**Fifth OFS and YouFra Asia-Oceania Congress**

*The Congress was held in Bali, Indonesia, 20-27 April 2017, jointly hosted by Indonesia and Malaysia.*

**CONCLUSION**

*“As the deer panteth for the water. . . so my soul longeth after thee”,* beautiful words of a song expressing one’s yearning for his Creator. And just as a deer pants for water, 81 brothers and sisters of the Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis (OFS) from Asia and Oceania gathered in a Congress to express their pining for the grace of God to look down on their Order and bless it with guidance, as they continue to seek ways and means of improving, enlightening and cultivating their vocation as Secular Franciscans.

The theme of the Congress was ***“Conversion to be carried out every day”.*** This key word is something we need to do together with daily prayer when we seriously live our vocation, observing the Rule and the General Constitutions. Conditions are never constant and we must be able to adapt to ever-changing times and circumstances in our spiritual journey. To do this, we must have a spirit of openness and be able to walk with humility with our brothers and sisters.

We opened the Congress in a very inspiring way through the celebration of the Holy Mass presided by Bishop Silvester San, Bishop of the Diocese of Denpasar. The choir added to the solemnity with their angelic voices. The message of the bishop in his homily inspired us all as it touched our hearts and opened our minds to the realities of our present times. The presentation of the gifts was done through a mesmerizing and captivating Balinese traditional dance, capturing the attention of the audience. As a fitting conclusion to the celebration, we were again treated to an attractive cultural presentation.

The delegates were then warmly welcomed by Hendro Setiawan who presented to us the features of our venue and gave us an overview of the congress program. In the opening address Tibor Kauser, General Minister OFS, briefly spoke about the priorities of OFS: formation, communications, JPIC and servant leadership.

There were 81 participants from: Indonesia (13), Malaysia (16), Taiwan (4), Sri Lanka (3), New Zealand (4), Thailand (2), India (1), Australia (4), China (4), Hong Kong (2), Japan (1), Korea (5), Myanmar (1), Pakistan (1), Philippines (6), Vietnam (8) and CIOFS (7). Included in this number were YouFra representatives from India, Vietnam, Philippines, and China as well as Spiritual Assistants from the different First Order branches, the TOR, and Franciscan Religious.

The Congress was meant to be a venue for dialogue on the most important subjects for OFS life such as formation, communications, family, financing, membership, administration, YouFra and JPIC. Firstly, each subject was presented by three parties - CIOFS and national fraternities - around the best practices, followed by the eight small group discussions for one and a half hours. Each small group came up with the summary of the discussions, which was in turn handed over to the Conclusion Commission. A Summary of the summaries was presented to the plenary session and the seven summaries were combined to be an integral part of the Conclusion of the Congress. The Conclusion is hoped to be the reference point for all the Asia-Oceania national fraternities to put into practice when applicable in the coming four years until the next Asia-Oceania Congress.

The Conclusion Commission was comprised of Fr Francis Mai OFM (Vietnam), Earl Jonas Serenio, YouFra (Philippines), Aldo Tayao OFS (Philippines), Anthony Phung Bai OFS (Vietnam), Chantal Healy OFS (New Zealand), Elizabeth Goh OFS (Malaysia), Hyacintha Kwon OFS (Korea), Ivonna Indah OFS (Indonesia) and Lola Kelly OFS (Australia) and each member of the team made an allocated presentation of the summary to the Congress that was then open to questions and clarification.

The participants of the Congress listened to all 30 presentations – 21 for the seven subjects, 5 round table presentations regarding Aging and Minority, and the presentations about “How to manage the Order”, FI, Update of Asia-Oceania National Fraternities, and China Project. Despite the strenuous 30 presentations and continuous dialogue on seven topics, the participants took part in the activities enthusiastically.

We were very blessed to go on the tours organized by the hosts of the Congress. The hosts were so gracious as to take us to exotic and fascinating sites in the area. The brothers and sisters enjoyed the Tanah Lot temple, Pandawa beach and Pura Uluwatu for a traditional “Kecak” dance, and ate a delicious traditional Balinese dinner. Fraternity was celebrated each night with song and dance that reflected the diverse cultures of the participants. There was a lot of fun, joy and camaraderie shared by the brothers and sisters.

In the closing session of the Congress, Augustine appreciated the hard work and commitment of the Organizing Committee, recognizing Hendro Setiawan OFS and his wife Bernadine OFS, Ruth Marcus OFS and Marayah Undin for all the hard work and sacrifice they extended to the organization and success of the Congress. Later, Augustine acknowledged the various committees who played specific roles, including the Conclusion Commission, the moderators and the time keepers. In closing, representatives of the CIOFS gave their final messages, once again thanking all those who played a role in the Congress. Tibor Kauser OFS and Chelito Nunez OFS emphatically directed the participants now to put into action the various outcomes. The Congress ended on the last evening with an uplifting celebration of fraternity and a concluding Mass the following day.

Pax et Bonum.

**Conclusion Commission,**

**27 April 2017.**