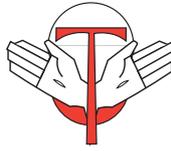


GENERAL CURIA
THE ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR

REORGANIZING AND RESTRUCTURING

Guidelines by the OFM General Definitory





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PREFACE

Dear Brothers,

May the Lord give you peace!

All the Entities of the Order are living realities that evolve with the passing of time and according to the needs of the times. The structures that we build in our Entities are relative and provisory and, therefore, must always be at the service of Gospel life and mission.

We are living through an era of rapid change where the new challenges of our society urge us to give new evangelizing answers. Moreover, the Friars in many of our Entities are experiencing increasing physical and spiritual fatigue because of being overworked. As a result, they are unable to find new answers to new evangelizing challenges, making it increasingly difficult to concentrate on the essential quality of Gospel life centered on the priorities of our *way of life*.

There is also a growing need in most parts of the Order for interprovincial collaboration, restructuring of Entities, activities, and, most importantly, of our life and evangelizing mission. To this effect n. 31 of the General Chapter of 2009 stated that,

“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”.

It is precisely because these processes of restructuring are being carried out in different Entities and Conferences that our last General Chapter asked the General Definitory to study this issue and offer the Order “guidelines for accompanying these processes with the goal of providing a greater dynamism to evangelical and missionary life” (Mandate 47). Hence, what we introduce here is a simple and flexible aid that is not too detailed, and which is based on the experience of the different Entities of the Order and other Congregations.

May the Lord enlighten everyone during these processes to attain the goal of elevating the evangelical quality of our life, witness, and missionary ardor for each individual Friar and Fraternity!

November 13, 2010
Feast of St. Diego of Alcalà

Br. JOSÉ RODRÍGUEZ CARBALLO, ofm
Minister General, OFM

Prot. 101678

Chapter 2009 • *Mandate*, n. 47 on “Reorganizing and Restructuring”

“The General Chapter requests that the Minister General and his Definitory continue studying the issue of reorganizing and restructuring 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.”

1. Importance of the Topic

Recent Ministers General have clearly expressed the importance of and the need for restructuring Provinces as shown here:

- It is necessary to develop a “*culture of solidarity in service of our common future*” (H. Schalück, 1992).
- “*Interprovincial collaboration is the future of the Order*” (General Chapter 2003).
- Interprovincial collaboration is necessary “*in order to accomplish important aspects of our charism and to be signum fraternitatis*” (J. R. Carballo, 2004).
- The essential concern is to guarantee the continuity of the presence of our charism rather than the survival of the current structures.

2. Terminology

Meaning of the terms used:

- a.** *Restructuring*: Process of realignment of various types in the Entities of the Order.
- b.** *Reorganizing*: Realignment of activities, works, and presences (i.e. houses) within a Province, in order to render them more suitable to face new demands and situations.
- c.** *Interprovinciality*: Collaboration between two or more Entities in some activities of common interest, such as houses of initial formation, mission to the people, new fraternities for new forms of evangelization, etc.
- d.** *Union of Entities*: Amalgamation of two or more Entities in order to form one new Province.
- e.** *Restructuring for Growth*: Entities that grow and generate other Entities.
- f.** *Refounding*: This refers to the urgency to start from the Gospel by placing it as the foundation of our own lives, fraternities, and provincial structures.
- g.** *Revitalization*: This term is synonymous to refounding and it means to promote the quality of evangelical life and the witness of Friars and Fraternities; it is the main goal of all processes of restructuring and reorganizing.

3. Reasons

1. *The Reasons why some are resisting a restructuring*
 - a. The province has a specific identity it needs to safeguard.
 - b. Reducing the presences would diminish our contact with and place among the people, thus weakening the birth and pastoral care of vocations.
 - c. Shutting down convents means giving in to death.
2. *Reasons for Reorganizing and Restructuring*
 - a. In an era of rapid change, living the gift of the Gospel and restoring it as center focus to the world as Friars Minor, entail an ongoing discernment, a serious review of practical choices and “the courage to start new presences and witnesses” (LSR 33).
 - b. A constant assessment of our life is required especially because of the *symptoms of uneasiness* throughout our presences” (SAG 35).
 - c. Reorganizing and restructuring must be done not only for practical reasons, such as the dwindling number of vocations, but, above all, because we have too many works, activities, and houses that impede us from concentrating on the essentials.
 - d. Assessing our structures is necessary, so that they may be always and only at the service of our life and mission.
 - e. Openness to others is indispensable in order to feel responsible for the Entities and the poorest of the Order.

4. Goals of Reorganizing and Restructuring

In order to respond to the call of God today through the signs of the times and places, the Entities must pave the way for processes of reorganizing and restructuring with the following goals in mind:

- a.** to promote the quality of Gospel life and witness of both the friars and fraternities.
- b.** to give dynamism to Gospel and Missionary life, making way for new youthful energies for new forms of “new evangelization” and to relaunch *missio ad gentes*.
- c.** to welcome the challenges and urgencies that comes to us from the world today and which the Order wishes to focus on more (cf. *BGG* 14) in light of “the signs of the times and places” (cf. *BGG* 29).

5. Criteria for Reorganizing and Restructuring

Restructuring must be in view of revitalizing, that is, “re-founding” our lives on the Gospel. This entails:

- a. To respect the “vital priorities”. In other words, the person of each Friar Minor must take precedence before any activity and place” and “being must be privileged over doing as *life* should be over *activity*” (SAG 36).
- b. “To do an in-depth study on the priorities of *various types of activities and presences*” (SAG 36), so as to understand which “presences are to be maintained, opened, or closed” (cf. J. R. Carballo, *Chapter Report 2009*, p. 133).
- c. To elaborate a project with progressive stages.
- d. To appreciate local realities as bearers of life, and not to take into account only the distribution of presences in a territory.
- e. To favor interprovinciality in various areas: initial and ongoing formation, youth ministry and vocation, formation of Guardians, spiritual exercises, missions to the people, new fraternities of welcoming and sharing.
- f. To keep these processes very present in the prayer of the Fraternities and of the Friars.

6. Means

- a. To endorse the *Moratorium* in the Entities and Conferences.
- b. To cultivate in the Friars a spirit of solidarity, the sense of belonging to the Order, a mentality of openness and interprovincial collaboration.
- c. To foster among the Friars positive and constructive attitudes toward realignment and restructuring, helping them view the present as a *kairos* thus, sourring then onward to discernment while centering their lives on the values of the Gospel and franciscan charism.
- d. To renew (refund) persons and fraternity (cf. SAG 36).
- e. To safeguard the priorities of the Order in ongoing formation as well as in the project of life and mission.
- f. Promote Youth Ministry and Vocations.
- g. Review Initial Formation.
- h. To form Guardians.
- i. To redesign and reduce activities and works in order to reinforce the quality of life and “revitalize vocational response and the Gospel project of life and mission” (SAG 36).
- l. Empowering Interprovinciality:
 - concentrating our energies on common interprovincial activities, such as vocation and youth ministry, initial formation, evangelization, missions, justice and peace, etc.
 - To merge and amalgamate various Provinces (cf. SAG 31.37).
- m. To keep always in mind what must guide every process, namely, realism, clarity, boldness, and a vision of the future.

7. Typology of Restructuring: Guidelines

1. *Restructuring for Growth*

The Entities that are growing need to be “restructured” and reorganized in order to allow their life to develop further. Hence,

- a Dependent Custody can become an Autonomous Custody and a Foundation can become a Dependent Custody.
- a Province can give rise to another Province or to a Foundation or an Autonomous Custody.

The erection of a new Province is regulated by the General Statutes, art. 120 and 124.

The erection of a new autonomous Custody is regulated by the General Statutes art. 121, 124, 125, 128.

- Before they can be erected it is necessary that there is a possibility of living the life and mission of the Order that include the necessary requisites for formation, government, collaboration and financial support (cf. SSGG 120 §1).
- Besides the need of having the minimum number of Friars and Guardianates (for a Province, 40 solemnly professed Friars and 6 Guardianates: cf. SSGG 120 §2; for an autonomous Custody, 25 solemnly professed Friars and 4 Guardianates: cf. SSGG 121 §2) and “the well-founded hope for the future growth of the Order” (SSGG 121 §1).

The erection of a Foundation is regulated by the General Statutes, art. 127 and 128. Foundations dependent on the Minister General may admit Friars to the novitiate and to profession, who are to be enrolled in the same Foundation.

2. *Entities going through an internal restructuring*

All the Provinces are facing a variety of difficulties due to a diminishment of personnel. The most common policy is to deal with *emergencies*, often by sacrificing persons and/or the quality of the life of the fraternity. However, it is more important not to let oneself be managed by the situation, but to know how to respond to missionary *urgencies*; to have an *open vision* of the future of the Province; to know how to *plan* activities and works; and find suitable *strategies*.

These structures (i.e. works and properties) can be considered under the following 4 categories:

1. Structures that must continue because they cannot be relinquished.
2. Structures that need to be adapted, transformed, or have a different purpose.
3. New structures that must be invented as new answers to new demands.
4. Structures that must be relinquished.

The act of *internal reorganizing* done with discernment, far-sightedness and courage, entails the *restructuring* of a Province with the goal of restoring significance to the presences of the Fraternities and a new “missionary” commitment to its activities.

All the Provinces need an *internal reorganization*, even if they are *flourishing Provinces*. All need to go through this process in order to ensure the proper conditions for a good quality of life and especially to free its energies for new evangelization.

3. *Entities that are open to Interprovinciality*

This is about making a choice or following a strategy as a sign of:

- interprovincial *collaboration*;
- *solidarity* with other Provinces and the Universal Fraternity;
- service for a *common future*;
- witness to be *signum fraternitatis*.

The most important areas are:

- Initial Formation (vocation ministry, common houses of formation and Theological Institutes, Cultural Institutes, etc.).
- Ongoing Formation (formation of Guardians; formation for mission; accompanying those under 10 years of solemn profession; in-depth seminars, etc.
- Common projects of *solidarity* and *mission* “*inter gentes*.”
- Commitment to some *missions ad gentes*.

Also interprovinciality must aim at *something new*. The risk or temptation is considering interprovincial collaboration as an aid to continue existing activities and works.

Interprovincial collaboration that strengthens and inspires the sense of belonging to the Order entails:

- *Caring for poor or weak* Entities, as it is the case with a Province that can no longer hold its own.
- *Being responsible* and supporting a *Fraternity of the Order* that needs personnel or other forms of assistance in order to continue living in a place that cannot be relinquished, especially “missionary” fraternities.

4. *Entities on their way to amalgamation*

- a. The reasons for and goals of the process of unification among various Entities need to be clarified and understood.
- b. Such a process is not to be seen as a result of a progressive death or as a negative process, but as a new possibility for greater collaboration and rebirth of Franciscan life and mission. *The goal of pruning is to rejuvenate Franciscanism in a region and keep it fruitful.*
- c. A similar process must emerge from the urgent need to respond better to the signs of the times; to inculturate the charism here and now; and to live a more authentic and meaningful life. It must emerge, moreover, from the will to prepare for a meaningful future.
- d. The success of the process of unification requires that:
 - it proceed without haste, but also without pause, so that significant choices may be made, responding to the demands of the situation and according to our charism;
 - all the Friars be involved, especially the Guardians of the Fraternities, so that they may be aware of the process and make shared choices;
 - a sociological inquiry be done on the number, age, energies, and overall sense of the friars and that there be an image of the future of our Order in the Entities involved in the process;
 - the Franciscan presences that are to be kept, suppressed, or created should be singled out. This ought to be done, moreover, after having drawn up a procedure of restructuring and internal renewal and before the actual unification:
 - there should be meetings among the Friars concerning ongoing formation, spiritual exercises, Chapter

- of Mats, etc., so as they may be better acquainted with one another;
- there be a joint effort in some important sectors, such as initial and ongoing formation, missions to the people, pastoral vocation, JPIC, etc;
 - the decision for union should take place at the Provincial Chapters, after having consulted formally all the Friars of Entities concerned. Furthermore, the result of such a consultation must be made known to the Minister General and his General Definitory, so that they can make a final decision;
 - it (the process) should be facilitated by a guide/group made up of Provincial Ministers and their Definitories.
- e. The Conference of Provincial Ministers is invited to participate in this reflection and to come up with proposals while keeping in mind the presence of Franciscanism in a given region.
- f. When the process is well advanced, the Minister General can appoint, if considered opportune, a Delegate General to accompany the final phase that would lead to the creation of a new Entity.

Abbreviations

LSR = *The Lord Speaks with us on the Road*

BGG = *Bearers of the Gift of the Gospel*

SAG = *Starting Afresh from the Gospel*

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