

# INTERNATIONAL FRANCISCAN CONFERENCE – TOR

## YOUR RESPONSES TO MAKE A DWELLING



September 2018



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

**MAKE A DWELLING** – these were the words that we pondered together in our General Assembly, May 2017. We reflected, we prayed, we listened – all ways of dreaming. One participant reminded us of a quote of Dom Helder Camara: *“When one dreams alone, it is only a dream. When many dream together, that is the beginning of a new reality.”* That perhaps is what we hope to come to now, a year later: a more intense living of our TOR Rule #8, a new beginning for this lived reality:

*Within themselves, let them always make a dwelling place and home...*

As you read the responses received from the participants, may you rejoice in memories and be inspired anew by the waves of blessing: a dwelling inclusive and lasting; at home with God, others and myself; to embrace and understand; to build and fill; a place of smiles for friends and strangers: simply stated – a grace-filled dwelling.

Sr. Deborah LOCKWOOD, President IFC-TOR  
Sr. M. Magdalena SCHMITZ, Vice-President  
Sr. Dolores CANEO, Councilor  
Sr. Joanne BRAZINSKI, Councilor  
Bro. Franco KANNAMPUZHA, Councilor  
Sr. Benigna AOKO, Councilor

## What difference did attending the 2017 Assembly make in my life?

This was the first Assembly that I have attended. I appreciated the world view into which we were immersed. It was intentional, quality, holy time to interact and share ideas, joys and common concerns with other Franciscans. It was a grace-filled experience to be present in the physical environment where Francis, Clare and Companions lived and ministered.

## How have I made a dwelling inside and for my brothers and sisters?

The presentations on the Franciscan Values: Evangelical Conversion, Prayer, Poverty and Humility by Sister Ramona Miller, were a personal renewal. The responses by a variety of participants from various cultural perspectives were insightful. The group sessions often called forth a deeper awareness and greater understanding to embrace broader viewpoints. These perspectives have called forth a greater need to listen and ponder the truth that my Sisters have to offer. This will enable the Franciscan Charism, as exemplified in living the Franciscan Values, to be witnessed by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity.

*Sister Natalie Binversie, O.S.F.  
Manitowoc, Wisconsin, U.S.A.*



## What difference did attending the 2017 Assembly make in my life?

The experience of internationality has strengthened me again; The Sharing in the language group was very inspiring.

The topics' presentations were easy to understand; what was expressed by different groups, by different countries was very enriching.

For me it was very helpful to well prepare topics/lessons for the novices.

## How have I made a dwelling inside and for my brothers and sisters?

I try to open myself inwardly to God in his day by day inspiration for today's various forms and I would like to give to the women in training space for development and formation.

*Sr. Teresa Hameter  
Franziskanerinnen von Vöcklabruck, Austria*



## What difference did attending the 2017 Assembly make in my life?

IFC-TOR General Assembly on 2017 was for me a spiritual renewal experience. The reflection on the Franciscan values of conversion, prayer, humility and poverty helped me to renew spiritual life in the inter-cultural community. The Group sharing was a rich experience.

I practice the Franciscan Values in a creative way by:

- Being grateful to everyone
- Attitude of appreciation for the very presence of every community member
- To make an atmosphere of serenity in relating with one another
- Appreciation to different culture and language
- Pitch a tent within me and in others with a simple smile.

Thanks to Sister Ramona Miller and to the organizers of IFC-TOR. Thanks to all the group members for their contribution of personal sharing and discussions. The General Assembly did create a difference in me with the theme - *make a dwelling*.

*Sr. M. Rita Edakkoottathil OSF  
D - 48017 Münster, Germany*



## What difference did attending the 2017 Assembly make in my life?

The prayer services touched my heart in the diversity we experienced at those particular moments. Working with Brother Rufinus Palen from across the Pacific Ocean and then meeting him was one part of making a difference in my life by attending the Assembly. The other part was to have him share the tragic death of a family member during the Assembly because of the violence in his area of the Philippines. I was confronted with the connectedness of dwelling with one another wherever in the world we are located as Franciscan sisters and brothers. Reflecting back, I learned even deeper to always be ready for the surprise of making a dwelling that invites another into an ongoing relationship.

## How have I made a dwelling inside and for my brothers and sisters?

These past months, I have been able with the members of my Congregation to make a dwelling for a Poor Clare Community to move their monastery to a corridor of our Motherhouse. Their monastic life and our evangelical life continue as before the move. I want to believe that my attitude of invitation was the work of the Holy Spirit when the call came wondering if there was a dwelling place for the Poor Clares to move in with us while keeping their monastic life. Little did I remember about the dwelling place that had been provided on our College campus for this Poor Clare community to attend the *Contemplative Program* following Vatican II, having classes in their cloistered area from our Sister professors; A dwelling place relationship begun nearly 50 years ago.

*Sr. Marilyn Geiger, OSF  
Rochester, MN - USA*

## What difference did attending the 2017 Assembly make in my life?

Being aware that the 2017 IFC-TOR General Assembly would have been for me the last one, I tried to participate in it in the best way. I enjoyed everything that had been carefully prepared, the rich contents offered by the reflections, the moments of prayer, the reports, the open dialogue with people of different cultures. All this helped to create in me a space of inner freedom to welcome the new. The change that would take place after the celebration of our 22<sup>nd</sup> General Chapter as Congregation of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother.

The reflections on Evangelical Conversion, Humility, Poverty, and Prayer, have strengthened in myself the desire to conclude my second and last mandate as general superior of the congregation with a spirit of gratitude and humility.

I was able to experience that it is the Lord who builds a dwelling/a home for us and He fills it with peace and joy if we are able to make room for others, sisters / brothers, if we are able to truly live the teaching of our Seraphic Father Francis who exhorts us: *"...We must refer every good to the most high supreme God, acknowledging that all good belongs to him; and we must thank him for it all, because all good comes from him. May the most supreme and high and only true God receive and have and be paid all honour and reverence, all praise and blessing, all thanks and all glory, for to him belongs all good and no one is good but only God"* (Rnb 17,17).

*Sr. M. Teresina Marra, ssm  
Suore SS.ma Madre Addolorata, Roma*

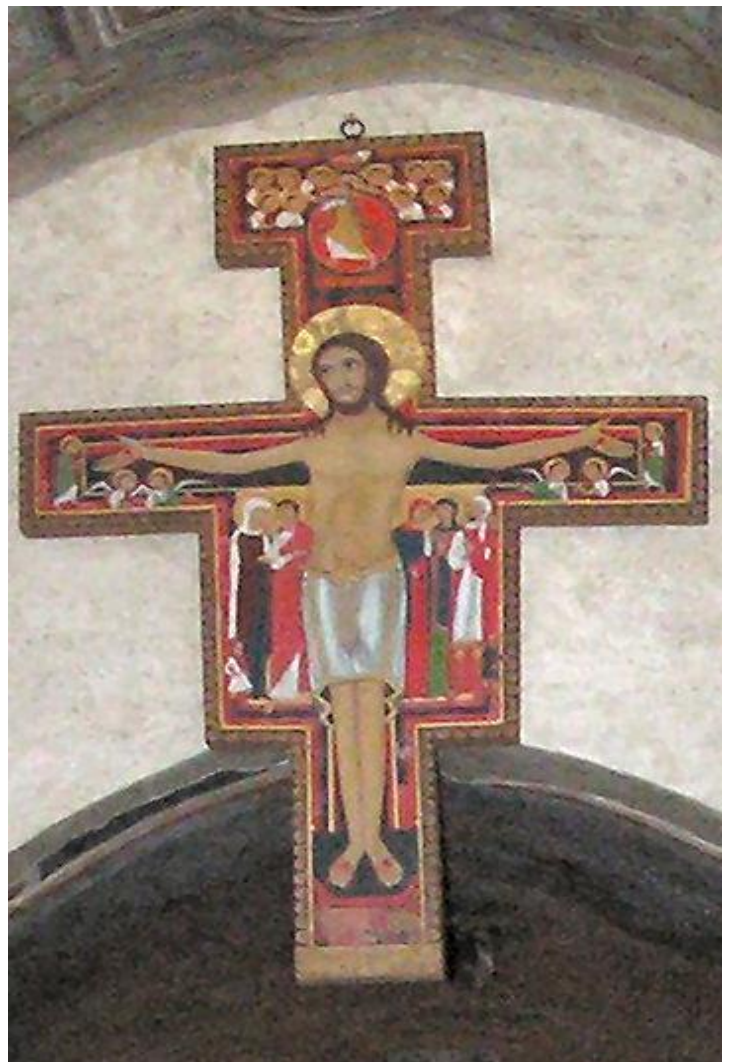
## How have I made a dwelling inside and for my brothers and sisters?

The opportunity I had to attend to the 2017 IFC-TOR Assembly has helped me a lot. Such experience helped me to be closer to the Lord through personal prayer than before, and live inner peace in me and around me.

I shared with my sisters what I received and experienced.

I try to be closer and more attentive to my sisters and brothers by sharing their joys and problems.

*Sr. Marie Louise  
Tchad - Africa*



Copy of the *Crocifisso di San Damiano*

## Make a dwelling for the Lord!

What difference did attending the 2017 Assembly make in my life?  
How have I made a dwelling inside and for my brothers and sisters?

**Make a dwelling for the Lord!** This was the theme of our last General Assembly in Assisi. This verse from our third order Rule has always meant a great deal to me. It occurs twice in the Rule: a) In the words of St. Francis to all who follow him, where Francis speaks about God, “*who will make a home and a dwelling with us*”, b) and in Rule 2:8 where we are invited “*to make a home and a dwelling for the Lord in ourselves*”. Thus there are two movements, one to allow God to work in us and our own deliberate action of making space within ourselves. The goal of this double action is our growth into the all-encompassing love of the Triune God and our constant conversion towards him and our neighbour.

In the past few months I have traced this encouragement of God “*he makes in us*” and his invitation to “*make a dwelling for him*” in my prayer life, in the community and in my activities.



During my contemplative retreat this promise entered anew deeply into my heart. God is making a dwelling for himself in me. He wants to come into me and my life and remain present in me. I can allow his activity in me, call myself back again and again into his presence and let myself be enfolded and healed by his look. It is liberating to accept this promise and to believe that he wishes to remain lovingly in me. It does not need intense effort on my part, just a simple being present and to confidently entrust my transformation to him.

The interaction between God and me does not simply wish to remain an inner event. The goal is that I grow into the love of the Trinity, which shows through my constant turning anew to him and to my neighbour. Wherever we give God space/a dwelling in ourselves, life's wounds can heal and the joy of life can grow. To know that God is looking at me and accepting me enables me to be there anew for my sisters in the community and in the Congregation. To recognize and accept their otherness. To esteem it as a treasure and to be aware that God has also make a dwelling in each one of them. Thus he becomes truly human. To allow myself to be loved by God gives me energy and the readiness to become converted to caring love. Gratitude, patience, forgiveness and support become possible. Our foundress, Mother M. Clara Pfänder, summarized it in these words: “*Help each other in mutual love!*”.

Of course she did not just stop at the love of God and the fellow sisters. She invited the sisters: “*For the rest no kind of charitable works for which the Lord gives you the opportunity are to be excluded from your love, whether it be for children or adults, for the healthy or the sick.*” Love creates waves wherever it has “moved in”. It knows no limits and is a creative fire that constantly finds new forms of expression and keeps our hearts open for the manifold encounters with the brother and sister in need. They could be people searching for a spiritual home or people at the margins such as refugees and migrants, sufferers with dementia or addicts, the lonely and overburdened, neglected children or youth in need of orientation. If God has made his dwelling in us and lives there, our eyes will be opened for his miracles among people and in creation and we will become aware of his many invitations to give love and attentive care. There will be no one-way street there because it will be a giving and receiving that ultimately flows back to God as a Eucharistic thanksgiving.

*Sr. M. Magdalena Schmitz, fcjm*

*Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Roma*

## What difference did attending the 2017 Assembly make in my life?

When I was a newly - professed Franciscan Missionary Sister of Assisi in Italy in early 1982, I remember that our Mother General attended a large meeting in Grottaferrata in Rome. I now know that she was participating in the Rule Project. Some years later, exploring the writings of our Founder, I came to know his great love for the Rule and those who live it, and our sisters, from the beginning, were encouraged to “wash, with perfumed water, the feet of all who share this life.” Now, more than thirty-five years in community, I was very fortunate to attend the IFC-TOR Assembly as a Co-Executive Director of the Franciscan Federation of the Third Order Regular of the Sisters and Brothers in the United States. My being in this ministerial position is through our current Mother General’s encouragement, and I am glad that the Federation encouraged my attendance.

Between these three events, I have been urged to ‘Make A Dwelling’ in my life and in my heart for many Sisters of my Congregation from all over the world. Together, we have sustained our small presence in the United States and come to know, first hand, how evangelical conversion, humility, poverty and prayer sustain our witness and service.

The gift that the IFC-TOR offers to its members is the world-wide, catholic, universal context within which our way of life exists, in the Holy Trinity. But we are not alone, either in our provinces, or congregations, or cultures, or even in our multi-cultural realities, as Franciscan TOR religious. We are God’s own, as sisters and brothers in Jesus, and as agents and instruments of the Holy Spirit. Here is the dwelling where all of our hearts, and our lived experiences, and our hopes and dreams can be expressed and understood in the light of our common values. And, I believe, the more we ‘dwell’ as one, in this Franciscan way of life, and in the communion that the IFC-TOR offer us, the more we can ‘make a more inclusive and lasting dwelling’ of faith and charity in our world.

*Sister Carol Woods, sfma*  
*Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Assisi-USA*



## The difference the 2017 Assembly made in my life and how I have made a dwelling inside and among my brothers and sisters.

Indeed it has made a great difference and impact in my life personally, as I am committed to reflect and share the experiences I have on the topics presented to us during those few days together at the conference. I focus and reflect the theme, “make a dwelling” Jn: 14:23, as I go about my role in my community.

I find the reflections and discussions at the workshops on the topics presented to us were very helpful and thought – provoking . They remind us what it means to live an authentic religious, and how well we understand and appreciate these Franciscan values in our daily life. The speakers provided enough stimulating topics for workshop group discussions. The space and time given at the workshop were sufficient for everyone to participate.

I enjoyed hearing from the rich experiences of the individual young and dynamic sisters. They have an impact in my consecrated living. They are so young in religious, yet already mature and so deep rooted in their understanding of consecrated religious life. Please continue to open that opportunity to the young. It is an eye opened for me to do more for my sisters in the congregation, especially for the Initial and the On-going formation programs, letting them be involved and be exposed more on personal interactions with other congregations’ programs. As well as collaborating and planning, especially, for our On-going formation with other congregations.

The theme, “Make a Dwelling”, has inspired me to adopt this theme for our Congregation’s 12<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, which will be held this year, end of December 2018. Since last year we have been preparing the entire Congregation well for this important event, (spiritually, emotionally and psychologically) through our general assembly.

We are called, just as the first disciples were called and sent in Mission by Jesus, because Jesus had a mission. We are called to make real, concrete and present, the Kingdom of God for the society, the creation as God created it. We are not living for ourselves, we are put into the world, into society to do that, to make present the Kingdom of God, which is very clear in the Gospel.

The sign of the presence of the Kingdom of God is Peace. Where there is Peace, there is the Kingdom of God. Where there are fraternal relationships, there will be Peace. This is what it means to “Make a Dwelling” where everyone is experiencing the Kingdom of God. Not the ‘Physical heaven’ but the experience of ‘heaven on earth’.

*Sister Flora TINGANG, SSFS  
Sisters of St Francis of Sarawak, Malaysia*



## What difference did attending the 2017 Assembly make in my life?



The Assembly gave me an impetus to live the four values more enthusiastically and transmit these values to all the areas of our apostolates. In our Congregation, we have an Organization named after our own Saint Sr. Alphonsa who was canonized in 2008. We started a centre to give the spirituality of this Saint, which is nothing but our four Franciscan values and the values connected with it namely simplicity and Franciscan Joy. Many of our sisters are trained to impart this spirit to people in different localities, in addition to the Seminar, course and retreat in the centre.

We have given stress to the Family apostolate, in which we make regular visits to the houses in our parishes. Besides, we have Basic Christian Communities in the parishes and we animate them to meet once a month to discuss their problems, pray together and improve their spiritual strength. We also conduct prayer meetings in this B C C groups. Our sisters work in many retreat centres. More than that we have trained sisters to give retreat to various groups of people: Mothers, youth, Children etc, where we inspire them to live a life of simplicity, penance and prayer. The Congregation has given much importance to practise these values and inspire others to live these values by our own life and our process of Evangelization.

I think the assembly has given a push to everyone who participated in it.

*Sr. Sinclare FCC  
Vemom P O, Mananthavady  
Kerala, India*

### **Making a dwelling place meant for us: intensifying the Franciscan value of hospitality.**

#### **What difference did attending the 2017 Assembly make in my life? How have I made a dwelling inside and for my brothers and sisters?**

In our general leadership team we have cultivated the characteristic Franciscan hospitality with greater awareness by making space and time available for those who do not have it (e.g. students, friends from other continents, -- to stage small festivities...)

We arrange prayer meetings and lend our ear to groups that are having a disagreement. We approach those who live with us and the guests in our house with tolerance and understanding for all their diversities, provide help as translators when difficulties of understanding arise, even open our cloister rooms for individual guests when needed and accompany them if they are unable to find their way in Rome alone. We bring the needs of the Church and the poor to God in prayer.

Meeting strangers: We show interest in the wellbeing of people whom we meet and take time to listen to them, e.g. in public transport, at bus stops...

Making a dwelling for my brothers and sisters: interiorly: thinking well of them, attending to their needs, thinking positively. Exteriorly: fulfilling well our own duties for others, doing ordinary little things as well as possible; taking care of our common home (the earth – Laudato Sì): turning off lights, not letting water run unnecessarily, not allowing food to spoil ... all aspects of JPIC Welcome Community Greccio; taking in people in situations of need.

*Sr. Maria Theresia Oberwalder  
Suore Terziarie di San Francesco, ROMA*



## What difference did attending the 2017 Assembly make in my life? How have I made a dwelling inside and for my brothers and sisters?

With a sincere greeting from Luxemburg, I am sending you a few thoughts about how we are trying to deepen the theme of the 2017 General Assembly.

Our General Chapter took place at the end of the year, and for 2018, the general council decided that we will hold conversations concerning community on the chapter statement “[to have a home – to be a home](#)” with all our communities, bringing the year to a close in November with a community day.

The following thoughts could make our conversations concrete:

- Home and homelessness – 2 realities that are to be found more or less in our communities.
- Longing for home roots – concrete ideas that we connect with home.
- How does my community show that it is a home for me?
- Home lives from giving and receiving, from reaching out to one another, from giving and receiving hospitality. Our charism of mercy requires us to have open doors and open hearts and open ears for people who are searching for understanding and acceptance.
- Our home – we in communion
- To be at home with myself = acceptance of my talents and limitations, saying goodbye to the ideal of perfection. The essential in my life is gift.
- To be at home with God = to rejoice that God supports us, that he has spoken his irreversible YES to humanity. To reach HIM, who is closer to us than we are to ourselves. Experience in silence the holy place that unites us with God, with all that is and with all people. Can I believe that God wants to live in our midst? How does that become visible in my life and in my community?

“Where does God dwell?” – “He is there, where we allow him in!” where we make it habitable for God who became a human being.

“When one dreams alone, it is only a dream.

When many dream together, that is the beginning of a new reality.” (*Dom Helder Camara*)

Pace e Bene

With sincere greetings

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*Basilica S. Maria degli Angeli, Assisi*