



**BEARERS
OF THE GIFT
OF THE GOSPEL**

**DOCUMENT
OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER
OF THE ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR**

Assisi, Pentecost 2009

General Curia OFM
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PRESENTATION

Dear Brothers:

May the Lord give you peace!

With heartfelt gratitude to the Lord for having allowed us to celebrate our 187th General Chapter, I am happy to present its final document. It is entitled *Bearers of the Gift of the Gospel*.

The Chapter wished to provide the friars with something inspirational. Thus this document is not a diagnosis of the state of the Order, but rather a hopeful proposal of paths that we might walk. In some areas we have already begun the journey. Others demand that we prepare the ground. Still others are an invitation from the Spirit to be attentive so as to read the signs of the times, and respond to them boldly and creatively, faithful to the Gospel. In this way, with our eyes fixed on the future, we will incarnate the Gospel in all the different contexts in which the Lord has called us to be present.

And this is precisely where the true value of this document is made manifest: in its role to act as a criterion of evaluation and to serve as an orientation for our evangelizing life and mission. The best use we can make of this document is to compare its contents with our own lives. We need to do this with serenity, authenticity and a vision for the future. This comparison should be done at all levels, from local fraternities to the general administration of the Order, including all the Entities and Conferences. It should help to initiate the conversion needed to make our statements consistent with our lived life. In my *Report to the General Chapter* and in the Chapter hall I have highlighted the usefulness of declaring a type of *moratorium* in our fraternities, our Entities, and, why not, on the general level as well. This moratorium would open up space for communal discernment. I am convinced that this document can be a valuable tool for such a process.

I ask that all of the friars, and each of you, read this document from the General Chapter of 2009 with great care. Inspired by its content, you will be able to evaluate your life and mission. It will allow you to begin unprecedented undertakings of witness and presence, which will in turn make each day more meaningful in your going forth to proclaim the Gospel as brothers and as minors, with your hearts turned to the Lord.

I have spoken about undertaking a process of conversion. We all know that this is very difficult. There is so much inertia and are so many obstacles that we raise up against grace! This document, however, has made constant reference to the Mystery of the Trinity, from beginning to end. It speaks of a God who is Father, who sends forth His Son and gives us the Spirit, which proceeds from both. We can be sure of the ongoing and unfailing action of this Spirit. May the certainty of the action of this Spirit, the true Minister General of the Order, be our hope and our confidence.

Rome, July 15, 2009
Feast of the Seraphic Doctor.

Br. José Rodríguez Carballo, OFM
Minister General

INTRODUCTION

In the name of the Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.¹

With reverence and sincere love, the General Chapter of the Order of Friars Minors greets all the brothers who, sent out to the world by the Lord God, proclaim in different countries and cultures, with word and witness of works, that there is no other Almighty One except Him. ²*And to all who receive this letter, Brother Francis, your little, despised servant in the Lord God, wishes health and peace.*³

Very Dear Brothers:

1.

The Lord has gathered us at Saint Mary of the Angels of the Portiuncula to celebrate the 187th General Chapter of our Order, from 24th May to 20th June of this year 2009, according to our Rule, which prescribes that the Chapter take place at Pentecost.⁴

It was significant that this meeting has been held in the year when we commemorate the 8th Centenary of the approval of the Franciscan *forma vitae* and in the place that saw the birth of our fraternity. The presence here of brothers from such different countries and cultures is an eloquent sign of the fruitful force of the life-project of Francis, which is none other than the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁵

1 *Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples* 1.

2 *Letter to the Whole Order* 9.

3 *Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples* 1.

4 *Regula bullata* 8, 2-3.

5 *Regula bullata* 1,1.

2.

Since the special way that Francis read the Gospel is essentially practical and living,⁶ we reaffirm the primacy of praxis *as the pathway for a better understanding of our vocation.*⁷ Therefore we are concerned about the distance that often separates our ways of speaking from real life. For this reason the Chapter wished to write a message that inspires and animates the daily life of the brothers rather than a doctrinal document. And we have wished to write it *in brief words* as Francis advised his brothers,⁸ since this too is a way to return to essentials.

3.

The theme of the Chapter has been evangelizing mission, which is a particularly apt means of *restoring* to the Lord the gift of the Gospel, given as the *forma vitae* to Francis.⁹ We speak of “gift” in the sense that Francis uses when he says that the Lord gave him brothers,¹⁰ and we speak of *restoring* in the sense in which he says: “Let us *restore* all good to the Lord, God Almighty and Most High, acknowledge that every good is His, and thank Him, “from Whom all good comes,” for everything.”¹¹ *Restoring* refers, therefore, to expropriation.

4.

In this message we want to share some reflections on these two aspects which, taken together, give origin to our *life and mission*, placing ourselves in the context of the life, the needs, the questions and challenges of our peoples. The proclamation of the Good News of the Reign of God, seed of a new world of justice, of peace and of fraternity, today more than ever must be a source of hope for them.

6 Cf. *Legend of the Three Companions* 28.

7 *The Lord Speaks with Us on the Road* 10-11.

8 *Regula bullata* 9, 4.

9 *Report of the Minister General* 16.

10 *Testament* 14.

11 “*Et omnia bona Domino Deo altissimo et summo reddamus et omnia bona ipsius esse cognoscamus et de omnibus ei gratias referamus, a quo bona cuncta procedunt.*” *Regula non bullata* 17:17.

THE GIFT OF THE GOSPEL

5.

*The Lord gave me, Brother Francis ...; the Lord led me among the lepers ...; the Lord gave me brothers ...; the Lord revealed to me:*¹² these words from Francis's *Testament* reveal a profound truth: at the beginning of everything is the Lord, origin of every good, He who is *every good, highest good, all good, who alone is good.*¹³ Every reality thus appears as a gift that comes from Him and the greatest of all the gifts is that of *His blessed and glorious Son, whom He has given to us and was born for us.*¹⁴ This is the Good News we have received: *the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God,*¹⁵ the gift that changed the life of Francis of Assisi and changes each of us.

6.

The gift of the Gospel is at the origin of our fraternity. In the Testament of Francis the gift of the brothers and the gift of the evangelical form of life go hand-in-hand.¹⁶ When the first two companions of Francis asked him what they must do to live with him, he replied: "Let us ask counsel of Christ," and with them he went into the church to open the book of the Gospel three times.¹⁷ There it is Christ who speaks, and from listening to His voice is born that new bond in the Spirit which is the first fraternity. The little group of brothers, the seed of the Franciscan Order, in this founding moment precedes any distinction by ministry. They are just believers who wish to take the Gospel seriously.

12 *Testament* 1, 2, 14, 23.

13 *Praises to be Said at all the Hours*, Final Prayer.

14 *Letter to the Faithful* (2nd version), 11.

15 *Mar.* 1:1.

16 *Testament* 14-15.

17 *2 Celano* 15; *Anonynous of Perugia* 10-11; *Legend of the Three Companions* 27-29.

7.

From its earliest days the fraternity discovers that it is called to proclaim what it lives. Thomas of Celano tells us that at the very beginning, when the brothers were only eight, they were first sent out through the world.¹⁸ Francis and his brothers thus become heralds and evangelizers. This will be a characteristic trait of Franciscan life, to which explicit attention is dedicated in both of the Rules.¹⁹ It is itinerancy, it is sympathy toward the world²⁰, from which one does not wish to flee, but in which rather is recognized one's own cloister,²¹ it is sharing the life of the poor and those who are found *along the side of the road*.²² This way of going through the world is restoring the gift of the Gospel received.

8.

Francis and his brothers make choices that turn their intuitions into something concrete. They choose not to touch money, but do not refuse to work or to care for lepers; they choose not to ride horseback, but this does not mean refusing to travel through the world; they firmly refuse ecclesiastical privileges, while declaring themselves *always submissive and subject at the feet of the holy Church*;²³ they choose to entrust themselves to Providence for their support, and for this very reason they are free *to eat what is placed before them*.²⁴ In this way and others the first fraternity appears as a prophetic fraternity, a fraternity that is a sign,²⁵ that can read the signs of the times and incarnate the Gospel in a way that is concrete and comprehensible to the culture of their time.

18 *I Celano* 29.

19 *Regula non bullata* 14; *Regula bullata* 3.

20 *Report of the Minister General* 17, 6.

21 *Sacrum commercium* 63.

22 *Regula non bullata* 9,2.

23 *Regula bullata* 12,4.

24 *Regula bullata* 3,14.

25 Cfr. *Report of the Minister General* 31.

9.

The evangelical creativity that Francis and his brothers use in proclaiming the Gospel of peace is evident: consider the way he succeeds in making peace between the bishop and mayor of Assisi, in conflict with each other.²⁶ Francis acts in a simple and intelligent way: he does not get involved in questions of economics and power that had divided them; he does not pretend to find a “political” solution to the conflict: he simply invites them to listen to the Canticle, a song whose lyrics and music he had composed.²⁷ His creativity suggests the way to help them resolve their differences, based on his own gift. What is more effective than music and song to move feelings and speak to the heart? The “logic of gift”²⁸ clearly appears as an alternative to the logic of price, of profit, of utility and power, which dominated then as it does in our world today.

10. Like Francis and many brothers in our history, who knew how to put their gifts at the service of the Good News,²⁹ and we too feel called to receive the gift of the Gospel and to respond to it creatively with our life, with concrete actions, through the exercise of our own gifts. We wish to learn to listen to the word of Jesus and to offer it to the men and women of today, in the spirit of the Gospel,³⁰ travelling the paths of the world as Lesser Brothers, evangelizers with our heart turned to the Lord.

26 *Legend of Perugia* 44 = *Assisi Compilation* 84.

27 *Legend of Perugia* 24 = *Assisi Compilation* 66.

28 Cf. *The Lord Speaks with Us on the Road* 19-25.

29 *Mirror of Perfection* 85.

30 Cf. *Mat* 25, 40.



RESPONDING TO THE GIFT OF THE GOSPEL

During the work of the Chapter various themes have emerged that we wish to offer to the brothers as possible pathways of restoration.

Evangelization

11.

In its deepest essence the Gospel is a gift meant to be shared. Being sent to evangelize comes from its very depths³¹ and is at the same time a demand of the faith. An authentic experience of God, in fact, puts us in movement because it is not possible *to sense the infinite embrace of a God who, being love and only love, loves to the extent of folly*, without feeling at the same time the urgent need to share this experience with others.³² In the final analysis, to evangelize means to have the experience of Emmaus, setting out on the road to make an offer of faith through shared witness³³. And the one who shares, *makes a response*.³⁴

12.

But healthy self-criticism is necessary, asking ourselves if the immobility and stalemate which threaten to paralyze any dynamic evangelizing, are not signaling a crisis of faith that affects some of us. Perhaps the crux of the matter does not consist in the fact that we do not believe, but rather in what idea of God we have placed at the center of our faith. Could it be that we too frequently emphasize unilaterally the monotheistic side of our our faith to the detriment of its Trinitarian dimension, in which lies its originality? This question is pertinent,

31 Cf. *Mat* 28, 18-20; *Mar* 16, 14-20; *Luk* 24, 46-48; *Joh* 20, 21.

32 Cf. *Joh* 1, 35-42; 1 *Joh* 1, 3.

33 *The Lord Speaks with Us on the Road* 39-40; 43-44.

34 *The Lord Speaks with Us on the Road* 19; *Report of the Minister General* 19c.

because being sent to evangelize makes sense only if based on faith in a God who is Father and who from the depths of his intimacy of communion and love sends his Son to proclaim and make present the Good News of his Reign by the action of the Spirit. Furthermore, only based on this presupposition of faith can we understand that the evangelizing mission is essentially inherent to our Franciscan vocation, since we have all embraced it under the sign of Trinitarian faith: *To the praise and glory of the Most Holy Trinity*.³⁵ On the foundation of a Trinitarian faith and spirituality we can enter into the dynamic of the logic of gift, which allows the wealth of gifts that the brothers bring, along with the diversity of social, cultural and religious contexts which challenge us, to confer on the mission of our Order its characteristics of being *charismatic, and therefore plural and diverse*.³⁶ In the centrality that is due to the triune God as the integrating principle of our lives, our fraternities and the gifts of the brothers, there is at stake the hope that animates our evangelizing mission.³⁷

Mission *inter gentes*:

being evangelically incarnated in our times.

13.

Another pathway to restoration that the Chapter has emphasized in these days is that called mission *inter gentes*,³⁸ an expression that indicates a way of being present in the places where the Lord sends us, as well as an attitude toward the world. It is a process of insertion in reality that makes us share the life of our peoples in all its complexity.³⁹ Mission *inter gentes* presumes this empathy toward the world and is the consequence and extension of the mystery of the Incarnation. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom, the Word – the first lesser one – becomes flesh in a human body, inserted in an historical moment, in a concrete society and culture, thus sharing wholly the human

35 *Profession Formula*, in CC.GG. 5 § 2.

36 *The Lord Speaks with Us on the Road* 38; cfr 19-25.

37 *The Lord Speaks with Us on the Road* 27; 38.

38 *Report of the Minister General* 16a; 25.

39 Cf. *Gaudium et spes* 1.

condition except for sin.⁴⁰ If Christ is the paradigm of all evangelization, the real and effective incarnation of the evangelizer in the socio-cultural reality of a people is an inescapable demand of his mission.

14.

To achieve this desired incarnation there is a need to *de-center ourselves from ourselves*.⁴¹ *following the example of the Son of God who did not count equality with God as something to be grasped but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave becoming as human beings are*.⁴² The Order feels called to be less self-referential, and to be more attentive to the future of the world; to be less anxious about our own future and more about the destiny of humanity; to concern itself not so much to adjust its internal structures as to adapt to the times that are moving rapidly. Such phenomena as interculturality; claiming and defending human rights; the emergence and growing visibility of minorities of every type; the crisis of the neo-liberal economic model, which further impoverishes the poor members of our populations, ruthless eco-cide, the phenomena of migration: these, among others, are pleas that the Spirit makes to us and which ask for a response. We believe that the Spirit continues to speak and reveal himself, today as much as yesterday.

15.

Mission *inter gentes* implies an attitude of *kindness toward the world*, as a condition for entering into dialogue with the men and women of today and for evangelization.⁴³ This does not mean accommodating ourselves to the world, nor suspending critical judgment in regard to it. Rather this means learning how to be able to look positively at contexts and cultures in which we are immersed, discovering unheard-of occasions of grace that the Lord offers us.⁴⁴ We live a new

40 Cf. Joh 1,14; Heb 4,5; Phil 2, 7-8; Eucharistic Prayer IV.

41 Report of the Minister General 17c; 23c.

42 Phil. 2:6-7.

43 Report of the Minister General 17: 5.

44 Report of the Minister General 29.

kairós that the Lord offers us through the collapse of earlier social, cultural and religious paradigms, and the emergence of new ones that accompany the change of era we are experiencing. In this way evangelizing mission becomes a movement of going and coming, that entails giving but also receiving, in an attitude of dialogue.⁴⁵

16.

Mission *inter gentes* is expressed also through inculturation. Seduced by Christ, the inculturated Word of God *par excellence*, we too wish to learn how to incarnate the evangelical message in the different contexts in which we live.⁴⁶ For the Gospel to be significant, we must not expect that the men and women of today are the ones who must struggle to grasp what we presume to communicate; rather it is up to us to learn the language of the world and its codes of communication to make the message understandable. *I have made myself all things to all people, to save at all costs even one*, says the Apostle. And he adds: *All this I do for the Gospel, to become a sharer in it myself.*⁴⁷ The situation of the Church in Francis's time offers a lesson: *imprisoned in feudal structures, it had lost the ability to communicate the Gospel to the society of that time, and had lost the language of mission, as the new world eluded it.*⁴⁸

17.

One of the forms of evangelization *inter gentes* is which many brothers are involved is that called “traditional” evangelization, that continues to preserve its respectability and which in no way eliminates or opposes new forms of evangelization.

45 *Report of the Minister General* 17: 4.

46 *Report of the Minister General* 263.

47 1 Cor 9, 22b-23.

48 *Report of the Minister General* 179 a.

Mission *ad gentes*

18.

Mission *inter gentes* finds its full expression and, in a certain sense, its fulfillment, in mission *ad gentes*. On many occasions the Chapter has expressed its sincere appreciation for this mission, and has underlined the importance of this essential feature of all evangelization. Mission *ad gentes*, in fact, points out in a unique way the first moment of faith, born from the proclamation of the *kerygma* to those who do not yet know the Gospel and which calls for conversion. Through faith proclaimed and shared, the Spirit creates bonds of communion from which the Church is born. This missionary dynamic pertains essentially to the physiognomy of the Church, obedient to the command of Jesus who says, “Go, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”⁴⁹

19.

Francis and his brothers of the early days were particularly struck by the Gospel texts of the sending of the disciples on mission,⁵⁰ which inspired their way of going through the world, devoid of whatever could offer them security.⁵¹ This is a typical feature of our Franciscan tradition, and from the beginning the brothers have learned to cross borders, to venture beyond the frontiers of Christendom. The story of the first fraternity is marked by missions beyond the mountains, toward Northern Europe, and beyond the sea, toward the East. Francis himself inspires these first missionary expeditions following the Chapter of 1217, before departing himself for the East two years later.

49 *Mat* 28: 19-20.

50 *Anonymous of Perugia* 10-11; 2 Celano 15.

51 cf. *Luk* 9,3.

20.

According to the Rule, mission is not born from human initiative but *by divine inspiration*.⁵² This is an essential feature for revitalizing our missions *ad gentes* today. Only with openness to the Spirit, who blows where he wills and as he wills, and who moves us to evangelize, will we rediscover the missionary strength and ardor that sometimes appear to be declining. The *Regula non bullata* for its part points out to the friars two ways of behaving: silent witness, in subjection to every human creature for love of God; and explicit proclamation of the Word of God with the call to conversion, “when they see it pleases the Lord.”⁵³ These are valuable directions, that weave together the characteristics of mission *inter gentes* with those of mission *ad gentes*, in a synthesis made possible by openness to the Spirit of the Lord. The explicit proclamation of the Gospel is the point of arrival of our way, as minors, of being present in the world, after attentive discernment to grasp when “it pleases the Lord.”

21.

In this attention to missions *ad gentes*, the Chapter has expressed the wish for collaboration among various entities, in a perspective of mutual exchange among the younger entities and those of more ancient tradition. Today, mission beyond our own boundaries is a calling for everyone, and movements of migration at a world level demand a new approach to this missionary dimension.

Dwelling on the Border

22.

The evangelizer is one who constantly crosses frontiers by the simple fact of being sent. These may be geographic borders, as in mission *ad gentes*, but there are also other types, and we must learn how to cross them. We live in compartmentalized societies where some-

52 *Regula bullata* 12:1.

53 *Regula non bullata* 16: 5-7.

times divisions become too rigid, thus giving rise to discrimination, exclusion, and in extreme cases, physical, psychological and ideological violence. In the present context of society, of the Church, and the Order itself, some of these have special importance, and prompt us to exercise our itinerancy, crossing borders like those between man/woman, cleric/lay, rich/ poor, culture/nature, body/soul, citizen/immigrant, prayer/work, Order/world, community/individual. To evangelize entails seeking to make our borders porous, to allow the flow of intercommunion and intercommunication. Once again, only Trinitarian faith and spirituality will allow us to dwell within the fissures of a fragmented world, striving to reconcile and move beyond these and other dichotomies, as a path of restoration.

23.

At the same time, there exist other frontiers that become blurred, less and less able to impose limits. Globalization can be used as a paradigmatic example of this fact. This is one of the great paradoxes of our time: for some the borders are hermetically sealed, while for others they hardly exist. The phenomenon of immigration is set within this dialectic, especially in regard to refugees. Every year thousands of people are expelled from their own countries by destitution or violence, and many die in the attempt to find the means to satisfy their own most basic needs and those of their families. Their itinerancy is that of the poor, of the minority. Can we Friars Minor find a social space in which these values of our charism may be better represented? An evangelical presence among them would be a particularly eloquent sign of restoration in this world where only the flow of money, goods and services gets free passage, but not persons, much less the poor, sacrament of the Son of God, who *was poor and a stranger*.⁵⁴ By the Incarnation, the Word places himself on the side of the periphery, of vulnerability, of poverty.⁵⁵ We should not forget that *our minority, which has that of Christ as its paradigm [...] must be translated into courageous choices, that bring us to “abandon certain social and*

54 *Regula non bullata* 9: 5.

55 *Letter to the Faithful (2nd Version)* 4-5.

*ecclesial situations in order to choose with greater decisiveness the liminality of religious life, and experience marginality as the essence of our Franciscan identity.”*⁵⁶

24.

We are witnessing the birth of a world in which diverse sensitivities are arising and sharing a common space: African, Asian, Latin-American ...; cultures and religions which only a short time ago were majorities in certain areas are ceasing to be such, while others are emerging and reaffirming their own right to be recognized and to exist. It is no longer necessary to travel thousands of kilometers to encounter other cultures and other religions. The opportunities for dialogue with them are already within reach. *Forming us for dialogue and restoring the Gospel in these areas is the work of the Spirit*⁵⁷ whose action knows no borders, because it is *the Spirit that moves us to go ever further, not only in a geographical sense, but also beyond the ethnic and religious frontiers, for a truly universal mission.*⁵⁸

The Laity and “Shared Evangelization”

25.

The evangelizing mission belongs to the whole Church, not just to ordained ministers. In the diversity of ministries, all Christians are called to respond to the word of the Lord who sends them to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom. A correct conception of the Church recognized in the common baptismal condition the foundation of the diverse charisms and ministries. For these reasons we, Lesser Brothers, feel ourselves called to promote evangelization shared with the laity as an act of authentic *response to the Gospel*, gift of God for all of His Church. In this way the laity exercise their right and duty of *keeping, practicing and professing the faith they have received.*⁵⁹ The lay person is an evangelizer by right, not by gracious concession, even

56 *Report of the Minister General* 32b.

57 *Regula bullata* 12:1.

58 *Redemptoris missio* 25; cf. 30.

59 *Dei Verbum* 10.

less as a kind of substitute to supply for a lack of personnel. As a consequence, we must enter into an “ecclesiological conversation” that will help us overcome the clerical mentality that still prevails among some brothers. If a model of Church were based only on the priest and the cleric missionary it would not allow for shared evangelization, since this implies the willingness to renounce certain securities and to grant spaces of power and action. Therefore such a restoration would be a concrete sign of the Spirit: and it is up to us, Friars Minor, to be prophetic inventors of signs.⁶⁰

26.

Our Order, composed of clerical and lay friars, understands and appreciates the gift of the lay religious vocation. In this regard we consider it useful to recall some orientations that arose in the Chapter in regard to them. We recalled that *in some regions of the Order [...] there are still situations of discrimination in regard to opportunities for formation that, according to our legislation, must be the same for all* and the manner of exercising our ministries does not always favor the active participation of the lay friars in our evangelizing mission.⁶¹ In this regard, we have reaffirmed the need for a single formation for all brothers, which is both respectful of the gift of each brother and the different vocations called forth by the Spirit. It is necessary for all our candidates to be formed to evangelize, not to exercise a single model of evangelization. Along the same lines, we should ask ourselves if sometimes clericalism in the Order is not in part due to our present structures of formation, which make some of our brothers in formation with a lay vocation finally become ordained simply because they do not find other spaces with other dynamics of formation outside the clerical *cursus*.

We applaud the efforts made in these last years by the government of the Order to continue insisting with the Holy See that we might be recognized as a mixed fraternity.⁶² But *this* change of canonical status,

60 *Report of the Minister General 30.*

61 *Report of the Minister General 137b.*

62 *Report of the Minister General 137c.*

which we all desire, must be accompanied by a change in fraternal praxis.

Fraternal Plan of Life and Mission

27.

No project of evangelization is the initiative or personal property of anyone; it is always the fraternity that evangelizes. The mutual care that the brothers show each other as a likeness of the Trinitarian community requires close attention to the quality of fraternal life. An important part of the service of animation by ministers and guardians is the search for means to recreate communion, mutual communication, warmth and truth in fraternal relationships.

28.

The life marked by the dynamism of the Gospel becomes an irrepressible passion for the Kingdom. We need to give form to life in order not to lose the fruits of what the Lord has sown. Therefore we remain convinced that is necessary for the fraternities and the Entities to enter into a culture of the Fraternal Plan of Life and Mission. We are led to this belief not primarily because of a concern for efficiency in operations, but rather by the need to integrate evangelizing mission within the context of our life and to establish priorities there to guide our decisions. *In recent years we have worked on the priorities of our life and we now affirm the conviction that between the priorities and evangelizing mission there must be a circular dynamic of feedback, within which our projects are placed. Within this broad perspective evangelization appears as the horizon of the whole journey of conversion of the Lesser Brother, and thus of ongoing formation. The evangelizing mission is not simply the “external” dimension of our life. In fact, consecrated life itself, under the action of the Holy Spirit who is at the origin of every vocation and charism, becomes mission, as did the life of Jesus.*⁶³

63 *Vita consecrata* 72, quoted in *You are Called to Freedom* 20.


 29.

We also need a sensitivity to our society, so that contact with this reality, examined through the critical instruments of the social sciences, and discerned with the eyes of faith, can suggest to us the project that the Lord is asking of us. We cannot turn our backs on the future of the world, especially in these times when post-modern culture, bearing in its train opportunities and uncertainties, disenchantment and skepticism, presents us with so many challenges. The Order has chosen to accompany it on the journey, not as one who has ready answers for the many questions being posed, but because just as much as our brothers and sisters, the men and women of these times, we are mendicants of meaning.⁶⁴ Will we be true to this choice? We cannot draw up a Fraternal Plan of Life and Evangelizing Mission without social awareness. Therefore, before becoming obsessed with realignment of our structures we must begin *to read attentively the signs of times and places*⁶⁵ and allow ourselves to be questioned by them.


 30.

The spirituality that nourishes our life and evangelizing mission is never foreign to the life of our peoples and what concerns them. What is called environmental justice, active non-violence, refugees, emigrants, those without land, ethnic minorities, the ethical use of financial resources *in solidarity, the HIV/AIDS pandemic*: these are some of the many realities that need to be brought to prayer and discerned in our daily practice of prayerful reading of the Word. The values of justice, of peace, and the integrity of creation, which are values rooted in the Gospel, must be present naturally in our life of prayer and devotion, and in our daily life and the exercise of our ministries. *We are* called to build bridges of dialogue, of encounter, of reconciliation and peace; to be messengers of the culture of life in the whole range of its development; to be, finally, guardians of hope.

64 *The Lord Speaks with Us on the Road* 6.

65 *Report of the Minister General* 184.


31.

The “realignment” of our forms of presence and our Entities usually includes closures and fusions for both: this is part of revising and restructuring. This is a painful process, yet we are called to discover in it a moment of paschal grace, to try to give back meaning to ourselves, in a manner that is simpler and more vulnerable, but also more prophetic and certainly more as lesser ones, in places where we are already settled. In our Order this is a reality that becomes ever more visible and that represents an exceptional opportunity for overcoming a provincial mentality, and favor an interprovincial outlook and the sense of belonging to a Conference and to the Order.

CONCLUSION

32.

As we reach the end of the brotherly encounter, we cannot fail to give thanks to the Lord for all the good things He has given to us during this General Chapter, and during the entire eight centuries of history of the Order, as we remain confident that He will continue to do until the end. We give thanks for so many brothers who, over these centuries, have sown the seed of the Kingdom in the world, at times with the silence witness of their lives, at other times with the explicit proclamation of the Gospel. We give thanks for the supreme witness of faith given by the innumerable martyrs of our Order. We give thanks for all those who continue working for the Kingdom with generosity, imagination and creativity in the missions *ad gentes*, in the Holy Land, in Africa, in the Far East, in the traditional forms of pastoral ministry and in evangelizing presences in places of breakdown. *We give thanks for our Poor Clare sisters, for our brothers and sisters of the SFO and YouFra and for all other lay people who share our passion for the Franciscan ideal.* We give thanks, finally, for the dreams of so many brothers of our day, some filled with idealism, some painful, but all bearing the future. With grateful hearts we recognize the ongoing action of the Spirit of the Lord, true Minister General of the Order, who accompanies and leads us along the pathways of the world to proclaim the Good News of the Reign of the Father in the manner of the Son.

33.

During the Chapter we have celebrated the Vigil of Pentecost at Saint Mary of the Angels. We all started by gathering in the square of the basilica around a large pile of dry branches. At a certain moment in the celebration that wood was set on fire with a little flame from the Paschal candle, sign of the risen Christ. It quickly became a bonfire.

Christian symbolism has frequently associated this element with the Holy Spirit. The image is not arbitrary: the account of Pentecost in the Acts of the Apostles says that when the Spirit descended on the disciples, it descended upon them as tongues of fire.

For there to be fire, there must be combustible material, since fire is just the internal energy of the material set free in the form of light and heat. The bonfire that burned in that moment reminded us in symbolic language that there is nothing and no one, no matter how dry and dead they may appear – as that pile of branches was dry and dead – which, when touched by the Spirit, is not capable of producing from within itself energy, light and heat. The action of the Spirit consists especially in freeing the inner potencies of persons and circumstances. Pentecost means allowing ourselves to be surprised by the unexpected dynamism that lives within us and *sends us out on the journey. It needs only a spark to unleash it, a little flame, like that of the candle: the flame of the Risen One. The Spirit takes charge of the rest.*

With Pentecost we leave behind the Paschal Season, not because one liturgical season ends and another begins – Ordinary Time – but because it is the bridge that puts the Risen One in contact with the daily life of those who believe in Him. Pentecost means allowing ourselves to be set afire by the Spirit with the fire of Easter in our daily life, so common and ordinary. There was a reason that Francis wanted the General Chapter to be celebrated at Pentecost, and that is what we have done.

*Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.*⁶⁶

66 *Regula non bullata* 24:5.

MANDATES OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER



DOCUMENT OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER
OF THE ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR
ASSISI, PENTECOST 2009

The creative imagination needed to incarnate the Gospel in a specific context, with unprecedented gestures and actions, was characteristic of Francis and his earliest brothers. Today more than ever such an imagination is an unavoidable necessity for the friar minor. The Extraordinary General Chapter of 2006 clearly pointed out that we are witnessing a change of epoch, where we can see the emergence of *new paradigms and categories which require us to review our mission seriously and to dare to try unknown paths of presence and witness*.⁶⁷ The same Chapter invited us to enter into *ongoing discernment and constant evaluation of our life and practices in the bosom of our fraternity and in constant dialogue with lay men and women*.⁶⁸ In the spirit of the primacy of praxis, we offer the friars and the Entities the mandates of the General Chapter of 2009.

I. ANIMATION OF THE LIFE OF THE ORDER

General Definitory

● *Priorities*

1. In the next years the Minister General with his Definitory should propose afresh the Priorities from a perspective of evangelizing mission and openness to the world, so that they might continue to be the fundamental values of reference in the animation of our life and mission.

● *Franciscan Identity*

2. The General Definitory, through the GSFS and the GSME, should study in depth the theme of our Franciscan Identity and the participation of all the brothers, priests and lay, in the evangelizing mission. If opportune, they might organize meetings at the continental level on these themes, in collaboration with the various Conferences.

67 *The Lord Speaks with us on the Road*, 33.

68 *Ibid.*, 35.

- *Meetings*

3. The Minister General should continue to convoke, each year, the new Ministers Provincial, Visitators General and Presidents of Conferences, for a meeting with the General Definitory. The duration and methodology of such meetings should be reviewed, in order to respond better to the following objectives: mutual knowledge, information, formation and collaboration with the Minister General and his Definitory.

4. In order to stimulate a more profound dialogue and to encourage fraternal communion, the Minister General and his Definitory should continue to meet with the Conferences or groups of Conferences at least once each six-year period, reviewing the current methodology.

5. Each General Definitory should attend the meetings of the Conference or Conferences in the region assigned to him in order to accompany them more closely.

Entities

- *Priorities*

6. Each Entity should assume the responsibility for finding its own methodology or process to study in greater depth and implement the *Priorities*.

- *Fraternal Project of Life*

7. The Provincial Ministers and Custodes, with their respective Definitories, should accompany each fraternity in the elaboration of a fraternal project of life in light of the guidelines coming from this Chapter.

- *Formation for Guardians and for those responsible for other sectors of animation*

8. The Conferences or, where this is not possible for reasons of distance or different languages, the Provinces or Custodies, should elaborate a project of animation/formation for Guardians and for those

responsible for other sectors of animation of the Entities. This project should be presented to the General Definitory, and to the Conference of the Presidents.

● *Schools of Prayer*

9. Create in each Entity or on the interprovincial level at least one house of welcome where the life of prayer is lived so clearly that it could be a “school of prayer” for Friars and laity, and a form of evangelization. The General Definitory should provide Franciscan resource material for the animation of these “schools.”

● *Moratorium*

10. During the next three years, 2010-2012, all the Entities of the Order should enter into a process of reflection and discernment. The reflection and discernment should be carried out on the basis of the following questions: Where do we find ourselves? Where do we want to go? Where is the Spirit leading us? We should answer these questions while keeping in mind our reality (weaknesses and possibilities), the invitations of the Church, the recent documents of the Order, the signs of the times, and the options to be taken in the near future.

● *Ongoing Formation*

11. The Minister Provincial ought to take advantage of opportune moments – like the 25th anniversary of solemn profession – to encourage all friars to interrupt their normal activities and carry out a programmed period of ongoing formation for at least six months. This experience can be organized by the Entity, the Conference or the Order.

● *Prayerful Reading of the Word*

12. Each Entity should introduce in the life of the fraternities periodic meetings dedicated to the prayerful reading of the Word (cf. *GGCC* 26 §1).

II. THE EVANGELIZING MISSION

1. Animation of the Evangelizing Mission

General Definitory

● *Evangelization from a Franciscan Perspective*

13. The Chapter asks that the Minister General with his Definitory and the Ministers Provincial with their Definitories promote an evangelizing mission that is clearly Franciscan, highlighting in a special way that:

- It be sustained by a strong experience of God;
- It be realized in fraternity and include the witness of fraternal life;
- It be characterized as a mission *inter gentes*, and by itinerancy, by presence in new and difficult areas, by risk-taking, and by closeness to the poorest, to those who suffer and to the excluded;
- It be open to the active participation of the laity and the Franciscan family;
- It promote where possible formation of a Fraternity that responds to the needs of a new evangelization, in communion with the local Church.

● *A Study of the Situation of the Order*

14. With the goal of offering strategies for action in the area of evangelization, the General Definitory should promote an interdisciplinary study on the situation of the Order. It should create a central commission, which will coordinate the work of commissions already established at the Conference level. They should employ the help of professionals in the field.

2. Formation to Evangelizing Mission

General Definitory

15. The Minister General and his Definitory, along with the Ministers Provincial and Custodes, should accompany the discernment of

future missionaries and provide for their formation, along with the ongoing formation of those who have already served for years in mission territory.

16. The Minister General and his Definitory should carefully examine the course on missionary formation in Brussels, and prepare guidelines for work in the missions that will serve the entire Order.

Entities and Conferences

17. The Entities and Conferences should promote initial and ongoing formation on the themes of ordinary evangelization, new evangelization and mission *as gentes*. This formation should be both theoretical and experiential. To reach these goals it will be necessary:

- To examine the programs of ongoing and initial formation in the Entities in light of the priorities of evangelization and mission. This should include concrete experiences in the Entities, as well as at the level of the Conferences and the Order, guaranteeing adequate preparation, careful accompaniment and evaluation of each experience.
- To motivate candidates in initial formation toward evangelization and mission from the Franciscan perspective, as “friars of the people,” sharing as much as possible the life of the poor of our time.
- To promote formation workshops on evangelization and mission *inter gentes* and *ad gentes* at the Conference level and/or at the Entity level. They should be open to the Secretariats for mission and evangelization, to friars in ongoing and initial formation, and to the laity. The structures and times for these workshops should be appropriate to the various places and cultures.
- To form and train friars for better service to the Gospel in the field of mass media, especially promoting responsible use of the *Internet*.

18. The Ministers Provincial and Custodes should promote and develop the missionary dimension and formative missionary experiences at provincial and custodial levels during the period of initial formation.

3. Missionary Forms and Presences

● *Areas for Evangelization*

19. With the commitment to maintain, promote and update our traditional forms of evangelization, which are carried out according to our charism in fraternity and minority and in collaboration with the Franciscan Family, special attention should be given to the following areas: parishes, sanctuaries and churches connected to friaries, preaching and popular missions, and other traditional forms of pastoral work (hospitals, prisons, immigrants, schools and universities).

● *New Forms of Evangelization*

20. Without neglecting the activities of ordinary evangelization, preference should be given to new initiatives. In order to privilege the missionary and evangelizing dimension, with special attention to new horizons and forms of itinerant evangelization and “inserted” fraternities, the General Definitory, with the participation of the respective Conferences, should promote typically Franciscan formative programs for friars and lay people together.

● *The Holy Land*

21. Taking into account the affirmations of the General Constitutions and Statutes, the Minister General and his Definitory should continue to encourage all of the Entities to collaborate in the evangelizing mission of the Holy Land. We consider it to be the most important international mission of the Order. Each Entity should collaborate by sending those friars who express an interest in working for a time in the Custody of the Holy Land in order to help develop its evangelizing mission, a task begun by Saint Francis himself.

● *Morocco*

22. Taking into account the affirmations of the General Constitutions (cf. *GGCC* 95 §3), the Minister General and his Definitory should continue to encourage all the Entities to collaborate in the mission of Morocco by sending friars. We consider this work part of the original mission of the Order, which began with the witness of our first martyrs.

● *Africa*

23. The Minister General and his Definitory should encourage all the Entities to collaborate with the friars of Africa, where significant growth is foreseen for the Order. This can be accomplished both through economic support and by sending personnel. They should encourage the friars of Africa to be missionaries to their own continent.

● *Amazon*

24. In the VIII centenary of the founding of our Order, the General Chapter, as a sign of evangelical prophecy, commits itself to a comprehensive project in the Amazon.

- It ought to take into account the humanizing power of the Gospel, the care and integrity of creation, and the defense and promotion of indigenous cultures;
- Three concrete commitments are involved in the realization of this project:
 1. To support and strengthen our presence in the region, a presence that goes back to the 16th Century (Vicariates and Custodies).
 2. To create a new interprovincial fraternity.
 3. To create a solidarity network in the Order, in the Franciscan Family, and among other groups.
- The General Chapter entrusts this project to the General Government of the Order, so that it might be undertaken jointly by the GSME, the JPIC office, UCLAF and, above all, by the Entities that live and carry out their mission in this region.

● *Asia*

25. Considering the possibility of the growth of the Order in Asia, and the very ancient tradition of Franciscan missions on that continent, the General Chapter accepts the project of new openings and missionary presences in Asia (e.g., Laos and Cambodia). The project will include the participation of the friars from the EAC and SAAOC, with an opening for international participation, and the accompaniment of the General Definitory.

● *Europe*

26. *Project Europe* will be developed in the context of strong secularization, characteristic of Europe. It will be international and interpro-

vincial, with the goal of giving life to new forms of evangelization.

27. A project for the countries and territories of Eastern Europe should be strengthened, especially with the Franciscan presence in the Greek Catholic and Latin Rite Churches of the Ukraine.

4. The Service of Dialogue

● *Evangelizing Mission and Dialogue*

28. The General Chapter requests that in all the Entities of the Order the Service of Dialogue work within the GSME in order to promote ecumenical, inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue as a fundamental aspect of our life and our evangelizing mission.

● *The Spirit of Assisi*

29. The General Chapter requests that on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Spirit of Assisi (October 27, 2011) each Entity, in collaboration with the entire Franciscan family, promote one or more initiatives of dialogue with groups of other religions or cultures that are present in the territory of the Entity.

5. Collaboration at the Level of Evangelizing Mission

Entities and Conferences

● *Collaboration in Missionary Projects*

30. The General Chapter requests that the Conferences and Entities approach with greater dynamism their local mission vocation, and that they specify their projects of evangelization and mission in such a way that two or more Entities of a Conference might be able to share personnel and resources in support of these projects.

● *Collaboration with the Laity*

31. The friars, wherever they live, should strengthen collaboration and dialogue with the laity, with a view toward collaborative evange-

lization in the world. Together, friars and laity can prepare programs for formation and animation, inspired by the documents of the Church and the Order.

- *Collaboration between the various Offices*

32. The General Chapter proposes that in the next six-year period collaboration and interactive processes between Secretariats, Offices and Commissions be deepened or initiated. This collaboration should be coordinated by the Definitory on the general or provincial level, and is meant to assist our life and our evangelizing mission.

III. FORMATION AND STUDIES

1. Formation

- *Ongoing Formation*

33. The General Chapter reaffirms the importance of Ongoing Formation as part of the daily experience of all the friars, and not simply as an episodic occurrence, and requests that it be promoted at all levels of the Order and at all times. This involves an assessment of the documents of the Order that deal with Ongoing Formation, personal responsibility and the development of a personal life plan, and should highlight the importance of the Guardian in the animation of the friars. It also involves regular evaluation of the process.

- *Formation Documents*

34. Given that the Order already has good documents for Formation, there should be a dynamic re-reading, assimilation and updating of them over the course of the next six-year period.

General Definitory

- *RFF – RS*

35. The General Definitory, through the GSFS, should promote a study of the reception, knowledge of, and implementation of the *Ratio Formationis Franciscanae* and the *Ratio Studiorum OFM* in the Enti-

ties. This should be done in collaboration with the Conferences. In light of this process, the possibility of an eventual updating of the *RFF* can be evaluated, especially in regard to the following points:

- The evangelical counsels and sacramental life;
- The Franciscan formation of friars who undertake priestly ministry; and
- The Ongoing Formation of those who have been involved for years in pastoral ministry, to help them integrate their Franciscan identity.

● *Formation Meetings*

36. The General Definitory, through the GSFS, should promote meetings at the Conference and Continental levels for:

- Formators of the Simply Professed, given the importance of this stage of formation; and
- Formators for the Pastoral Care of Vocations and for Postulancy, to help deepen their knowledge of discernment of human and Christian maturity.

Entities and Conferences

● *International and Intercultural Houses of Formation*

37. In light of the present reality of the Order, it is important to encourage the presence of some houses of Initial Formation and Studies in certain areas where they can be open to friars of various Entities and Countries. This will encourage a formation that is international and intercultural, and promotes our mission vocation.

2. Study Centers

General Definitory

● *PUA and Jerusalem*

38. The General Definitory should continue its collaboration with the PUA and with the Faculty of Biblical and Archeological Sciences of Jerusalem in order to continue the effort to improve academic quality.

The Provinces and Custodies should show special interest for these Centers, assuring capable friars for research and teaching.

● *The Cultural Patrimony of the Order*

39. The General Chapter recommends an intensification of the cultural and theological commitment of the Order, above all by having a greater appreciation for our Centers of study and research, and by designating more friars for higher studies. In particular we should be reminded of the urgent need to find and prepare friars and lay people for the Scotus Commission and for Saint Isidore's in Rome, in order to ensure their continuity.

● *GSFE*

40. With the aim of being able to create a contemporary Franciscan vision, which responds to the unease of our times, the GSFS should facilitate an exchange of academic experience between institutions of the Order, the Franciscan family, and others outside the Franciscan reality, encouraging collaboration with laity who are knowledgeable about the Franciscan intellectual tradition.

Entities

41. The Ministers Provincial and the Custodes should encourage participation of friars in the Masters Program for the Formation of Formators at the PUA, the FISC in Canterbury, the JPIC course at the PUA, and the Masters for Evangelization at the ITF in Petropolis (Brazil).

3. Archives

General Definitory

42. The General Definitory, through the Archivist of the Curia, should organize an International Congress of OFM Archivists in order to:

- Promote an exchange of documentation among the Provincial and Custodial Archives and the Archive of the General Curia;

- Encourage the professional formation of the Archivists in order to preserve the documentary patrimony of the Order; and
- Promote the collaboration of lay people in this type of work.

IV. JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Entities

● *JPIC Priorities for the next six-year period*

43. In the next six-year period (2009-2015) all the Entities of the Order, with the help of the JPIC Office, should commit themselves to:

- Promote in Initial and Ongoing Formation the values of our Franciscan spirituality highlighted in JPIC.
- Examine the impact of our style of life on creation, especially regarding climate change, and promote environmental justice in order to highlight the relationship between social and ecological themes (cf. the specific projects for Africa, the Amazon and Indonesia).
- Promote active non-violence in our lives, with particular emphasis on the resolution of conflicts.
- Pay special attention to the excluded of our society, according to the reality of each Entity, with a particular commitment to the defense and promotion of human rights.
- Consider and promote the ethical use of economic and natural resources in the life of the friars, in their ministry and in society.

● *JPIC Course*

44. The General Chapter requests continuation of the JPIC course at the PUA, and recommends that similar courses be given in all Franciscan Institutes of Higher Learning.

V. THE GOVERNMENT OF THE ORDER

General Definitory

● *Study of the Government of the Order*

45. The General Chapter requests that the General Definitory carry out a profound study of the overall problematic of the government of the Order. It can make use of an international commission in which the Entities and Conferences will participate. It should take into account the observations coming from the General Chapter of 2009. This commission should complete its work by January 1, 2012. The results will be discussed at the Plenary Council of the Order (PCO), based on Art. 194 §3 of the *GGCC*. The PCO will elaborate norms for the number and method of election of the General Definitors; they will take effect *ad experimentum* at the General Chapter of 2015.

● *PCO*

46. The General Chapter has determined the following:

- A Plenary Council of the Order will be held during the upcoming six-year period, according to Art. 138 of the *GGSS*, at a place and time to be determined by the Minister General with the consent of his Definitory.
- This General Chapter repeals the norm of Art. 143 §1 of the *GGSS*, leaving to the PCO determination of the number and method of election of the General Definitors to be elected in the General Chapter 2015. This determination shall be made in light of the results of the study of the overall problematic of the government of the Order, to be carried out by the Minister General and his Definitory.
- According to Art. 195 §1 of the *GGCC*, this General Chapter of 2009 grants to the PCO, which will be held in the upcoming six-year period, deliberative voice in this matter.

● *Reorganizing and Restructuring*

47. The General Chapter requests that the Minister General and his Definitory continue studying the issue of reorganizing and restructur-

ing of the Provinces, including clarification of objectives, methods and typologies, and offer guidelines for these processes in order to make our evangelical and missionary life more dynamic.

- *Study of Departures*

48. The General Definitory should study the causes and motives for departures from the Order, and offer orientations for intervention.

Entities

- *Anticipating or Postponing Chapters*

49. In order to guarantee an adequate preparation both for the General Chapter and for the Chapters of Provinces and Custodies, the Chapters of Provinces and Custodies are not to be celebrated in the six months prior to celebration of the General Chapter. The Entities, which for this motive need to anticipate or postpone their triennial Chapters, should deal with the question according to the norm in Art. 159 §1 of the *GGSS*: *“The President of the Chapter, however, for a just cause and having consulted the Definitory, can postpone it for three months beyond the three years or anticipate it by three months. To postpone or anticipate the Provincial Chapter by more than three months the permission of the Minister General is also required.”*

- *Presence in Other Territories*

50. To regularize the entrance of one Entity into the territory of another, the General Chapter requests that the interested Ministers Provincial and Custodes conduct a careful review of these presences, and, in a spirit of fraternal collaboration, normalize any situation according to indications in our legislation (*GGSS* Art. 123 §2 and Art. 238). The General Definitory should accompany this process, taking into account its concrete circumstances. Future cases should be resolved according to the legislation in the *GGSS*.

VI. FINANCES

General Definitory

● *Economic Transparency*

51. The Minister General and his Definitory should continue to promote a policy of economic transparency among themselves, in the General Curia and in all the Entities of the Order. Regular outside auditing, done by a competent company, ought to be continued in the Office of the General Treasurer and should be encouraged in all the Entities as a key tool in the effort to promote greater transparency.

● *Alternate Funding Sources*

52. The Minister General and his Definitory, with the help of the General Treasurer and competent outside experts, should continue to develop alternative sources of income that would ensure the maintenance of necessary structures: the service of general animation, support of the missionary projects of the Order, support of the Houses dependent on the Minister General, and help to needy Entities in the area of formation, studies and health.

● *Fund Raising*

53. The General Definitory, with the help of competent outside experts, should review the structure of the Office for Fund Raising.

● *Formation in the area of Finances*

54. The General Definitory, in consultation with the Office of the General Treasurer and the Conferences, should elaborate a program for Initial and Ongoing Formation that will educate the Entities of the Order on the theme of finances, paying particular attention to transparency, solidarity and ethics, from the perspective of our Franciscan spirituality.

General Treasurer

● *Directory*

55. During the upcoming six-year period the General Treasurer should draw up a Directory with essential guidelines for the Entities regarding the theme of finances and their relationship with the Office of the General Treasurer.

Entities

● *Fund for the General Secretariat for Missions and Evangelization*

56. This General Chapter has decided that the obligation noted in the *GGSS* Art. 68 §2 should be accomplished through a structure based on the current “tax bands” used by the Order for the “solidarity contribution.”

57. In a spirit of fraternal solidarity, the Ministers Provincial and Custodes should increase in a consistent manner the general fund for the missions, with the help of the Fund Raising Office of the General Curia.

● *Fund for Formation and Studies*

58. The General Chapter proposes that the *Fund for Formation and Studies* continue, and that it be sustained by all of the Entities.

● *Tax on Sales*

59. The tax on all sales of property made by the Entities of the Order, used to maintain the Houses that are dependent on the Minister General, should remain at 1%.

● *The Report of the General Treasurer to the Chapter*

60. The report of the General Treasurer should be presented to the Chapter before the election of the new General Government.

● *Review the System of Contributions to the GSME and the GSFS*

61. The General Definitory should create an International Commission composed of friars who are proficient in financial matters, members of the GSME and GSFS, and the General Treasurer, in order

to carry out an in-depth study of how we might strengthen the system of contributions to the GSME and the GSFS. The General Chapter delegates authorizes the General Definitory and the Conference Presidents to approve and implement the results of this study.

“*...The Chapter wished to provide the friars with something inspirational. Thus this document is not a diagnosis of the state of the Order, but rather a hopeful proposal of paths that we might walk...*”



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