

Priestly ordination of Father Volantino Verde of Jesus and Mary

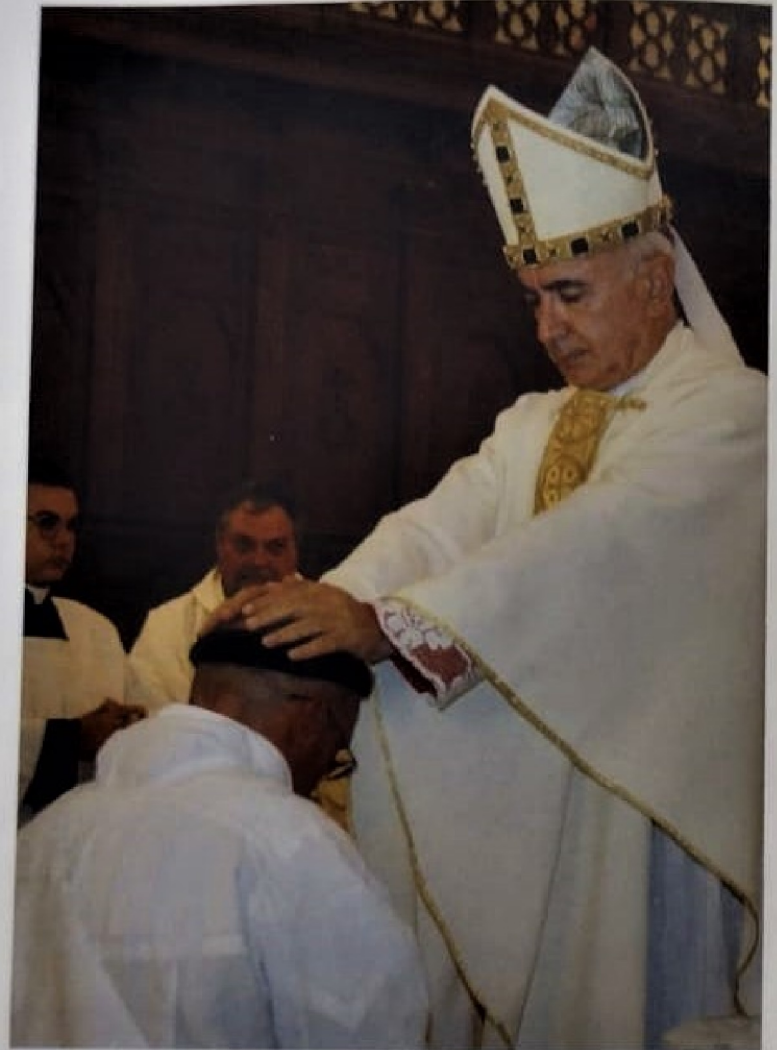
By Father Antonio Farrugia

For more than 12 years, Friar Volantino Verde, founder and general servant superior of the Little Friars and Little Nuns of Jesus and Mary (Poor Friars) has been visiting our diocese on annual canonical visits to our friars and nuns. The many who have had the opportunity to meet him throughout these visits would no doubt give witness to his joyful transmission of the Gospel beyond the limits of language. Many of you may also know his suffering to "give birth" to our religious community and his long journey toward priesthood.

Mid-October 2022, with hearts filled with joy, our entire American community of friars and nuns housed here in the diocese departed for Italy to *finally* celebrate our founder's priestly ordination held Saturday, Oct. 21, 2022, by Bishop Antonio Stagliano of Noto. There, all 38 members had congregated from all over the world to celebrate the special day among many (of those who could make the long journey) priests, religious, missionaries, groups of prayer friends and family who had supported us over the last 23 years of the community's existence, while others followed live online.

Father Volantino, who had completed his baccalaureate in sacred theology and licentiate in fundamental theology with a specialization in interreligious and ecumenical dialogue at Rome's Pontifical Lateran University was consecrated a priest of Our Lord by the same bishop who had first welcomed him into the diocese of Noto in 2010. Collaborating with Bishop Emeritus Sam G. Jacobs and Archbishop Shelton J. Fabre, toward the establishment of our formation houses here in Houma and the ordinations of Father Nathaniel and myself, Bishop Stagliano also later canonically approved the Poor Friar and Nun Statute *ad-experimentum* in 2014 and then confirmed it (with the guidance of Cardinal Gihrlanda, ex-rector of the Gregorian Pontifical Institute) definitively in 2019.

During his homily, the bishop appointed Father Volantino as the parochial vicar of both church parishes of the Immacolata of Noto and the Cathedral parish. He also appointed him as



the director of the diocesan soup kitchen for the poor, raising it as a permanent center for pastoral outreach connected to our community's itinerant street evangelization. He concluded by saying: "I have a lot of trust in what these little friars and nuns will do, because since I have been given by God the suffering and the grace to support you on this journey of yours, it is clear that God has established that all the good you do will belong – to the extent established by him – also to me. So, perhaps when he opens the doors of paradise to me, and I will ask the eternal father, 'But why do you welcome me here into heaven? Perhaps I don't deserve it.' He will be able to tell me: 'Do you think it's for all the long sermons you gave, for all the people you bored? No, but for the good works that those Little Friars and those Little Nuns do, thanks also to you who supported them: Yes, for that, you can come along with them into heaven, too!'"

(Father Antonio Farrugia is currently serving as administrator of Holy Family Church parish in Grand Caillou and St. Eloi Church parish in Theriot.) BC

