

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Peace and all good!

From 18-24 October the Council of the International Franciscan Conference-TOR held its annual meeting at the Convent of the School Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in Rome. This was the first meeting of the new Council since the Assembly of May 2009. Our General Secretary, Sr. Margherita and our Treasurer, Sr. Santina were likewise present. Sr. Daria had finished her mandate as director of Spirit and Life. I wish to thank the Community of Sr. Daria, the Franciscan Clarist Congregation, for allowing her to serve from 2004; we all wish Sister well as she begins a new ministry.

With this letter, I would like to share some aspects of the General Secretary and the Treasurer's reports as a way of keeping all of you informed on what is happening in the IFC-TOR offices in Rome. In addition, my letter will also present the decisions of the Council on how we plan to realize the recommendations of the last General Assembly. During the days of our meeting, we began and ended each day with prayer and the celebration of the Eucharist allowed us to be focused on how we can continue to build up the Body of Christ in service to the Gospel.

Before hearing the Reports of the Secretary and Treasure we spent some time reviewing the evaluations of the General Assembly. A part from some minor organizational issues there was a very positive evaluation of the how the Assembly was carried out and the results achieved. I will refer to some specific issues raised later in this letter. Even though the election process went more smoothly at this Assembly we still need to find a better way of nominating sisters and brothers to stand for election so that we will have a greater representation by culture on the Council. We wish to acknowledge the expertise of our facilitator Sr. Violet Grennan who enabled this Assembly to be so productive and successful. In addition a special word of appreciation goes to Sr. Nancy Celaschi who was the Secretary of the Assembly and who also did a summary of the evaluations. They both enabled the Assembly to do its work and serve the TOR Congregations throughout the world.

At the Council meeting it was discerned that we will continue to use PROPOSITUM as a means of educating and promoting the TOR Rule and Life. Even though only Minister Generals receive this publication we wish to continue its diffusion to all those interested in the TOR way of life by continuing to place it on the web site (www.ifc-tor.org). In addition we would like to consider possibly publishing it twice a year. A plan for the themes of PROPOSITUM was suggested. In light of the results of the Assembly, we thought that it would be a good idea for us to explore how the vows are understood from different cultures in an attempt to look at new ways of living religious life in the 21st century in the light of the four core values of the TOR Rule. How can the vows be understood as a challenge for young men and women in the world to enable us to becoming a disturbing presence in our world today. This project will fulfill several of the recommendations given to the Council from the Assembly especially on the issues of formation, education and making Franciscan sources available.

The Council also discussed ways that we could reach out to those Congregations who, for whatever reason, were not present at the Assembly or have withdrawn from active membership. We will attempt to make more personal contact with certain geographical areas that were not represented at the last Assembly so that in four years time we will be able to bring some new members to the next Assembly.

We discussed how the JPIC issues can be brought home to our Congregations. It was felt that IFC-TOR might serve as a "clearing house" for ideas and projects that our sisters and brothers are engaged in and invite other Congregations to join in these. This is the best solution given the limited resources of personnel and funds that most are facing today. In this sense we will try to use the resources of the website more in terms of disseminating information and material. However, this requires that all of you collaborate and send us material already formatted so that we can disseminate it rapidly and accurately. The issue of translations arises here since we do not have the resources for doing this and would appreciate the materials sent by your communication officers already translated in the languages that your Congregation use.

To enhance communications, we are exploring ways of making the addresses of the Congregations and Minister Generals available on the web. However, since this is sharing your personal data, Italian law requires that we maintain certain norms. This will mean providing you with a special password so that you alone may have access to the private section of the web. As soon as this has been done we will communicate this to you. We ask you to send links to your websites and activities so we may also make these available. Also we encourage you to inform us about the pressing needs for pastoral ministers to assist those currently living in “frontier” communities so we may encourage some intercongregational help where possible.

The Council voted in favor of the recommendation of digitizing the TOR Rule project and of entrusting the original documents to a Franciscan Institute for preservation in their archives of this precious material. We would like to invite anyone who has some of the Rule material lodged in your Congregation’s archives to send a copy to the IFC-TOR offices so this may be included in the overall project. We are currently investigating the best way of digitizing the material and evaluating to which Institute we will donate this material.

The Council ratified the Statute changes as were voted upon at the General Assembly. The official version will be the English Language version which will be put on the web. Unofficial translations will appear in the other languages as well.

Action was taken on the approval to renew the lease for the offices at Piazza Risorgimento for 6 years. The Council confirmed Sr. Santina Cangemi as treasurer and Sr. Margherita Merlino as general secretary of the IFC-TOR for another term. Our thanks go to their Congregations for their generosity in allowing them to minister in service to the IFC-TOR.

The Council would like to entertain requests for Itinerant schools to be held in your region. We can fund one a year. More information may be obtained from the IFC-TOR offices. Please remember your annual contribution to the work of the Conference and of course we always welcome donations for the solidarity fund which helps us support such projects as the itinerant schools. Lastly, we can announce the opening of the new Franciscan Institute for Franciscan studies in Nairobi. For more information please consult the web site of the CCFMC (Comprehensive Course on the Franciscan Mission Charism) www.ccfmc.net.

Date/Place of the next Council Meeting

The next IFC-TOR Council meeting will be 11-16 October 2010 at the Franciscan School Sisters.

With greetings of God’s peace, I remain,

Fraternally,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James F. Puglisi, SA". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James F. Puglisi, SA
President