

it creates a deterioration of the economic situation where poverty, injustice, exclusion and waves of immigrants toward the West and large cities are on the increase. Such phenomena accelerate the process of internationalisation and of multiculturalism but are rarely accompanied by a true intercultural dialogue. It is a reality which calls out to the Church and to our Order and demands a change in our "being in mission."

- We note that the Church and our Order as well, is providentially increasing in number in the South of the world (Asia, Africa, Latin America). This fact urges us not only to know how to welcome the diversity of our brothers as a gift of God (Testament, 1), but also to establish a true fraternity through constant listening and continuous cultural exchange. This process exacts a great openness of mind and heart and a continuing conversion as authentic friars minor.

- Our mission has a Trinitarian root: it flows from the one mission of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, sent by the Father (cf. Ad gentes, 2) and takes place especially in the witness of a contemplative, holy and fraternal life (cf. Redemptoris Missio, 90). Mission relates to each of us, everywhere that the Order is present. We wish to emphasize that even the friars who are living in the churches of the old or not recent foundation, often in very secularised and indifferent environments, are called "to go" with humility and simplicity, toward their brothers who are not interested in the person of Jesus or in belonging to the Church. And we wish to recall that the commitment to justice, peace and the safeguarding of creation is an indispensable part of our mission.

- In the light of the Word of God and asking the illumination of the Spirit, we welcome with humility the gifts that the Lord has granted to our Order: the increase of our presence in new countries during the past 40 years, especially in the South of the world and in Eastern Europe, the generous availability of many friars for mission ad gentes, new vocations to the Franciscan life, the prophetic witness of some friars in difficult and marginalized situations (about which we heard likewise at this Congress), the search for new opportunities for our Franciscan presence especially in inter-religious dialogue according to the "spirit of Assisi", and solidarity expressed by many benefactors.

- At the same time we are aware of our personal and institutional mistakes which have impeded our mission as friars minor: a certain individualism in missionary undertakings, a too "Western" methodology of working in the missions ad gentes, the scarce collaboration among Provinces, the

lack of preparation on the part of the missionaries, the lack of a true mission project for the Order.

-The review of our recent history in the light of the Holy Spirit moves us to renew our efforts with regard to fraternal life, minority, evangelical witness and ongoing conversion, by proclaiming the reign of God and His justice through a life of simplicity and a preferential option for the poor and marginalized, without fearing a sincere dialogue with all, as our Father, St. Francis, teaches us very effectively (cf. RNB, XVI). We feel, from the experience of the Congress, like the Apostles, "unable to hide what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4, 20).

- We think that the Franciscan style of being missionaries ought to emerge from the deep reality of our charism, as various documents of the Church and of our Order declare (cf. Ad Gentes, Evangelii Nuntiandi; the documents of the Extraordinary General Chapter of Mexico, 1992). These texts invite us to be truly friars minor in simplicity, humility, availability, itinerancy of mind and heart, capacity for openness toward the other, expropriation, by following the example of St. Francis and of the other saints of the Order such as St. Anthony and St. Maximilian Kolbe.

**-We believe it important to share the various topics treated at this Congress with our communities and circumscriptions, in particular the education which knows how to lead us from multiculturalism to interculturality and the indispensable topic of mission.**

1. to promote the development of a true "missionary project for the Order" which includes:
  - a better knowledge of our cultural, intellectual and spiritual heritage, which helped the Order in the past to be in mission;
  - a Franciscan missiological reflection;
  - a Franciscan mission methodology;
  - an education toward inter-culturality, especially in the formative centres of the Order,
2. to provide for and make obligatory the preparation and updating not only of missionaries but also of all those friars who serve in another culture or nation;
3. to promote solidarity in the missions in personnel, economic support, especially in the area of formation;
4. to encourage the cooperation within the Conferences and among the Conferences in the development of needed missionary projects, making the required juridical adjustments;
5. to strengthen the General Secretariate for Mission Animation with the functions of information, animation, planning and the coordination of the Secretariates at the level of Provinces and Conferences;
6. to encourage the creation of missionary projects with the laity, especially with those of the Franciscan family (SFO;MI);

7. to continue the experience of Missionary Congresses (national, at the level of Conferences...) likewise on specific topics (for example, dialogue with Islam), given the importance of the sharing of experiences and of missionary reflection coming from various sources;

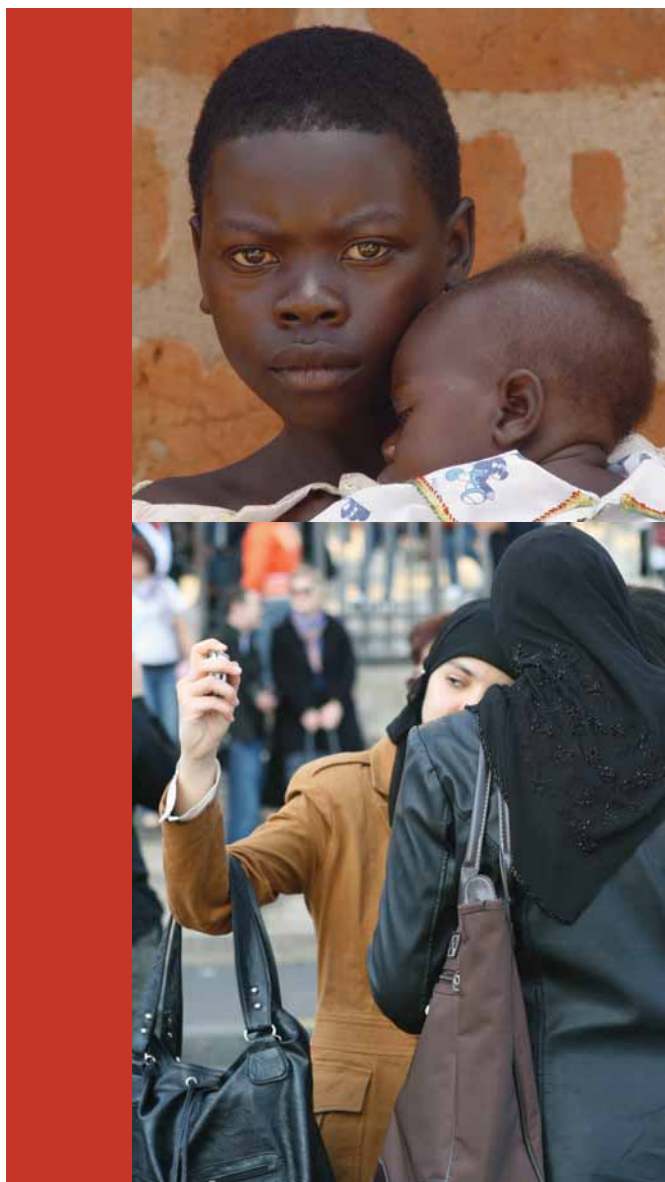
8. to ensure the continuous accompaniment of our mission presences, by offering our young friars a solid Franciscan formation with formation directors who are adequately prepared;

9. to develop better communication (common languages, translations, website) to foster a mutual understanding and a mission consciousness among the friars.

**Aware that we are only at the beginning of our journey toward a renewed missionary consciousness which ought to flow from a passionate love for Jesus Christ and for humankind, we invite you to join us in furthering and making these reflections available to all the realities of our Franciscan family.**

**The friar-participants at the First Missionary Congress**

**Cochin-Kerala (India): January 21, 2006.**



## For Further Information

Consult the program on the web sites of the Secretariats for Missions or the Secretaries General for missionary animation of the four Orders:

### OFM

Segretariato generale per l'Evangelizzazione  
Via. S. Maria Mediatrice 25  
00165 Roma (Italia)

[www.ofm.org](http://www.ofm.org)

### OFMConv

Segretariato generale per l'Animazione Missionaria  
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### OFMCap

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### TOR

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[www.franciscanum.it](http://www.franciscanum.it)

