



Reflection on the number of General Definitors and on the functioning of the Definitorium

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Objective:

The purpose of the report is to present the current numerical state of the General Definitor, the method of election of its members and the tasks they carry out, in order to give impetus to the discussion on any proposals and changes.

What the General Constitutions say in the matter:

ART 209

The General Definitors, in a number established by the General Statutes, are elected in the General Chapter for a six-year term; after which term, they can be re-elected, without any interval, only for another six-year term.

ART 210

If the office of General Definitor becomes vacant outside of the Chapter, another is elected by the General Definitorium, to complete the six-year term, after consultation with the Ministers Provincial of the Conferences for which the Definitor who had ceased from office was elected.

What the General Statutes say in the matter:

ART 149

§1 The number and methods of election of the General Definitors are determined by the General Chapter.

§2 Each General Definitor is elected taking into account his training and qualities, in relation to the animation of the life and mission of the Order; as well as his ability in international relations, in team work and in the knowledge of multiple languages and cultures.

§3 In the elections of the General Definitors, there is need to take into account the regions and languages, since the General Definitorium of the Order, as far as possible, must express its ethnic, cultural and geographical diversity.

ART 150

Without prejudice to the provisions of articles 202-205 of the General Constitutions, it is the task of the General Definitors, elected for the whole Order, to first of all give advice to the Minister General in what is relevant to the life and mission of the Order; to perform particular





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tasks entrusted to them by the same Minister General, and to animate the gospel life among the Entities and in the regions of the Order.

State of the question:

The current number of General Definitors and the manner of their election were established by the Plenary Council of the Order in 2013 at Konstancin-Jeziorna, which received the mandate for this question from the General Chapter of 2009.

Mandate 45 of the General Chapter of 2009:

45. The 2009 General Chapter gives a mandate to the General Definitorium to conduct an in-depth study of all the issues related to the government of the Order, using an international Commission, which will involve the Entities and the Conferences and will take into account all the observations offered in the 2009 General Chapter. This Commission will have to complete its work by January 1, 2012. The results will then be discussed during the next Plenary Council of the Order (CPO), in accord with the norm of Art. 194 § 2 of the GGCC. The CPO will draw up norms regarding the number and the method of electing General Definitors, which will remain in force, ad experimentum, until the General Chapter of 2015 (Bearers of the Gift of the Gospel, 2009).

Decisions of the Plenary Council of 2013 (Konstancin-Jeziorna):

The profile of the General Definitor:

The Plenary Council was asked: who can be a good General Definitor? That is, what are the criteria for electing a General Definitor? On what criteria are they elected? Always taking into account that there does not exist a “perfect” Definitor, but a “possible” Definitor, here are some characteristics which outline the profile of the General Definitor:

- He ought to have a prior experience of animation and of government.
- He ought to possess some skills and qualities which make him useful for service to the Order and able to live in an international fraternity and to work in a group.
- He ought to be a person willing to change, on a personal and structural level, in order to benefit the renewal of the Order and to ensure a certain agility and flexibility of work to the Definitorium.
- He ought to have a good knowledge of cultures. In addition to his own original language, he ought to understand and be able to express himself in at least one of the three official languages of the Order, that is, Italian, Spanish or English.





The tasks of the General Definitor:

- Elected for the whole Order.
- To give advice to the Minister General in all that concerns the life and mission of the Order.
- To fulfill particular tasks entrusted to them by the Minister General.
- To animate the gospel life in the Entities and in the regions of the Order.
- They ought to, in addition, accompany a geographical or cultural area, namely:
 1. Identify and get in touch with candidates for the service of General Visitor.
 2. Synthesize the final report sent by the General Visitor in order to present it to the General Definitorium.
 3. Provide for the Minister General, after the discussion in the Definitorium, a draft for the letter which he sends to the Entity after the visit.
 4. Motivate the Provincial Ministers, the Custodians and all the friars to collaborate with personnel and economic resources for the support of the houses dependent on the Minister General.
 5. Coordinate the Minister General's visits to the Entities and the Conferences (times, ways, places, etc.) and accompany him throughout the visit.
 6. Create and maintain an archive of the geographical or cultural area of competence.

With regard to the General Definitorium as "Council of the Minister General", the CPO has highlighted some characteristics which represent guiding criteria for capitular discernment:

- The internationality of the Definitorium – "The criterion of internationality ought to be taken into consideration in the selection of the Definitors, since the General Council of the Order ought to express, as much as possible, the ethnic, cultural and geographic diversity of the Order" (CPO 2001).
- Representativity – "It is important to keep in mind the number of brothers and of the Entities in the current situation. The Definitor performs a function of liaison "in two senses": between central government and the grassroots of the Order: transmits government guidelines and indications to the brothers and transmit the vocational situation of the brothers and of the Entities to the government. This function is very important because it is an effective service of communion to the entire Order.
- The sense of belonging – Through religious profession we entered into a family which is the Order, to live the life project contained in the Rule and in the General Constitutions. The





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Province or Custody is part of this family and cannot journey separately, nor claim to interpret the charism in isolation, belonging to an Order approved by the Church and not to a federation of provinces. In this sense, those elected to the government of the Order ought to represent not only the respective Conferences, but ought to have a more general sense of the universal Fraternity. They belong both to their own Conference and to the Fraternity which is the Order and for whose government they are nominated.

- The Accompaniment – The young and the elderly must be accompanied; the structures are in the function of accompaniment, of assistance to the individual brothers. “The basic structure of the Order is the individual brother ‘moved by the Spirit’ (Rnb 2,1). We are convinced that this Spirit, which is the bond of perfection (Col 3:14; CLR 10,7) and the source of the evangelical project, pushes the brother to become ‘Brother-in-relation’, a person capable of putting into practice his own vocation with the others, even in situations of tension” (CPO 2001).

Number of General Definitors:

The number of General Definitors to be elected during the General Chapters is eight, coming from:

- 3 from the Conferences of Europe (UFME)
- 2 from the Conferences of Latin America (UCLAF)
- 1 from the English-speaking Conference
- 1 from the Africa Conference
- 1 from the Conferences of Asia and Oceania (FCAO).

Method of election:

The election of General Definitors in Chapter will proceed according to the following procedures:

- Each conference will present to the Secretary of the General Chapter, by the terms established, two candidates for the office of General Definitor.
- Along with the names of the candidates, the Secretary General is to receive the curriculum vitae, the presentation of specific qualities that refer to the proposed ministry and the principal reasons on the part of the Conference of Ministers Provincial.
- The names of the candidates, with the respective curriculum vitae, will be communicated to the voters (vocales) one month prior to the General Chapter.





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• During the General Chapter, the brother Capitulars coming from every region of the Order designate the candidates according to the following numerical distribution of the brothers:

1. The European region will present 6 (six) candidates.
2. The Latin American region will present 4 (four) candidates.
3. The English-speaking region will present 2 (two) candidates.
4. The African region will present 2 (two) candidates.

The current numerical state of brothers per Conference:

BOLIV	706
BRACS	1113
CAF	470
CEM	1943
CONAMO	318
COTAF	619
EAC	941
ESAC	425
ESC	1007
MEXAC	1140
SAAOC	651
SLAN	1236
SLAS	974

Observations:

Do we want to maintain the existing structures or do we want to change them and adapt them to the situation and to the changes taking place, even as regards the numerical changes of the brothers in the different Entities? Always thinking of the best accompaniment of the brothers and of the Entities and the animation of the whole Order.

It is also important to understand what the trend of a Conference is: whether it is growing or rapidly decreasing, so as not to make changes that would immediately become old. But it is also true that the number of Definitors could be changed at each at Chapter and therefore adapt it to the changes.

Reading the text of GGSS 149 § 1 which states: “The number and the methods of election of the General Definitors are determined by the General Chapter”, one can ask: this article is usually





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interpreted so that, if you change the number of Definitors in a chapter, you have wait six years to implement the election in the next chapter.

Juridically, it can also be thought that the Chapter already determines the number for the election that takes place in the Chapter itself: the text says that “they are determined by the General Chapter” and does not specify that they must take effect in the next Chapter.

You can implement the change immediately, without waiting six years. In practice, it would be enough to schedule the discussion and decision/vote of the Chapter on the number of Definitors before the election of the Definitors themselves. We don’t even need an amendment to the Statutes: it’s just a matter of interpretation. But if you want to proceed in this way in the next General Chapter, you need to prepare in advance so that the Conferences can identify the appropriate candidates.

The Definitors, although being proposed by the Conferences from which they come, are elected for the entire Order. However, in practice, they tend to take special care for the Conferences of origin, especially in visiting the Entities of “their” Conferences and in representing them at the General Curia, for reasons related to language, culture and experience. This is not the case for many other Orders/Congregations.

Since the end of last year we have 1 Definitor from the two African Conferences and also 1 member of the Definitorium (currently, the Vicar General) for CONAMO.

Proposals:

1. For better accompaniment of the Conferences, especially the most fragile ones, are eight General Definitors enough? How should the Definitor accompany the Conference? The practices in each Conference vary (visits, animation of Entities, etc.).
2. Is it possible that the General Chapter chooses the General Definitors in the number of eight and the Minister General adds two more Definitors chosen/proposed by him?
3. Considering the number of brothers in the Entities, the diversity of languages and also cultures, is it possible for the Conference to think of two Definitors for this region?
4. Considering the growth of vocations in Asia and the breadth of the two Conferences, is it possible to think of two Definitors for this region?
5. Are other proposals possible?

