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QUARTERLY BULLETIN OF JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION, OFM

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FRANCISCAN YOUTH FORUM FOR PEACE, FRATERNITY, AND ECOLOGY BRINGS TOGETHER 320 YOUNG PEOPLE IN RWANDA

Rwanda – 2025

Theme: “A Safe Earth Cultivates a Peaceful World!”

From the 26th-29th December, 2025, the Autonomous Custody of Our Lady of Kibeho, Burundi-Rwanda, through its Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Commission (JPIC), organised the Franciscan Youth Forum for Peace, Fraternity, and Ecology, which brought together 320 young people from four parishes entrusted to the friars in Rwanda.

The forum took place at the Padri Vjeko School in the parish of Kivumu, Diocese of Kabgayi, and brought together young people eager to learn, reflect, and actively commit to building a more just and peaceful world in harmony with creation.

For four days of intense and enriching experience, participants engaged in formation, reflection, prayer, and fellowship in an atmosphere steeped in Franciscan spirituality. According to Fr. Jean Eric Mutabazi, OFM, Custodian Animator of JPIC, the forum’s main objective was “to awaken in young people a deep sense of responsibility for building peace, caring for creation, and personal growth, inspired by Franciscan values.”



The programme included presentations by various speakers who addressed key issues for young people's personal lives and the future of the planet.

Fr. Emmanuel, OFM, emphasized that there can be no safe world without peace, insisting that peace must first be built in hearts, communities, and societies, and reminding everyone that peace and ecology are inseparable.

A second speaker delved into the importance of positive and critical thinking, encouraging young people to train their minds to discern what is good, true, and life-giving, and to consciously filter the messages they receive in their daily lives.

The third speaker offered practical and motivational guidance, reminding young people that their future is in their own hands. They were encouraged to be focused, productive, and realistic, to recognize their potential and their limitations, and to courageously and hopefully take responsibility for their own lives.

Faithful to the Franciscan spirit, the forum included a concrete action of ecological commitment. The young people participated

in a tree-planting activity, during which more than 800 trees were planted. Wearing T-shirts with the slogan "Called to Heal the Earth, Called to Build Peace," the participants visibly expressed their commitment to caring for creation and promoting peace.

In addition, there were moments of play, recreation, and fellowship, which helped create a family atmosphere where the young people felt welcomed, valued, and at home.

The organization and realization of this Franciscan Youth Forum in Rwanda was made possible thanks to the generous support of benefactors, whose contributions covered training, accommodation, food, materials, transportation, and a dignified environment for the young people, many of whom face significant economic hardship.

On behalf of all the beneficiaries, we express our deep and sincere gratitude. Your support has generated a lasting impact by investing in youth, peace building, and the care of our Common Home.

Fr. Victor Nkundayezu, OFM
JPIC Coordinator for Rwanda



RWANDA: FRANCISCAN NOVICES DEEPEN THEIR COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE, PEACE, AND CARE FOR CREATION

Twenty-one novices from the Province of St. Francis (Kenya) and ten from the Autonomous Custody of Our Lady of Kibeho (Burundi-Rwanda) participated in an intensive course on the Franciscan commitment to Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC), reaffirming the essential dimension of these values within the Franciscan charism.

From the 2nd-7th January 2026, in Rwanda, a total of 31 Franciscan novices experienced two weeks of formation focused on the spirituality and mission of the Order of Friars Minor regarding justice, peace, and care for creation.

Franciscan formation from the sources and the local context

The course was led by Fr. Jean Eric Mutabazi, OFM, Custodial Animator of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) and member of the Animation Committee, who guided the participants in a profound reflection based on Franciscan sources, the local sociocultural context, and concrete life experiences.

During the sessions, the novices understood that Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) is not an optional or secondary dimension, but rather forms part of the very essence of the Franciscan charism, just like prayer, fraternity, humility, and mission.

As the Guidelines for the Animation of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (n. 24) point out, these values “permeate all aspects of our lives” and guide the Order’s evangelizing presence in the world.

St Francis and St Clare: Prophets of peace and ecological conversion

The programme included a historical and spiritual reflection on St Francis and St Clare as prophets of peace, as well as on the Franciscan commitment to socio-environmental justice throughout the centuries.

Participants also explored the current urgency of peace and ecological conversion, discerning the Franciscan response to contemporary challenges marked by conflict, inequality, and the environmental crisis.

Furthermore, the programme presented the spirit of collaboration that should exist between the Office of JPIC, the Secretariat for Formation and Studies, and the Secretariat for Mission and Evangelization, promoting the integration of these values across all structures of the Order.

A renewed commitment to the franciscan mission

The course concluded with a final evaluation in which the novices shared their experiences. Many acknowledged that they were not fully aware of the central place that justice, peace, and care for creation occupy within Franciscan spirituality.

With enthusiasm, they expressed their commitment to promoting these values in their daily lives, integrating them into their formation process and future ministry.

This formation experience in Rwanda confirms the importance of strengthening initial Franciscan formation from the perspective of Justice, Peace, and Integration (JPIC), ensuring that new generations of friars live and proclaim the Gospel with a clear awareness of their responsibility for social justice, peacebuilding, and the care of our Common Home.

Fr. Jean Eric Mutabazi, OFM
Custodial Animator of JPIC
Member of the Animation Committee



THE 2026 INTERNATIONAL JPIC COURSE WILL BE HELD IN ROME AS PART OF THE 8TH CENTENARY OF THE DEATH OF ST. FRANCIS

The General Office for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) of the Order of Friars Minor (OFM), in collaboration with the Pontifical University Antonianum (PUA) in Rome, will hold the annual International JPIC Course from the 18th to the 24th of May 2026. This course is a key training opportunity for strengthening the Franciscan mission in today's world.

The course, primarily aimed at new JPIC facilitators within the Order and the Franciscan Family, takes place within a particularly significant commemorative context: the celebration of the last two Franciscan centenaries, that of the Cantic of the Creatures and that of the Death or Passing of St. Francis of Assisi. Both events are deeply connected by the verse added by Francis himself to his Cantic: "Praised be You, my Lord, through our sister bodily death."

Under the title "From the Cantic of the Creatures to the Easter of St Francis of Assisi," the 2026 International JPIC Course seeks to offer a contemporary and engaged reading of the great challenges of our time, in light of Franciscan spirituality and the Gospel.

En su carta de invitación, el Ministro general de la Orden subraya que estos centenarios In his letter of invitation, the Minister General of the Order emphasises that these centenaries “*have inspired many reflections that now form part of our social life and our mission,*” and presents the course as a privileged opportunity to continue deepening this formative and pastoral path.

Formation for Action in Justice, Peace, and Care for Creation

The Annual JPIC Course provides perspectives for analysis and action on socio-environmental justice and peace, intended for an audience that will apply the theoretical and practical content in their outreach work and in the specific tasks entrusted to them in their fraternities, Provinces, and local contexts.

In line with the guidelines approved at the last JPIC International Council (Assisi, 2025), the course is structured around three main lines of action:

- the pursuit of justice for migrants and refugees,
- the promotion of peace in a world marked by violence,
- and the commitment to ending the destruction of creation.

An Integrated and Experiential Structure

The training program is organised into four main parts:

The first offers an updated perspective on the global and local challenges related to human mobility,

armed conflict, and the socio-environmental crisis.

The second part proposes a philosophical, theological, and Franciscan interpretation of the Paschal Mystery of Jesus and St. Francis as the foundation of the Christian commitment to justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

The third section presents concrete, positive experiences of Franciscan fraternities already working in these areas across different regions of the world. Within this framework, a visit to Assisi is also planned, including a tour of the Porziuncola and the tomb of St. Francis, sites of particular significance in the context of the centenary.

Finally, throughout the course, participatory planning tools will be offered, using a synodal approach, aimed at generating processes of change, influence, and impact through JPIC animation.

An open invitation to the Franciscan Family

The Minister General expressly encourages participation in this course, “particularly for those who are beginning this service,” and invites members of the Franciscan Family, lay people, and young people to take advantage of this opportunity to strengthen the shared commitment to living the Gospel today through a shared mission.

The 2026 International JPIC Course will have simultaneous translation into English, Italian, and Spanish.

For more information, contact the JPIC General Office at pax@ofm.org.

OFM JPIC



A DAY AT ST ANTHONY'S DINING ROOM IN THE CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

“These are the treasures of the Church”

On 1st January, 2026, the city of San Francisco, California, dawns with little commercial and social activity. The thermometer reads 11° Celsius and the rain is present. One of the city's central neighborhoods is the Tenderloin, currently known for its high concentration of homeless people, the sale and consumption of drugs, especially fentanyl, and poverty. In the heart of this neighbourhood is the church of St Boniface administered by the Franciscans since 1887.

At 9:00 am. 121 Golden Gate Avenue runs through the Tenderloin, and that is where the San Antonio Dining Room is located. At this time of day you begin to notice a group of people forming a line. The Dining Room was founded in 1950 by Br. Alfred Boeddeker, OFM, who was the parish priest of St. Boniface, the church under which the St. Anthony Foundation was born whose mission is *“to feed, heal, shelter, clothe, lift the spirits of those in need and create a society in which all people can thrive.”*

Today, ten Franciscan friars are at the service of St Boniface church and the different programmes managed by the Foundation. It is an intergenerational, multilingual and multicultural fraternity that knows how to combine its fraternal life with the demands of daily work. One of them has taken as an apostolate to go out into the neighbourhood in search of the inhabitants of the street to offer them sheets, socks, hats, raincoats, scarves, or whatever he receives in donations, so that the night is as unforgiving as possible.

At 9:30 am. It is the arrival time of the volunteers who will serve for the next four hours. The food is ready, the dining room looks clean and hygienic. Aurelio, one of the 260 collaborators who work at the Foundation, begins to lead physical warm-up exercises in order to prepare the body for work. Then general indications are offered and service areas are assigned: distribution of food and water, cleaning of tables, attention to people with physical disabilities, etc.

On the 7th November, the St Anthony Foundation celebrated seventy-five years of existence. That humble dining room of Br. Alfred *“has become a vibrant community centre that accompanies more than 10,000 neighbours each year.”*

Among the beneficiaries of this programme are the homeless; those with low incomes, but with a home, and within these two groups there are some who have fallen into alcoholism or drug addiction.

At 10:00 am. The St Anthony's Dining Room opens its doors to receive the first diners. The most commonly used greeting by everyone is: *“Happy New Year!”* Half an hour later the dining room tables are almost full. The faces, languages, and accents of the people who occupy them reveal their origin: Asia, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa, etc.

Some of them were born in the country, most of them are migrants. Everyone knows that in this Dining Room they have a place that not only offers them a lunch, but also welcomes them with respect and affection three hundred and sixty-five days a year. In addition to lunch, they can access the distribution of breakfast and dinner to go, as well as the weekly delivery of a bag of food.

At 12:00 am. After two hours of intense work, the people in charge of the soup kitchen give some of the volunteers a twenty-minute break with their respective lunch and then a change of service. Once that time is over, the same is done with the other part of the day's volunteering.

Pope Leo XIV in his Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi te*. On love for the poor, he affirms that their condition represents *“a cry that, in the history of humanity, constantly challenges our lives, our societies, our political and economic systems, and especially the Church”* (n. 9).

The St Anthony's Foundation has allowed itself to be challenged by that cry and at this time responds to it through programs such as the Dining Room, free clothing, clinics for physical and mental health, a technology centre to reduce the digital divide, personal hygiene service with showers and laundry, the drug recovery programme with a view to reintegration into the labour market, advice on fair employment, women's empowerment, advice on migration and labour issues, personalised support and guidance in different areas, etc.

At 1:30 pm. The dining room has closed its doors, but a man with Asian features has been able to sneak in. The leaders and volunteers look at each other without knowing what to do. One of them, with a smile on his face, says aloud: "*one was missing.*" Lunch is then served.

The work is done. A small screen located near the food distribution reports the number of lunches delivered on this first day of the year, namely 1574.

At 2:00 pm. Volunteers begin to leave the facilities, experience physical fatigue, but also satisfaction of the heart. A few meters from the Dining Room is the St Boniface's Church. At that time, a group of people are seen leaving it and receiving their belongings that they left at the entrance. They are the beneficiaries of the St

Clare's programme that offers street dwellers at least eight hours of rest in the pews of the church, allowing them a safe and warm place under the care of a staff that welcomes, protects and attends to them.

When in the third century the authorities of the Roman Empire asked the deacon St. Lawrence to bring them the treasures of the Church, he distributed amongst the poor the few possessions that the Christian community possessed, presented to the authorities a multitude of poor, crippled and blind with the iconic phrase: "*These are the true treasures of the Church.*"

In this place, the Franciscan friars for more than seventy-five years have dignified the poorest and most vulnerable people left on the streets by the prosperous and opulent society. Without a doubt, they are convinced where the true treasures of the Church are to be found, and opening the doors to them daily is their greatest joy.

Br. Daniel Rodríguez Blanco, OFM
Director of the JPIC General Office



THE FRANCISCAN NETWORK FOR MIGRANTS IN IQUIQUE, CHILE: "A WELCOMING HAND AND A LISTENING SILENCE"

On Monday, the 31st January, 2022, news spread around the world: an anti-immigrant march in the city of Iquique, Chile, drew some 4,000 participants. Some of the protesters attacked a migrant camp in Chile, mostly inhabited by Venezuelans, destroying their tents, and burning their belongings. A similar incident occurred in late September 2021, amidst the migration crisis in northern Chile.

In response, the Bishop of the Diocese of Iquique, Bishop Isauro Covili, OFM, since his installation in mid-2022, has made constant appeals to stop all forms of violence, inviting everyone to be "instruments of peace" and to embrace a culture of welcome toward the migrants in the area, especially in the Tarapacá Region.

Iquique is a city in the Tarapacá Region (bordering Bolivia), in northern Chile, 1,800 kilometres from Santiago. It has an estimated population of 233,228 and has been one of the main arrival points for migrants in the north of the country.



La Red Franciscana para Migrantes en Tarapacá: presencia y acompañamiento pastoral

The Franciscan Network for Migrants (RFM) in Iquique has developed various pastoral and social activities since its inception in 2023, strengthening Franciscan migrant ministry in the area. The beginning of 2026 has been marked by numerous initiatives supporting migrant families.

“A Space of Fraternal Joy”: Support for Migrant Children in Alto Hospicio

The first of these initiatives took place from the 9th – 11th January. The RFM, together with the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, held the “Space of Fraternal Joy” initiative for three days with the goal of

“creating a safe and fraternal space that promotes joy, play, learning, and integration for migrant children from Paso de la Mula during their vacation period.” January and February are vacation months in Chile, coinciding with the Southern Cone summer. Paso de la Mula is one of the migrant settlements in Alto Hospicio, a municipality linked to Iquique.

On the first day of the three-day event—the 9th January—the brothers and sisters addressed the topic “My Emotions” in a clear and engaging way, and on the second day, “My Cultural Identity.” Games, songs, painting, prayer, and theatre were the pedagogical tools used to entertain the children gathered at the Daughters of Charity’s premises.

The third day was the most anticipated. The program included an excursion to one of the beaches in the city of Iquique. At seven o’clock in the morning on the 11th January, about 30 children returned to the area set up by the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. A delicious breakfast awaited them. Two hours later, they were enjoying the waves of the Pacific Ocean.

On the beach, a two-metre-long inflatable plastic whale was the main attraction for the children. They all wanted to climb on it or, at the very least, hug it. The black and white whale only got to rest during lunch, whilst the little ones enjoyed the meal prepared by the nuns. After a break, the sand and sea welcomed the migrant children once again.



Integration and Recreation: Initiatives for Migrant Children in 2026

Alto Hospicio is located on one of the coastal desert mountain ranges of Iquique. Following the violence that occurred in 2021 and 2022, many migrants occupied land and, since then, have built precarious dwellings without basic services, reflecting the complex social situation of migrants in Tarapacá.

Another activity carried out by the Franciscan Network for Migrants took place in February 2026. In the courtyard of the “Vicentinas” school, they installed a small portable swimming pool that will be available until the start of the school year. “The pool is for girls on Tuesdays and for boys on Wednesdays,” reports Sr María Isabel Ruiz, F.d.C.

Entrepreneurship Workshop for Migrant Women in Iquique

Sr Totty Bórquez, FMM, a member of the RFM in Iquique, acknowledges that migration is a topic discussed with suspicion and distrust in the city. For her, the RFM is a welcoming hand that, in the silence of listening, lets migrants know they are not alone and that someone believes in them.

On the afternoon of the 17th February, in the room where breakfast was served on the day of the outing, and while the girls enjoyed the pool, their mothers participated in a meeting to finalise the program, days, and times for the Thermal Printing Entrepreneurship Workshop for ten migrant women, which will last three months. Outside, Sister Jeanette Martínez, F.d.C., looked after the girls and offered them a light snack.



The participants come from Bolivia, Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua. This project not only aims to provide training in the production of various goods, but also to offer resources for brand development, social media management for product positioning, and legal advice for establishing a cooperative. The workshop's subtitle is: Woman, you can!

Networking with INCAMI and the pastoral care of spiritual accompaniment

Fr. Julio Campos, OFM, parish priest of San Antonio de Padua Parish in Iquique and facilitator for RFM – Chile, affirms that working with migrant children and adults “is an opportunity to enrich my vocation as a lesser brother who follows Jesus, poor and a stranger.”

Furthermore, the RFM plans to expand its support for the Chilean Catholic Institute for Migration (INCAMI), an organisation of



the Chilean Episcopal Conference, through pastoral care focused on listening to and providing spiritual accompaniment for migrants passing through or living in the city. INCAMI offers services including legal advice, immigration guidance, a shelter, health services, and a centre for listening and spiritual accompaniment. Father Vicente Taji, SVD, is the director, and Janett Gómez Calle is the coordinator of the Iquique office.

The Franciscan Mission with Migrants in Northern Chile

“Working with migrants is a daily challenge because it involves stepping outside of oneself, looking toward others, listening to someone you don’t know, and acting with trust,” shares Fr. Julio Campos. “This approach to life is healthy because it means living with hope, believing in others, and therefore, believing in God,” he concludes.

Br. Daniel Rodríguez Blanco, OFM JPIC – Rome



FRATERNAL VISIT TO THE PERUVIAN AMAZON: PRESENCE AND HOPE IN CONTAMANA

Franciscan Presence in the Peruvian Amazon: Mission in Contamana (Loreto)

From the 20th-23rd February 2026, a delegation from the Order of Friars Minor made a fraternal visit to the Franciscan friar in Contamana, in the Amazonian region of Loreto, Peru, after a six-hour journey along the Ucayali River, one of the main waterways of the Peruvian Amazon.

The delegation included Fr. César Kulkamp, Definitor General; Fr. Francisco Gómez, Secretary General for Missions, and Evangelisation; and Fr. Daniel N. Rodríguez Blanco, Director of the General Office for Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC), accompanied by Fr. José Surita, Provincial Treasurer of the Province of the Twelve Apostles. They were welcomed by the friars of the fraternity: Fr. Miguel Vilca, Fr. Maico Hervas, and Fr. Francisco Miranda.



A new fraternity at the service of the Franciscan mission in Peru

The fraternity, established a year ago and belonging to the Province of the Twelve Apostles of Peru, responds to the Order's desire to strengthen its presence in the Peruvian Amazon. Fr. Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General, expressed the dream and desire to promote Franciscan work in the Amazon, since "our Order wants to give special importance to the challenges of living out our charism in this context."

This mission revives the historic Franciscan presence in the parish of St. Francis of Assisi, in the Apostolic Vicariate of Requena, where Spanish missionaries served for years, leaving a profound mark on the ecclesial and social life of the Amazon region.

For Fr. Ernesto Chambí, Provincial Minister, the decision made a year ago seeks to return to the Province's origins, which have always had brothers in all regions of Peru. Now, the new fraternity in Contamana has become a significant place, serving as a point of reference for brothers in formation and for all levels of the organisation, including schools, parishes, and shrines.

Missionary Journey Through Riverside Communities of the Ucayali River

During the visit, the brothers toured riverside communities such as Canaan Cashiaco and the hamlet of Lourdes, celebrated Mass with the parish community, and held a fraternal meeting to discern the challenges and opportunities of the mission in the Amazon.

Gospel and Care for Creation in the Heart of the Amazon

The fraternity aims to live and proclaim the Gospel in the heart of the Peruvian Amazon, embodying the Franciscan charism through closeness to the communities, the promotion of education, care for children, the strengthening of parish life, and a commitment to the care of creation.

Commitment to Environmental Threats in the Amazon Region

Pastoral work also addresses the ecological challenges of the territory, especially threats such as illegal mining and other forms of exploitation that severely affect Amazonian communities and ecosystems.

The Franciscan presence in Contamana represents a concrete sign of the Order's missionary dream, in harmony with the apostolic exhortation *Querida Amazonía*, which invites us to embrace the social, cultural, ecological, and ecclesial challenges of this region, which is strategic for the Church and for the world.

Fr. Daniel Rodríguez Blanco, OFM
Director of the JPIC General Office



FRANCISCAN FRIAR PUBLISHES REFLECTION ON GAZA AND PARTICIPATES IN OPEN LETTER TO U.S. BISHOPS

Franciscan Reflection on the Suffering in Gaza

Franciscan Friar Jacek Orzechowski, OFM, has published a reflection entitled “*A Franciscan Friar Shares His Response to the Ongoing Tragedy in Gaza*,” in which he addresses, from a Franciscan spiritual perspective, the humanitarian situation faced by the civilian population in Gaza.

The text is part of the Franciscan Wisdom Series and stems from the testimony of Nada Jwaifelat—a Palestinian girl who survived an attack in Gaza—and the author’s meeting with her in Washington, D.C. From this concrete experience, the friar invites us to contemplate human suffering in the light of the Gospel and the Franciscan prophetic tradition.

Open Letter from the Network of Priests Against Genocide – USA

In this same context, several friars participated in the “Open Letter from the Network of Priests Against Genocide – USA, to the Bishops of the United States,” addressed to the U.S. episcopate.

The letter requests a clear stance on the situation in the Holy Land and calls for moral and pastoral responsibility in the face of the suffering of the civilian population.

Although the network’s name explicitly refers to the priestly ministry, the initiative also includes non-ordained religious men and women committed to the defence of human dignity and peace.

Press Release on the Peace Board

Additionally, the Network has issued a press release entitled:

“U.S. Priests Against Genocide Urges Catholic Leaders to Speak Out on the Peace Board as Suffering Continues in Gaza.”

This statement explains the context of the letter and refers to the convening of the so-called “Peace Council,” highlighting the need—according to the signatories—for a clear ethical response to the current situation.

This document is separate from the open letter and is intended for public information.

Franciscan Tradition and Prophetic Commitment

Both the friar’s reflection and his participation in the open letter and the dissemination of this statement are situated within the Franciscan tradition of commitment to justice, peace, and human dignity.

The author invites Christians not to remain indifferent to suffering and to act with charity, justice, and fidelity to the Gospel.

The open letter and the press release can be found in the attached PDFs at the end of this publication.

Press Release – **[Spanish Version](#)**

Press Release – **[English Version](#)**

Open Letter – **[Spanish Version](#)**

Open Letter – **[English Version](#)**

OFM JPIC



THE ECLIPSE OF THE HORIZON: WHEN POWER BECOMES BLIND TO LIFE

“When man darkens the sky, the earth becomes a desert: rediscovering the leadership of minority groups to disarm a world in conflict.”

In the beating heart of the Middle East, among the glass skyscrapers and squares steeped in history, a drama is unfolding that transcends geopolitics. It is the crisis of a model of authority that has decided to “hide God.” When power severs its connection to a higher responsibility, that metaphysical and moral dimension that imposes respect for the Absolute in man, it loses its sight. It becomes, in the most tragic sense of the term, a blind power.

The first victim of this blindness is the sacredness of existence. In contemporary “war materialism,” death has ceased to be a mystery to be honoured and has become an operational means. People no longer kill simply to defend, but to communicate a position; It is destroyed not out of necessity, but by statistical calculation.

However, the destruction of man has never generated peace, but only a “ghostly silence.” The illusion that a military victory can fill the void of meaning is the most dangerous lie of our time. Without a transcendent Horizon, the other ceases to be a brother and becomes “expendable biology.” The result is a desert of rubble and a hatred that, devoid of the balm of forgiveness, is passed down like a toxic legacy for generations.

This blindness extends beyond the battlefield, infecting the economy and technology. In economics, power untethered from ethics transforms profit into a cannibalistic idol: man is reduced to a “human resource,” a numerical cog to be optimised. In technology, the illusion of omnipotence pushes us to believe that everything technically possible is morally permissible.

In both cases, the absence of a transcendent Horizon creates a “throwaway society.” It is the “soft” version of war materialism, which uses algorithms rather than missiles to marginalise humanity and hide fragility under the veil of productive efficiency.

Is there an alternative to this anthropological darkness? The answer lies in a gesture made eight centuries ago, yet more relevant than ever: the meeting of Saint Francis of Assisi with Sultan Malik al-Kamil. In the midst of the Crusade, Francis proposed the Leadership of the Minority.

The “minor” leader is not the weak, but the one who has the courage to be disarmed. In the Middle East, this model today inspires a “Track II Diplomacy” (unofficial diplomacy) that seeks not technical compromise, but the reconciliation of hearts. It is a leadership that lives at the grassroots, that speaks of the shared management of resources and the protection of creation, starting from the assumption that the good of others is a necessary condition for one’s own good.

The final challenge belongs not only to diplomats, but to each of us. Franciscan leadership is, first and foremost, an interior attitude for anyone who holds responsibility:

1. Disarming Language: Renouncing drone-like words that wound from a distance.
2. Inhabiting Proximity: Preferring listening to judgment, “motherhood” to punishment.
3. Recognising Limits: Accepting that we are not masters of life, but its custodians.

Life regains meaning only when power “removes its blindfolds” and recognises God in the face of the enemy. Putting God at the centre does not mean imposing a religion or an ideology, but remembering that man is sacred.

Francis’s example in the desert sands teaches us that a world without God can be built, but that world will inevitably end up devouring its children. Choosing to lead the minority today means having the audacity to believe that true victory is not the annihilation of the adversary, but the rediscovery of a lost brother.

Fr Tony Shoukri OFM
Guardian Beirut

INTERNATIONAL DAYS – April / June, 2026

April 22 - International Mother Earth Day

May 1 - International Workers' Day

May 10 - World Fair Trade Day

May 22 - International Day for Biological Diversity

May 17-24 - Laudato Si' Week

June 5 - World Environment Day

June 8 - World Oceans Day

June 12 - World Day Against Child Labour

June 17 - World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought



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