



INTERNATIONAL FRANCISCAN CONFERENCE – TOR

MAKE A DWELLING

February, 2018



Opening Liturgy

How happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things, and persevere in doing them because “the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them” and God will make his home and “dwelling place with them.”

Second Letter to the Faithful 1

In his First Letter to the Faithful written in the early 13th century, St. Francis of Assisi exhorts women and men desiring to share in his Gospel way of life with these words: “We are mothers when we carry Him (Jesus) in our heart and body through a divine love and a pure and sincere conscience, and give birth to Him through a holy activity which must shine as an example before others.”

What is this “holy activity”? To love the Lord with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength, to love our neighbor as ourselves, to be of goodwill to all, and to produce fruitful actions that will shine in the darkness. This “birthing,” this “holy activity” is the Spirit of Jesus, the dynamic principle of life that rests within us, makes its home and dwelling place among us, and propels us into loving union with the Father and the Son, and one another. Sister Francis Bangert, OSF

May our lives rooted in poverty and humility prepare a dwelling for the Spirit, a manifestation of peace in the world.

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

POVERTY

Sr. Ramona Miller, OSF

Today we focus on the value of living *in the spirit of poverty*. We Third Order Franciscans are faced with disquietude living Franciscan evangelical poverty as we make use of the goods of this world to do works of mercy. The unease arises from a doubt. Are we living in such a way as to make it obvious that we are Franciscans for whom poverty is core to our spirituality? Interpretations of how to live poverty have been a conflictual aspect of Franciscan history from the beginning when there was a shift of the friars “from itinerancy to a more settled way of life, involving landownership, building projects, libraries, and study centers.”¹ Francis and Clare are exemplars for living evangelical poverty, but Third Order Franciscans do not find prescriptions for living poverty in our primitive rule, *The Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance*. The *form of life* that is the prologue to our 1982 Rule is not about hating our bodies, or wearing a habit, or working with lepers, but rather about conversion.² “It is about people choosing to respond in faith to the God revealed in Jesus.”³ Our ongoing conversion transforms us to become poor like the poor Christ. Ordinarily poverty is chosen by Third Order Franciscans not for an ideal or ascetical purpose, but with a charitable purpose or social help in mind.⁴ How are we contemporary Third Order Franciscans addressing the social needs around us to witness to a new world vision? In this presentation I propose to reflect on our spirit of poverty in three “fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself.”⁵

Relationship with God

Our rich Franciscan legacy of relationship with God begins with St. Francis’ *Prayer Before the Crucifix*. The stance of Francis expressing his darkness and emptiness before God, “enlighten the darkness of my heart,” portrays his spirit of poverty. Without God’s initiative, we are dark, empty, and void of meaning. The spirit of poverty compels us to often pray “give us this day our daily bread.” Our trust that God hears our pleas changes us to be childlike; trust generates joyfulness because we know that we will be taken care of. Didn’t Jesus tell us not to worry about our life, what we will eat or wear? He said, “look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap... yet God feeds them. Are not you more important than they?”⁶ Saint Francis modeled for us that the way “to experience the fullness of God was through a process of emptiness.”⁷ Recognizing our littleness, we grow in love and gratitude for God, “who is the fullness of good, all good, every good, the true and supreme good.”⁸ Evangelical poverty prepares us to be receptive to the awesome showering of divine riches from God



Sr. Ramona Miller, speaker

Relationship with our neighbor

Relationship with God intertwines with our relationships with our neighbor, and with creation. Let us imagine that we are setting out on a hike up a mountain, and we are assessing the supplies we would need for a few days to reach the panoramic peak. Looking over our

¹ Paul Lachance OFM and Pierre Brunette OFM, *The Earliest Franciscans* (NY: Paulist Press, 2015), xi.

² Robert M. Stewart OFM, “*De Illis Qui Faciunt Penitentiam*” (Roma: Istituto Storico Dei Cappuccini, 1991), 336.

³ Ibid, 336

⁴ Lino Temperini TOR, “Poor with Christ to Serve the Poor,” *Propositum* 3.2 (1998), 7.

⁵ Pope Francis, #66.

⁶ Mt 6:26

⁷ David Couturier OFM Cap., “Naked in the Public Square: Millennials and the Hopes for a New Franciscan Economy,” AFC Presentation 2016. (See <http://www.franfed.org>)

⁸ RegnB XXIII, 9

camping gear, we eliminate heavy items that would impede our climb, and we lighten the load to a comfortable weight that will meet our needs. While judging the externals we carry, it is important to ponder our internal disposition. Heavy emotional weight would slow down the trek as much as external weight. Compare the preparatory work of a mountain climb with our daily striving to be good neighbors. Ask ourselves, what weighs me down?

Jesus Christ showed us the spirit of poverty we ought to have in our relationships with each other, and our neighbors; he knelt and washed his disciples feet.⁹ Servant leadership requires humbly respecting others, doing actions of service, but more so, recognizing that each person has a face of God, a truth to be revealed to us. As sons and daughters of God, we have a responsibility to be mindful of the human dignity of each person; to respect and protect *human dignity*, avoiding behavior and attitudes that leave others feeling they are objects. Our spirit of poverty will avoid having power over another, and attitudinally create in us a disposition of kneeling before the other with respect. We recognize that we are interdependent brothers and sisters on a mountain climb to the heavenly Jerusalem.

Often, aspirants to our Order are enthusiastic about leaving all behind, and they willingly clothe themselves plainly according to the congregation's customs, and live simply with us. Over the years the initial enthusiasm to live poorly can be dampened by an accumulation of things that weigh us down. A transfer to a new assignment provides a moment of reality: what is necessary to take to the next place? What can be given away? It is the same process as setting out on a mountain climb. What really do I need for the trip I am beginning? These decision-making moments require a trust in the community; a deep trust that what I need I can request from those with whom I live.

Just as personal choices are made for de-cluttering, so congregational leaders need to do an inventory to assess what congregational holdings are needed for the current ministries and care for the retired, and what needs to be divested. For the past eighteen months, I have been engaged in the task to downsize our libraries at our motherhouse. The grief of deciding to pass forward favorite books from the past was painful, and gave me guilt about how limited I am in living the spirit of poverty. I am learning to let go of unnecessary holdings that lightens us for our mountain climb. Hanging on to the past will weigh us down and impede our journey.

As I reflect upon the changes in religious life since my profession of vows in 1961, there are many changes that impact our lightness of heart. In the United States, the average age of women religious is increasing. There were 100 young women in formation in my congregation when I was in the novitiate 57 years ago. The Sisters' labor in health care institutions, colleges and schools provided stipends that more than covered the congregational expenses. Today, we have one Sister under temporary vows, and no one in the novitiate; our average age is 81. The congregation is dependent upon interest from investments and the generosity of our benefactors to cover the living expenses of the Sisters. There are weighty problems facing many congregations in North America to dispossess large buildings that are no longer necessary for a shrinking number of members, as well as selling pieces of real estate. While such American congregations embrace a new type of external poverty, there are other young congregations who have few assets. They are limited in their resources to respond to the social needs of the poor in their locales. How might we help each other?

The question before us is "How do we discern the charism of our congregations to do the works of mercy in the changing circumstances of our moment in history?" Dealing with our personal and communal challenges of living poorly cannot blind us to those around us. Pope Francis prayer, "*O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes,*"¹⁰ hearkens to the very reason why we Third Order persons exist: "*to give witness by word and work to God's voice; ...to heal the wounded, to bind up those who are bruised, and to reclaim the erring.*"¹¹

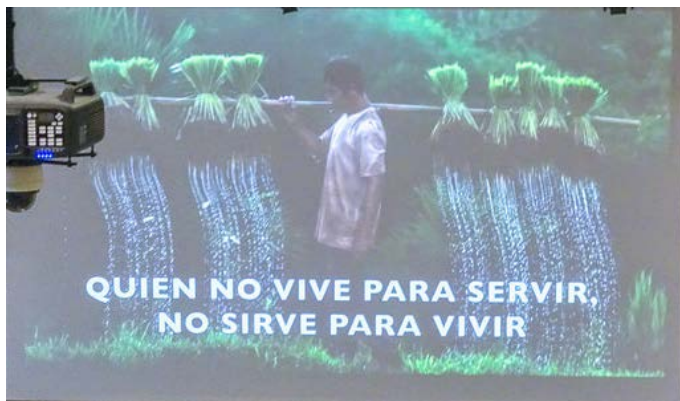
⁹ See John 13: 3-5

¹⁰ Pope Francis, 246.

¹¹ TOR Rule, 29,30

There are two different ways we can examine our stance of caring for our neighbor: we can consider our direct “hands on” approach of service in our ministries, and/or we can review the strategies for systemic change to relieve the destitution and suffering of the poor. An example of direct service to those non-Christians, particularly those of the Islamic faith who are demonized because of current wars in the Middle East, would be participating in dialogue, reassuring them of our concern. Developing humanizing relationships lessens their suffering from prejudicial judgments. An ongoing question for us in the face of global migration: *“How are we Third Order members responding to displaced persons, to all refugees fleeing violence and natural disasters?”*

Working for Systemic change is another response to poverty. Systemic change can be brought about by education, presenting a vision for improvement of social issues while identifying causes of the current suffering. We can promote systemic change by advocacy work—advocating for justice in all our governments’ welfare practices. Our spirit of poverty requires us to trust that our small advocacy efforts will develop like planted seeds into great fruit. An example of a wee bit of progress in systemic change is



increased awareness and improved legal services for those victimized by human sexual trafficking.¹² The efforts of women religious have contributed significantly in addressing this issue. We are far from eradicating this form of slavery, but our small efforts are pushing out this tide of evil.

Relationship with Mother Earth

Pope Francis has profoundly affected our consciousness living a spirit of poverty in relationship with the earth. He provided a moral vision in the encyclical, *Laudato Sí*, especially through his prayer:

“Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth. Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.”¹³

Franciscan spirituality of reverence for creation has been at the essence of the Franciscan movement even before Francis’ companions sang the *Canticle of the Creatures*. Our belief that ongoing, evolving, continuous creation is a dwelling place of God¹⁴ moves our lips to sing praise and thanksgiving. However, the global circumstances of harm to Mother Earth requires us to re-examine how we are living in appropriate relationship with God’s creation. Our sensitization to the environment can affect us with great sadness as we feel the physical ailments of Mother Earth suffering from desertification of the soil and the extinction of species.¹⁵ How do we address this sadness? Ongoing conversion requires us to assess ways that we refrain from overuse of earth’s resources, and ways that we can promote conservation efforts to sustain the beauty of creation for generations to come. What are the best practices of our relationship with Mother Earth that our congregations are promoting? What does our spirit of poverty require of us?

¹² For further information, see http://www.stopvaw.org/Trafficking_Explore_the_Issue

¹³ Pope Francis, *Laudato Sí*, 246

¹⁴ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* (NY: Bloomsburg, 2014), 122-153.

¹⁵ Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)*, #215.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this twenty-first century, what message are we Third Order Franciscans giving the world about renouncing our possessions to be true disciples of Jesus Christ?¹⁶ “The goal of Franciscan life is not primarily about ministry; it is fundamentally about witness, - the witness of relationship.”¹⁷ Considering the word of Pope Francis that relationships are “intertwined”, we are challenged to develop relationships that curtail the violence and greed within our global family. The efforts we are making to live poverty must be about creating a better world. Are our neighbors inspired toward a new world vision by our witness?

This presentation was followed by a reflection of three responders:

- **Sister Licia Mazzia, SFP, (Italy/Rome)** noted that POVERTY impels us to seek alms to serve the poor and to acknowledge our own weakness. Our poverty should lead us to a true relationship of transparency with God. She noted that her congregation is also experiencing a decline in membership, which is resulting in a need to reinvent religious life today and brings positive energy to strengthen our vocation. She sees this as part of the life-cycle of creation, making us flexible to adapt. Our vulnerability brings us closer to the poor and to other congregations, recognizing our need for collaboration. The congregation is particularly involved in discerning how to continue ministry with the poor and how to collaborate with lay associates. She concluded by stating that “our poverty is that we need one another.”



Sr. Licia Mazzia, General Minister

- **Father José Oltra Vidal (Spain, Rome)** is from a congregation with 400 members and 1000 associates, whose charism is based on the spirituality of the Good Shepherd. He



Father José Oltra Vidal, Delegate - Sr. Gertrude Lilly Ihenacho, General Minister, USA

reflected briefly on article 21 of our Rule and Life, stating that humility becomes incarnated in our poverty. He also quoted from the testament of their founder, Luis Amigo, who said that by saving one soul, one saves one's own.

¹⁶ See Luke 14:33

¹⁷ David Couturier OFM Cap., “Naked in the Public Square: Millennials and the Hopes for a New Franciscan Economy,” AFC Presentation 2016. (See <http://www.franfed.org>)

Recalling that we are to be witnesses of Christ's love, he reminded all of the need to evangelize through action and Word, to work for the integral health of people and try to reinsert them into society so that it can be more consistent with the Kingdom.

- **Sister Gertrude Lilly Ihenacho (USA)** spoke of the great need for the huge world-transforming Franciscan family, with our specific TOR charism to heal the “leprosy of the heart” and the need to empower the powerless to effect change. Poverty empties us to do the will of the Father. As a community of African-American women with a history of slavery and poverty, they willingly become slaves for Christ. They try use their experience and freedom to protect human dignity, helping others to become victors, not victims. She stated that her community members seek no status, power, wealth or greed and they need to abstain from individual vices and behavior that destroys community. They are encouraged to eat healthy food for energy for the journey. Their charism is to work for social change becomes Christ comes for all people, to heal a broken world. They are hoping to develop a new vision for social and systemic change.



Bishop Domenico Sorrentino at Opening Liturgy

HUMILITY

Sr. Ramona Miller, OSF

We come to this presentation as the culmination of our reflection on the four values. Today our focus will be living in a *spirit of humility*. In the major life of Francis, Bonaventure wrote “Humility, the guardian and embellishment of all the virtues, had filled Francis with abundance. In his own opinion he was nothing but a sinner, though in truth he was a mirror and the splendor of every kind of holiness.”¹⁸ Our contemporary exemplar of humility, Pope Francis, teaches us the essence of humility. The humble person honestly accepts themselves with their God-given gifts and interacts with others in the same loving manner whether the other person is a head of state, or a homeless person. As our Rule states: “let them neither dominate nor seek power over one another.”¹⁹ An American author, David Brooks, wrote that humility relieves you of the awful stress of trying to be superior all the time.”²⁰ Our Franciscan word for this virtue is living as *minores*.

I will offer three aspects for living in a spirit of humility: 1) personal humility which is self-acceptance; 2) the challenge of humility for congregational ministers, and 3) reviewing Franciscan *minores*.

Personal Humility

All virtue begins with imitation of Jesus who “did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness.”²¹ Following the conversion of St. Francis’ embrace of the leper, he happily went to the leprosarium to minister among these poorest of the poor. This exemplifies *minores* as an operative virtue for Franciscan ministry. Clare’s conversion has a similar trait; she was not satisfied to give alms to the poor, but rather left her noble status to make the life of the poor her own life. The Franciscan movement expresses identification with the poor Christ who lives among us.

Our Seraphic Doctor, Bonaventure, in a sermon for Christmas, described the humility of God in this manner: “God has humbly bent down and lifted the dust of our nature into unity with His own person.”²² God came to us in a particular manner, in the person of Jesus whose poverty and humility expressed God’s Love for us. God’s desired to lift us up by becoming one of us. In the sacrament of Baptism we are initiated into God’s own life; a life that calls us “out of darkness into His marvelous light.”²³ Through baptism, we “put on Christ” (Gal 3:27) and we walk **humbly** in the newness of life because in the words of St. Paul, “it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.”

In 1995 I was visiting in South Africa, in the diocese of Tzaneen. There I had a powerful and impactful experience of witnessing the Baptism of one hundred adults and children. They had been catechized by a deacon, and waited for two years for missionary priests to come for a worship service for the Baptisms and Eucharist. Their joy expressed in the fullness of their singing, their clapping and dancing affected me deeply. I was humbled by their witness of joy in becoming a member of the Body of Christ. This is the core of our humility, - that God lifts us up to share in God’s own life. Through this shared life in the Trinity we extend God’s love to others.

Consider the humility of Jesus who becomes flesh in Mary’s womb—the physical characteristics Jesus acquires are from the genetic pool that Mary has in her ovaries. The

¹⁸ LM VI, 1

¹⁹ TOR Rule 25

²⁰ David Brooks, *Road to Character* (NY: Random House, 2015), 205.

²¹ Phil 2:6-7

²² Bonaventure, “Sermon II on the Nativity of the Lord,” *What Manner of Man?* Trans. Zachary Hayes OFM (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974, 1989), 57.

²³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994), 323.

lowliness of Jesus is to submit to the darkness of developing in the womb of this Israelite teenager. He must accept the biology of her humanity, and the physical form of her Israelite family. In a wild imaginative thought, I wondered if Jesus in the Trinity before the Incarnation might say to the Father: "I don't like heat. Could I be born to an Inuit woman near the Arctic circle?" But, God would say: "No, you are promised to the people of the Covenant who live in Judah; there are pre-ordained conditions for your birth."

I would invite us today to reflect on our humble beginnings. We did not choose the ethnic origin that we carry in our genetic make-up. Through an act of love of our parents, we came into being in a specific time, a specific place, and a specific culture. In our mother's womb our physicality was determined: our bone structure, our susceptibility to certain physical weaknesses; maybe genes that are pre-disposed to spawn cancer, or diabetes, or a familial tremor; the color of our hair and eyes aligns us with our ancestors. Our self-acceptance of our God-given uniqueness and natural talents enables us to interact humbly with others, truthfully with love.

Article #18 of our Rule reminds us that we are "poor people...to whom the Lord has given the grace of serving or working with our hands." We acknowledge that each member of our congregations has a special "grace" – we call it a talent or a gift-- for building up the kingdom of God. And, as leaders, we take into consideration the requirement to provide ongoing education and enrichment for the furthering of these gifts for the greater mission of caring for the Body of Christ.



Outgoing IFC-TOR Council and Staff

Humility for Congregational Ministers

Election to leadership in our congregations is its own school for learning humility. The expectation of being sister and brother, while at the same time being a person with major responsibility that affects the lives of the members, requires the virtue of humility. By virtue, I mean the habitual and firm disposition to do good, -an inner spiritual strength that moves us toward our full humanity. The virtue of humility creates an inner disposition of listening carefully to the good of the other, and responding with the truth from our perspective. It helps us to keep in mind the etymology of the word "dialog:" it is from the Greek where "dia" means "through" and "logue" means "word." The word of God coming through the other gives us a truth that we humbly listen to in order to learn and engage further in the conversation.

What about conflict resolution? How does humility assist us in resolving conflicts? Patiently listening and repeating what one has heard is a good beginning for a conversation to resolve conflict. Does the other person feel that we have heard their point of view? Do they feel that we understand the source of the conflict from their perspective? And, in responding, do we use "I" statements spoken with respect for the other? There is a phrase in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians that describes this: "speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature

body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.”²⁴ If we speak our truth without love we may injure others. And, if we speak with so much love that we dilute the truth, we weaken our relationships and trust. Speaking the truth in love builds up the Body of Christ until we all are united with the head, Christ.

It is our ongoing conversion in prayer that prepares us for having the virtue of humility so that we truly embody our TOR Rule # 19: “and let them never want to be over others. Instead they should be servants and subjects to every human creature for the Lord’s sake.” Clare, in the *form of life* for her Sisters wrote:

*“Let whoever is elected reflect upon the kind of burden she has undertaken on herself and to Whom she must render an account of the flock committed to her. Let her also strive to preside over the others more by her virtues and holy behavior than by her office, so that, moved by her example, the sisters may obey her more out of love than out of fear.”*²⁵

The responsibility of leadership requires us to utilize the means to develop shared decision-making. Clare did this at San Damiano by consulting with **all** the Sisters for whatever concerned the welfare of the monastery, keeping in mind that “the Lord frequently reveals what is better to the youngest.”²⁶

Franciscan *minores*

Before our new 1982 Rule was adopted, there was an International Assembly in Rome to hear presentations on the historical and theological background for each portion of the Rule. At that time, Sister Marianne Jungbluth spoke on serving with humility, saying that St. Francis admired the humility of Christ who though He was Lord, had a special love for the poor, the little one, the despised and the exiled. Following Christ’s example, “Francis shows us how we can realize this way of being ‘minor’ in daily life, in interpersonal relationships, and in our dealings with all.”²⁷

Being “minor” is fundamental to our penitential life. Following in the “footprints of Jesus”²⁸ projects us into the ongoing and daily reality of God’s little ones, the marginal, the helpless, and the unwanted. St. Francis concretely expressed his experience of *minores* by working among the lepers. The lives of the earliest Franciscan laypersons, Luchasio and Buondonna, demonstrate that the humility of serving the marginalized characterized the Franciscan movement. We, in the Third Order Regular, have impressive histories in the stories of our founders and foundresses. What is ours to do today and in the coming years? For some of us, it is required to assess whether we need to leave well-established ministries to reach out to newly marginalized persons, such as the refugees from war and famine. Each generation of Third Order Franciscans has had, and will have, new situations to address in the manner of living *minores*.

We are edified by those Franciscans who have joined other religious in the Sisters of Migrant Project/Sicily sponsored by the USIG. The project’s focus is to be “in the street” forming relationships with the local migrants, refugees.²⁹ These virtuous women are a bridge between those migrants who come ashore in Sicily and the people of the area inundated with the newcomers. The multi-lingual community of Sisters from different charisms represent a new form of religious living for the future. It requires great humility personally and communally to be about this mission.

²⁴ Eph 4:15

²⁵ FLCI, 8

²⁶ FLCI, 18

²⁷ Marianne Jungbluth, FHF, “How to Serve and Work,” *History of the Third Order Regular Rule* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2008), 284.

²⁸ RegnB XXII, 1

²⁹ <http://www.internationalunionsuperiorsgeneral.org/mission/migrants/> (accessed 9/6/2016)

Conclusion

In summary, I offer the suggestion that pondering the call for ongoing conversion of living in the spirit of humility is a multi-layered thought process. We name our personal attributes God has given us to share with others. As congregational ministers, we examine our humble stance before our members. And, in the context of Franciscan history, we assess how we are doing to live poor lives with the poor. All the while, we claim with faith that it is Jesus whose life we live, and whose life we share. Keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the meaning of humility grows in us. As we appropriate interiorly this humble life of Jesus, we better understand how it is that we can be filled with joy when we live “among the poor, the weak, the sick, the unwanted, the oppressed, and the destitute” (TOR Rule 21).

This presentation was followed by a reflection of three responders:

- **Sister Shannon Schrein (USA)** mentioned that she is new to congregational leadership and is in awe of the humble graciousness of the sisters who served before her. She sees the fourth value reflected in the Beatitude of the pure of heart, for they shall “see God” in those with whom we work, live and minister, serving all gently. She sees conversion beginning only with a humble acknowledgement of our dependence, most of all when our prayer comes from humility. She believes that we are particularly challenged to love the marginalized in our midst, and love them back into relationship.



Sr. Shannon Schrein (USA), Sr. M. do Livramento Melo de Oliveira (Brazil/USA), Sister Elisabeth Robert (France)

- **Sister Maria do Livramento Melo de Oliveira (Brazil/USA)** noted that 50% of her congregation’s members are over 70. She said that the beginnings of her congregation were very difficult...and have never become easier; it is a gift to accept our history. Instead of complaining about the lack of congregations, she feels all need to address the situation and deal with it. If we truly believe that we are walking in the footsteps of Giants, what about the new ones? Where are the giants today? We must remember that God speaks through all the sisters, and that sometimes the answer comes from unexpected places. We must help everyone see that not everyone has the same gifts and help the sisters develop the talents they DO have. It is true that we must listen to the Word of God humbly, but equally so must we listen to our sisters in humility – or, as she put it, TUNE IN! The question is how to motivate our members to change, to adapt ministries according to current needs? It took her congregation 20 years to change structures because of fear. The breakthrough came when a small group who had been resistant to change came to chapter saying that, for the sake of the Franciscan values, they would not resist. The rest is history!

- **Sister Elisabeth Robert (France)** spoke of her reality as leader of a congregation that was founded in 2005 from the union of five separate congregations, noting that the sisters feel like “co-founders”. When asked to help in the guidance of another congregation, she found the challenge in living the charism of another group without being condescending and dominating. The answer is found in a return to the sources, to what is essential to our life, in reflecting on the humility of God as seen in the incarnation and passion. She admitted that the union of the five congregations required much suffering and letting go, and an honest grieving process. Some sisters went from a congregation of 35 to one of 600. Some did not have young sisters and were surprised at how “they” live. There were differences in culture, language, and habit... that had to be addressed and dealt with. She noted that some congregations brag about their members, but we must be truthful and remember that all that we have, we have been given. This allows us to rejoice in the good that others have and do. The congregation still has demographic problems, and that affects the way they go “into the world”. They still have problems defining their mission, but they need to speak about the values of their founders. She concluded saying that they live in fraternity with those they serve, and that there is no one so poor they have nothing to share. She ended with a question... is humility truly our attitude or is it an illusion that we are taking on this attitude. We must allow others to wash our feet because we need it in a vital way.



General Assembly Facilitator, Assembly Secretary, Presenter, Staff, and 2013-2017 IFC-TOR Council



New elected IFC-TOR Council and secretary at work