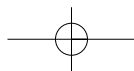




MAY THE LORD GIVE YOU PEACE

*Document
of the General Chapter
Order of Friars Minor
Assisi, Pentecost 2003*

General Curia OFM
Rome 2003



Presentation by the Minister general

Dear Brothers,
May the Lord give you peace!

It is only a few weeks since we ended our “Pentecost Chapter” of 2003. It was an important event, not only because of the experience of fraternity that we lived, but also because of the pressing call to personal and fraternal conversion that this Chapter, the first of the third millennium, has made to us.

The General Chapter, in addition to revising the *General Constitutions and Statutes*, approved the document “*May the Lord give you peace*” (= *Lgp*), which I now present to you, following a final revision made by the General Definitory, in conformity with the Chapter mandate. The said document takes up the call to conversion in an explicit way: “We see the need –we read in n. 2 of the document- not to domesticate the prophetic words of the Gospel in order to adapt them to a comfortable style of life. On the contrary, we wish to accept the Spirit and to feel the internal evangelical urgency to be “born again” (*Jn 3, 3*) on both the personal and institutional levels”. “We wish –we read in n. 1- to embody in our lives and works the Word that dwells in our hearts”.

“Be born again”, “to undertake the path of gospel discernment” in order “to return to the essentials” and “to carry out the part that corresponds to us in our own historical period” are some of the insistent calls of the Chapter, which must find a specific response in our lives and, in this way, respond, as Friars Minor, with the joy of faith, dialogue, itinerancy, evan-



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gelisation and sanctity of fraternity (cf. *Lgp* II part), to the challenges that the market economy, violence, fundamentalism and the culture of image present to us (cf. *Lgp* I part).

In accordance with what was proposed during the Chapter, the document “*May the Lord give you peace*” is accompanied by a proposal for personal and fraternity reflection on the basis of readings taken from the documents of the Church and Order and by a series of questions that might help for a greater assimilation of the document.

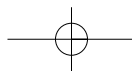
I suggest what follows as a methodology to be employed: Begin with a personal reading of the proposed texts, followed by a reflection, also personal, on the text of the document, keeping the formulated questions in mind. As a second moment, on a pre-arranged day, the study in common of the document should be carried out and the questions that refer to fraternity life should be answered in fraternity. It would also be good for each Friar to write out his personal answers to the questions and a synthesis of them should be made at the end of the fraternity meeting. Both moments of the study of the document must be carried out in a climate of meditation and prayer.

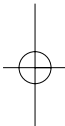
May the Holy Spirit enable us to discern the signs of the times and give us the necessary strength to be bearers of Peace and Good through our attitudes and our words in whatever place and situation we may find ourselves.

Rome, 25th July 2003, the Feast of St. James the Apostle.

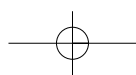
Br. José Rodríguez Carballo, O.F.M.
Minister General

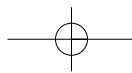
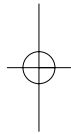
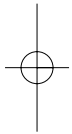
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THE FINAL DOCUMENT





Introduction

At the beginning of the religion, when blessed Francis would go with a brother who was one of the first twelve brothers, that brother would greet men and women along the way as well as those in their fields, saying: “May the Lord give you peace”. (LegP 101f; MP 26).

1. We Friars Minor from one hundred and ten different countries gathered at the Porziuncola at the beginning of the third millennium, when the Franciscan Family is celebrating the 750th Anniversary of the death of Saint Clare, wish to reaffirm and re-discover the profound implications of our call to proclaim the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We recall in particular that greeting revealed to Francis himself in the context of a fractured and suffering humanity: “May the Lord give you peace” (cf. *Test* 23). As in the times of Paul, humanity also suffers today, with unusual force, “the pains of childbirth” while awaiting the hour of being liberated from the slavery of corruption in order to participate in the glorious freedom of the children of God (cf. *Rm* 8, 18-25). We wish to embody in our lives and works the Word that dwells in our hearts and is “hidden in the field of the world and of the hearts of men” (*3LtCl* 7). We wish to echo, with “all our heart, with all our soul and with all our mind” (cf. *Rnb* 23,8; *Mt* 22, 37) God’s “yes” to all creation, His gaze on all creatures and His affirmation that they are all “good” (cf. *Gen* 1, 31), His coming to be with all

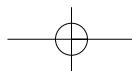
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men and women in the birth, life, labour, death and resurrection of the Lord (cf. *TestCl* 13) and His final “yes” to all creatures living in peace and justice (cf. *1 Cor* 15, 28). We wish to embody this message of hope in our personal and fraternal lives, in the way we lead all peoples, including our enemies, towards peace and good.

2. We especially see the need not to domesticate the prophetic words of the Gospel in order to adapt them to a comfortable style of life. On the contrary, we wish to accept the Spirit and to feel the internal evangelical urgency to be “born again” (*Jn* 3, 3) on both the personal and institutional levels. Together with all men and women of good will (cf. *Lk* 2, 14; *GGSS* 22), we wish to give birth to a new epoch, to awaken a new vision of life and of relationships based on justice and love, the paths of peace. We recognise in this context the urgency of returning to the essentials of our experience of faith and of our Franciscan spirituality in order to nourish, from within, our fragmented and unequal world that is hungry for meaning with the liberating offer of the Gospel just as Francis and Clare of Assisi did in their time.

3. We cannot be satisfied with praising the works of our predecessors, but must inspire ourselves by them in order to carry out the part that corresponds to us in our own historical period (Cf. *Adm* 6; *2Cel* 214). The goals of our General Chapter 2003 are to evaluate this intention and to propose new paths of creative fidelity. We wish to follow the invitation of Pope John Paul II given to us in his Message to the Chapter in order to do this: “The fascination of young people for Francis and Clare is great and should be used to propose to the generations of the third millennium ‘a more attentive reflection on life’s essential values’. These reach their fulfilment in the response which each person is invited to give to God’s call, particularly when the call implies a total giving of self and of one’s energies to the cause of the Kingdom” (*NMI* 46)” (Message to Gen. Chap. n. 5).

4. The Chapter studied the report of the Minister General “*Vocavit nos Deus ut eamus per mundum*” and evaluated the

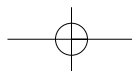


progress of the Order during the previous six years. We expressed our desire to continue in the direction undertaken by our Fraternity as it is expressed in the *Five Priorities of the Order*, 1) The spirit of prayer and devotion; 2) Communion of life in fraternity; 3) Life in minority, poverty and solidarity; 4) Evangelisation and mission; 5) Formation, because we think that they continue to be “a key in reading how to live our identity and to understand the expectations of the world”. We encourage all the brothers to meditate and to study carefully the contents of the said *Report*, which is an encouraging guide for renewal and change. In the same way, we consider it useful to recommend the publications of the *Service for Dialogue* and the principles and vision of the religious life presented in the Plenary Council of the Order (Guadalajara, 2001), which gather together paths of genuine searching.

5. The present *Final Document* is located in the same trajectory and takes up its challenges. Our intention is to highlight some significant topics that have focused the dialogue of the Friars gathered from all parts of the world in the homeland of Francis during the jubilee of our Sister Clare and under the protection of Our Lady of the Angels. Giving greater relevance to the supreme commandment of love as the path of peace and salvation (Cf. *Mk* 12, 29-32), we offer it to each and every Friar of our Entities, to all the Brothers and Sisters of the Franciscan Family and to those that feel themselves attracted by the profound current importance of our charism.



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A greeting together with new signs of heaven and earth

“A greeting with new signs of heaven and earth which are great and extraordinary in the sight of God yet regarded as of little importance by many religious and others” (1LtCus 1).

6. One of the essential elements of the Christian journey is the ongoing capacity to examine the signs of the times and to interpret them in the light of the Gospel (cf. *GS* 4; *GGCC* 102 §2; *SRS* 7; *VC* 81). They are events of life that mark a determined epoch of history and through which the Christian feels questioned by God and is called on to give a gospel response. The signs of the times are, in this way, flashes of light present in the dark night of our lives and of our peoples, lighthouses that generate hope. Whoever does not read the signs of the times runs the risk of becoming installed, of repeating himself, of nullifying the deepest dreams, of losing, little by little, the contagious joy of faith. To know how to interpret them is, for the Christian, a gospel requirement: “You know how to interpret the face of the earth and the sky. How is it you do not know how to interpret these times?” (*Lk* 12, 56). The Lord invites us to listen to His voice in the events of history, to detect His ever active presence, in order to announce what we have seen and heard through word and deed (cf. *1 Jn* 1,1; cf. *GGCC* 89.93 §2). The signs require, then, recognition, reading,

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interpretation and judgement on the personal level and in the bosom of the fraternity (cf. OA 3; RFF 32).

7. From this perspective, we feel called to undertake, at all times and in all places, the path of gospel discernment: “Test everything and hold on to what is good” (1Ts 5, 21). This discernment must be carried out in a double perspective. On the one hand, we must become aware of the personal and social schemes that oppose life in order to denounce them and contribute to their overthrow. On the other hand, we must open our eyes of faith and hope in order to detect, in the midst of the crises, the emerging dreams of humanity, to open up channels for them in our own life and, in this way, anticipate the Kingdom proclaimed and lived by Jesus Christ. We should know how “to distinguish what is of the Spirit from that which is contrary to Him” (VC 73c). Francis of Assisi seemed to all to be, his official biographer tells us, “a man of the other world” (1Cel 36), a living foretaste of a life possible for all. If we are capable of reading the signs of our times in the light of the Gospel, we ourselves will be capable of being readable signs of life for a world that is thirsty for “new heavens and new earth” (Is 65, 17; Ap 21, 1).

8. John Paul II invited religious men and women of our times to “courageously propose anew the enterprising initiative, creativity and holiness of their founders and foundresses in response to the signs of the times emerging in today’s world” (VC 37a). He asked us not to limit ourselves to reading the signs, but to “contribute to elaborating and putting into effect *new initiatives of evangelisation* for present-day situations” (VC 73d).

9. We Friars Minor especially feel ourselves questioned by some negative historical realities of the context in which we live and which, given their ever wider diffusion, can be considered as characteristic of our epoch. Their common denominator is the rejection of what is different, the rejection of the other and the systematic negation of otherness. But, at the same time, an attentive look also discovers signs of life and

hope: the unceasing and creative search for insertion, for proximity, for communion, for embracing, for brotherhood, the path of authentic peace.

Between a market economy and an economy of solidarity

10. A patent reality of our globalised world is the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of a few. The common good is only the good of a certain few. The market economy, which is regulated on the margins of ethics, functions from an excluding logic that always benefits the same people, the powerful. The immense majority of the inhabitants of the planet lives on the margin of a minimum of wellbeing, at the same time it is manipulated in its desires and emotions by the mass media of communications in order to induce it to an irrational consumerism. The gap between rich and poor is ever more scandalously greater. The indebtedness of many nations, as a measure of survival, has only made the problem more acute: they are impoverished and, in addition, indebted. The most conservative of statistics point out that our global economic system keeps two thirds of humanity in poverty and misery. The market is equally linked to a culture of the immediate and of being without roots.

11. Faced by a system that pretends to be regulated without ethical criteria, profound reflections are springing up in search of a world ethic that is based on respect for the inviolable dignity of the human person and should be capable of guaranteeing a minimum of justice for all (cf. GGSS 63-72). We see the search for more human alternatives on all side, different in their value, but sharing their opposition to the alleged fatality of our dehumanising systems. Faced by an economy *of* the market, an economy *with* a market is proposed. In response to a cultural globalisation, there is a growing urgency for a reassessment of the rich cultural diversity of our peoples. Faced by the arrival of the global market and its alliances with technology, possibilities are

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sought for the creation of communication networks that would benefit the inter-dependence of goods and resources with a view to a dignified life for all, especially for the poorest. A global consciousness that such longed for peace will not be achieved without justice on these levels is being consolidated. In this context, many people have given their lives to making the dreams of the poor their own, as a supreme sign of love and consistency with the ideal of life (cf. LG 42).

Between the power of violence and the practice of peace

12. The XX century has been, without doubt, one of the most violent centuries in the history of humanity. The signs are evident and they continue today with unusual power: a merciless destruction of nature, underhand forms of exclusion, tribalism, ethnic wars, confrontations between religious groups, genocide, the oppression of women, the sexual abuse of children, trails of blood hidden behind the arms race and so many other forms of violence that have wounded peace for ever.

13. However, it is no less certain that contemporary man is becoming more conscious of the dynamics of violence and of the mechanisms with which to face it both personally and institutionally. The massive protests against injustices that impede communion, the multiple networks that work creatively to form us in a culture of non-violence and of respect for creation, the small everyday actions in favour of mutual understanding and the resolution of conflicts, the men and women that sow the seed of truth in the social fabric of the lie... are only some of the significant signs of a new time that wishes to dawn among us.

From fundamentalism to dialogue

14. The increase of fundamentalism is another of the features of our time. In general terms, it endeavours to be a neat

and secure guarantee of an identity, but at the cost of the systematic negation of the other, of what is different. It tries different means of justification to break the links of a common humanity. It considers belonging to a determined ideology more important than belonging to the human race with its common needs and desires. The defenders of this ideology base themselves on the conviction of being superior: they possess the truth and consider in advance that the other is mistaken; therefore, there is no need for dialogue. Fundamentalism is a threat to all groups and to all sectors: scientific, religious, political, economic, artistic.... Hand in hand with it go intolerance, authoritarianism, coercion, dogmatism, fanaticism, sectarianism, sexism, racism, xenophobia and all forms of negation or of domination of the other. It is, in the final analysis, the antithesis of the worldwide brotherhood, a sure way to feed hatred and vengeance.

15. In this context, we see, as a real sign of the times, the movements that strive to encourage dialogue between cultures, generations, sexes, religions and the currents of thought in order to create a favourable atmosphere for mutual knowledge and recognition and the search for common paths to establish a brotherly world in rich and healthy differences. In this context, many religions have undertaken a return to their most original and pure foundations and have opened wide their doors to peace and solidarity.

From image to symbol

16. Undoubtedly, ours is a generation more tied to the image than to the word. Successive images are constantly passing before our eyes trying to attract our attention and to induce us to decide without reflecting. The culture of the image strengthens the phenomenon of immediacy. Disconnected from the past, we live subjected to the demands of the present in a subjective process of making values relative. Our lives are not only permanently affected by what the mass

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media of social communications dictate and promote, but even the most intimate dimensions of our existence are now material for public display and consumption. The media are intimately connected to the market forces; they live, among other things, by offering incessant reports about the conflicts generated by violence; they communicate the image of humanity trapped in a continuous circle of frustration.

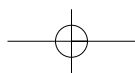
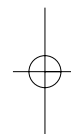
17. On the other hand, the consciousness is growing that the culture of the image leads to the sterilisation of imagination, to the reduction of the individual to a consumer of images. Therefore, alternative proposals are multiplying for educative spaces that stimulate the imaginative and creative capacity of the human being, safeguarding our condition of creators of symbols. The alternative of a symbolic trend (poetry, rite, icons, dance, music and gestures) that helps to connect profoundly with personal truth and with the transcendent is palpating in our society.

18. The demand for an ethic of the media is growing in civil society, so that they may not be only trackers of human miseries, but might offer real images of justice, peace and the integrity of creation and contribute to creating hope of global scope and significance.

19. Historical reality confirms for us once more that the wheat and the darnel normally grow together (cf. *Mt* 13, 24-30), which constitutes a strong call for gospel discernment in order to decide which direction our path of personal and institutional transformation must follow. We understand the present *crisis of faith* unleashed by these realities as a time of grace –of *kairos*– which challenges us to re-create our believing experience in tune with the challenges of an epoch in crisis. It is an opportunity to try out a belief that causes the totality of the person to emerge and commits it to peace and goodness. In the same way, we consider this *ethical crisis* to be an

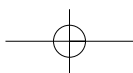
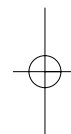


instance of grace in order to develop a new ethic of life, an ethic of coherence that overcomes fragmentation through the harmonisation and integration of thoughts and works, prayer and action, word and commitment, faith and life, the aspirations of the heart for faith and hope and their incarnation in visible forms (actions, rites, structures).





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The response of the Friar Minor

20. During the Chapter we communicated in different languages, we interpreted the texts from premises that were at times divergent and we recognised, in our own lives, many of the elements that we criticise in our society. The violence and the demands of daily life of all regions of the world cause us pain. We share in our own flesh the anxieties and the fears of our contemporaries. The social fractures, of which we have spoken, also exist among us and in the personal lives of the Friars with whom we live. We struggle to integrate our faith and our life. There are tensions among us at the moment of deciding, in our world of continuous change, on how to harmonise the reality of a worldwide Fraternity and the inherited structures of the Order. We recognise the continuous need of creating environments of greater trust and of stimulating mutual unity. Our very bodies bear the signs of the Tau. The life of the Friar Minor is a life in ongoing conversion.

21. At this moment of history and in a world full of signs and contradictions, who is the Friar Minor? What is his specific way of giving witness to the Gospel? What must his specific contribution be? During the course of the Chapter we tried to respond to these questions, which touch on the deepest human and spiritual roots of our vocation. Starting from the *Report* of the Minister General, we summarised, in five points, our reflection on the response of faith that our times call for. The Friar Minor is a person of faith, of dialogue, an itinerant, a person that joyfully transmits a message and lives the sign of ‘the

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sanctity of fraternity'. These five elements, mutually intertwined, constitute a symbolic alternative of the mission that we wish to offer to the life of the Church and to the world. Let us begin, after the manner of Francis, with our life of faith.

The Joy of Faith

“Consider, O human being, in what great excellence the Lord God has placed you for He created and formed you to the image of His beloved Son according to the body and to His likeness according to the Spirit”. (Adm 5, 1)

22. Created in the image and likeness of God, the Friar Minor wonders about himself and about his origins: Who are You, Lord? And, who am I? (Cf. *The Deeds of St. Francis and his Companions, ABF IX, 41*). Through reflection, formation, experience and life in the Church, the Friar Minor discovers that his form of life begins with the initiative of God, who calls us into existence, to salvation, to the very life of the Trinity. This initiative is a grace of the generosity of God. The “sweetness” of God has won us over. We have tasted His food in our everyday lives and act it out by being “co-lovers” with Him (Cf. Duns Scotus, *Ordin.* III dist. 28). Captured by this gift of love, the law of reciprocity stimulates us to invite others to share this profound joy. “O love that loves, that does not attain someone that loves you” (Cf. Iacopone da Todi, *Laudes* 79, 5; *2Cel* 196).

23. During the Chapter, two biblical images expressed this generosity of the Trinitarian life of God:

- a.** The image of the Baptism of the Lord, in which He hears, coming “from on high”, the pleasure of the Father: “This is My beloved Son, in Him I am well pleased” (*Mt* 3, 17). The beginning of the mission of the Lord is the joy that “the Father has in the Son, and the joy which the Son has in the Father, which is the Holy Spirit” (Timothy Radcliffe, *Joy and Peace*). At the heart of the life of God there is uncontainable joy.

- b.** The image of the Supper, during which Christ, in the midst of the disciples' crisis and moved by the Spirit, pronounces a word of love accompanied by an equally loving act. He washes the feet of His disciples (*Jn* 13, 1-20) and gives them a share in His own life, "This is my body given up for you; do this in memory of me" (*Lk* 22, 19).

In both images we find the joy of faith that is transformed into gift: the humble servant is capable of suffering and bearing the cross -so that others may have life- as a supreme manifestation of His love. "Let all of us brothers consider the Good Shepherd, who bore the suffering of the cross to save His sheep" (*Adm* 6, 1; cf. *Jn* 10, 11).

24. We place these biblical images to the fore because, in these times of personal fears, of social fractures and the loss of the meaning in our existence, this revelation "from on high" shines forth like an explosion of light in the midst of the darkness of the world. Besides, both images are central to our tradition of fraternity, authority and mission (Cf. *Adm* 4; *2LtF* 6-13), three key topics during this Chapter. They are the lens through which we interpret the "signs of the times" and the manner in which we re-create the significance of our existence in the bosom of a culture of unimportant and passing images. In these powerful biblical images we see that faith is not a formula or a mere plan of asceticism. Our faith is not governed by the images of the media, so often loaded with violence and opportunism. It has another source: it is reflected in the history of Jesus, who invites us to enter into His Baptism in order to receive the joy of the Father and the renewing power of the Spirit. In the following of Jesus we are invited not only to give, but to give ourselves to others (*1Pet* 2, 21; *Rnb* 1,1). In itinerancy and dialogue we share in the life of our neighbours and we offer our greatest effort in order to create, with them, an alternative culture of signs that are capable of making the joy and passion for life contagious. "Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, that He who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally" (*LtO* 29).

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25. Gathered in the Porziuncola, in the prayerful atmosphere of San Damiano and along the streets of the city of Assisi, we had the opportunity to see with our own eyes and to touch with our hearts the symbolic places of our life as followers of Francis and Clare. We have recognised the language of the signs of the God that calls us to be bearers of joy, of communion and of sharing in solidarity. Faith is not only knowledge, but is an always-open dialogue between a God that speaks to man in history and a man who responds to God from history: a continuous alliance (*Hb* 1, 1). In the depths of his self, the Friar Minor experiences faith as a participation in the wisdom and joy of the Father that overflow in all creation. The Friar Minor sees the image of the Son imprinted in his neighbour and discovers the indwelling of the Spirit in meeting and communion with the different. Through faith, the Friar Minor sees that “God lies hidden in every creature” (Bonaventure, *Itin.* Chap. I-II).

26. In this Chapter we wish to affirm once more our decision to guide our formation, our life in the “sanctity of fraternity” and our manner of evangelising on the basis of these central images, in the light of the nuclear truth of Trinitarian life. Incorporating these images of faith, we will make the life of God credible; our life with others a gift of peace; and our own life a song of joy, including when our tears wash the wounds of those hurt by injustice. “In all truth I tell you, you will be weeping and wailing while the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrows will turn to joy” (*Jn* 16, 20).

27. We wish, finally, to point out the specific dimensions of our life of faith that need to be emphasised at this time:

- a.** The life of faith is a common richness that we share through our national cultures, languages and identities. We are Friars Minor, an identity that transcends our lay or clerical vocation. In and from this life in God, we are one (Cfr. *Gal* 3, 28).
- b.** To be a credible sign, our life of faith must include the whole person: mind, heart, feet, relationships, the man-

ner in which we look at, meet, embrace and love our neighbour (*Rnb* 23, 8-11).

- c. This life of faith opens us up to the immensity of the possibilities that God offers to the human race and entails the ethical requirement of the incarnation as a “guarantee of what is hoped for”; and as “proof of the existence of realities that are unseen” (*Heb* 11, 1).
- d. Like Francis, we must pray in order to acquire the gift of faith and to open ourselves to dialogue with the God of history: “enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me right faith, certain hope and perfect charity” (*PrCr* 1-2)

Dialogue, the Path to Peace

“How differently with your people! You gave them the food of angels, from heaven untiringly providing them bread already prepared, containing every delight, to satisfy every taste. And the substance you gave showed your sweetness towards your children, for, conforming to the taste of whoever ate it, it transformed itself into what each eater wished” (*Wis* 16, 20-21).

“And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body” (*Test* 1-3).

28. The reality of God present in dialogue has its roots in Scripture and in the experience of Francis and Clare. At the present time of fractures and suffering, this essential process of the incarnation of God and of our conversion is born of a faith capable of *seeing* the “sweetness of God” in others -including the leper-, of *affirming* this goodness with joy and, in a profound communion born of compassion, of *working* for justice and peace. Dialogue commits all the dimensions of our life to creation, to society, to the fraternity and to the mission. When it succeeds in incarnating itself in the form of a presence, of a word, of a community and of work, it is changed into an elo-

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quent sign of that peace that silences the cries of violence and hatred (cfr. Ramón Lull, *Gentil IV*, Epilogue).

29. Here in Assisi, the place where the representatives of the great religions gathered together, we focused our dialogue on three dimensions that could constitute a solid starting point for reflection.

30. (1st) The life of conversion of Francis, as we see in the first lines of his *Testament*, does not have its origin in flight from the world, or in a word pronounced in secret, or in an internal religious experience that must be shared from a position of power and superiority, or in retreat before the challenges of his times, but in an exchange, in an encounter, in an open and receptive dialogue with his neighbour, including the one that is most disfigured and causes the greatest repulsion and “bitterness” (*Test* 1-3). This trajectory of constant openness to the other reaches its culminating point in the famous meeting with the Sultan (*1Cel* 57).

From the beginning to the end of the life of Francis, the Spirit guided him –and wishes to guide us also- along a path that, on the one hand, wipes out isolation, individualism and dependency on socially acceptable but alienating structures, and, on the other hand, leads to real communion with others. This is the profound response that we must offer to the crises of faith and ethics of our times. We are challenged to see Christ, “the sweetness from on high”, in the suffering condition of every human being on the planet and to turn our face towards Him and offer Him, like Francis, a blessing of peace (*L3C* 26). To broaden the possibilities of this dialogue, our disposition to respond to others is needed, in the same way that the initiative of God establishes a dynamic of free reciprocity (*SRS* 38-40, 44-45). Courage is needed. On opening ourselves to the mystery of the other we choose to enter onto holy ground (cf. *Ex* 3,5). For that, reverence, humility, respect, vulnerability and peace are needed: “Let them be meek, peaceful, modest, gentle and humble, speaking courteously to everyone, as is becoming” (*Rb* 3,11).

31. (2nd) The development of a mentality of dialogue and the practice of its demands necessarily place us on a path of purification (Cfr. *LtO* 50ff). Dialogue, an itinerary that can distance people from the very frequented paths of vengeance, prejudice, exploitation and violence, requires a pause in our habitual activities, in the routine and hyperactive forms of relationship that characterise our society. Dialogue requires formation and a continuous practice of the discipline of listening and receptivity. Through dialogue, the person abandons individualism and discovers his true individuality, his this-ness (*haecceitas*) before God (Duns Scotus, *Ord.* II.d.3, p.1, q.5). “What a person is before God, that he is and no more” (*Adm* 19, 2). Our fraternities and our places of work have the ethical challenge of being seductive signs of another way of living together and of relationship: that which leads to the fullness of life by the path of dialogue.

32. (3rd). This path of conversion to dialogue, based on a faith that is capable of seeing, entails the rigorous practice of *obedience* to the Word of God as the Word that takes flesh in the Eucharist (cf. *LtO* 26-27); in the body -not always worthy- of the Church (cf. *Test* 4-13); in the fragile body of our fraternity (cf. *Rb* 10); in our brothers and sisters; in our neighbour (cf. *2LtF* 1). In this way, *authority*, which is a gift and not a privilege, is changed into *service* in the following of Christ (*Adm* 4, 2). This dialogue of conversion commits us to a life of *poverty* that opens us up to the richness of personal and affective exchange and to the sharing of goods. It makes us receptive to the gift of our neighbour and, at the same time, requires us to make available to others the gifts that each one has received: “The standard you use will be the standard used for you” (*Lk* 6, 38). Through the practice of dialogue, our *chastity* -the purification and the offering of our affections- will be open to dialogue with God, with men and women, with cultures, religions and creation. Our whole being will be focused on the greeting of peace. The re-discovery of the human significance of the vows in our Franciscan tradition will help us to be signs of the Kingdom today and men of the future (cf. *VC* 27).

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Itinerancy, the sister of peace

“Whatever house you enter, let your first words be, ‘Peace to this house!’” (Lk 10, 5)

“Let them always be guests there as pilgrims and strangers” (Test 24).

33. Today, more than ever, many men, women and children migrate in search of better conditions of life: food, work, a roof and peace. In contact with our own wounded humanity, we feel ourselves sent (*Test 2-3*) by the Spirit to undertake the path of itinerancy, because these human beings, our brothers, are the living image of Christ, whom we wish to follow. “The love of God urges us” (*2Cor 5*; Cf. *Phil 3, 12-16*). The only baggage this journey in solidarity with the impoverished requires of us is expropriation: “Take nothing for the journey: neither staff, nor haversack, nor bread, nor money; and do not have a spare tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there; and when you leave let your departure be from there” (*Lk 9, 3-4*). Itinerancy is the expression of an absolute availability to go out to announce the Kingdom to the poor and to allow ourselves to be evangelised by them (cf. *GGCC 93 §1; 97*). We set out with others in order to create together a community in which goods are shared. We see Christ in the poor and we ask that all may enjoy the “grace of work” (*Rb 5, 1*). We mobilise ourselves to protest peacefully when the structures do not favour the right to a life of dignity. Through itinerancy we penetrate into neurological places, where our society is experiencing profound imbalances and tensions: the frontiers between the different religions (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism), the division between rich and poor, the powerful and the weak, slaves and freemen, men and women, in order to give witness to peace and justice. We wish to be, together with so many men and women that dream of a new world, architects of a *culture of hope and peace* (John Paul II, *Angelus 18.11.2001*). As Friars Minor, we wish to open up spaces and construct new relationships exalting the common human dignity, born of God our Creator and brought to its



perfection in Christ our Redeemer (cfr. *Rnb* 23,11). We find ourselves on a *journey* marked by a “crucified humanity”.

34. We have discovered that itinerancy is not a value imposed from outside, but one that surges up from within our own experience. We are experiencing it more and more, on both the levels of our fraternities and of the institution, although we sometimes feel, in our confusion and darkness, the temptation to resist the change. We wish to insist that, from a perspective of faith, these changes enable us to share the fate of our brothers, whom this world has made poor, and to understand the real dimensions of their hope.

35. The certainty is that we are moving. During the last Plenary Council and during this Chapter we examined how the character of our Provinces and of our Order is changing: young entities are arising strongly while old entities see their possibilities fade. Areas of the world that for decades remained politically silent now speak with a powerful voice. We dedicated much of our time to examining the relationship between what we are today and the way we lived in the past. Our structures have been submitted to a process of change with a view to redefining Novitiates, Provinces, Custodies, Conferences and what the qualities needed for leadership are. The diversity of languages used in our liturgies and dialogues are, equally, a small indication of the understanding of our identity as a worldwide Fraternity in the state of mission. The economic precariousness, the progressive reduction in the number of Friars - including those from violent death- and other multiple factors weigh on our local fraternities and invite them to inter-dependence, to fortitude and to hope against all hope. On the other hand, we see numerous projects arise –and they are accepted– that seek to harmonise, in a renewed way, the aspects of our life from an itinerant perspective. Some of these can be seen in: *“Testimonies: from the signs of the times to the time of signs”* (General Curia, Rome, 2002). Our internal itinerancy is meeting with the itinerant experience of our peoples, a sign of a common humanity that journeys towards liberation and peace. This itinerant experience is changing the form of our presence

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in the world, our way of working and evangelising, the ethical demands necessary to be truly brothers. On this itinerant journey we feel a strong call to the sanctity of the fraternity: “Wherever the brothers may be and meet one another, let them show that they are members of the same family. Let each one confidently make known his need to the other, for if a mother loves and cares for her son according to the flesh, how much more diligently must someone love and care for his brother according to the Spirit!” (*Rb* 6, 7-8; cf. *GGCC* 38ff).

36. The itinerant realities of our form of life are a breeding ground for renewal. During this Chapter we launched a call to return to the essentials of our life. Itinerancy calls us to consider the following as “food for the journey”:

- a.** *Contemplation, prayer, meditation, the prayerful reading of Scripture and the Eucharist* (cf. Bonaventure, *Itin.*, Prologue 4; *Journey towards “the place of the heart”* Remarks to help rediscover the interior life and the place of silence in Franciscan Life, Rome 2003). Itinerancy in the life of the Friar Minor is, principally, an internal process in order to feel the truth of his own person and to listen to the absolute presence of God, who calls. Therefore, it is also a journey of the entire person towards God, who creates, saves and liberates. These practices help to nourish our ethics with the sap of cultivated love. We cannot advance along the path with an empty heart: the goal would then become a distraction and a wandering. To walk without the light of faith generates blindness and agitation.
- b.** *Sharing life with others in fraternity.* To walk without our brothers and sisters leads us to isolation and desperation. Eating alone produces dryness of spirit. Itinerancy is the path we travel together with others. The Fraternity is a grace for perseverance on the journey.
- c.** *A living past* that has been given to us by our institutions, our intellectual tradition, our Franciscan spiritual-

ity, our sound customs and our wise people. We must maintain this alliance with our tradition because to displace ourselves without roots generates a journey without wisdom or horizons (Cfr. Peter John Olivi, *Principium I in Sacram Scripturam*, a study).

- d.** *The disciplines and structures that support our itinerancy.* It is indispensable to have a pause in our work in order to dedicate ourselves for a time to silence, recollection, self-knowledge, manual work, reading, study and sharing the faith. Without this pause on our journey we would not be able to detect the hardened ground (*Rnb* 22, 10-26) of our heart (activism, individualism, appropriation, fixation, nostalgia, anger, distraction and ideological searching for security) or to assess adequately our sister companions on the path of itinerancy: freedom, joy, the sense of belonging, openness, self-esteem, clarity of thought and the appreciation of creation and of all that exists as a “gift”.

The Gift of Evangelisation

“For this reason (the Son of God) has sent you into the whole world: that you may bear witness to His voice in word and deed and bring everyone to know that there is no one who is all powerful except Him” (LtO 9)

37. Evangelisation is a grace and a vocation proper to the Church (cf. *EN* 14). It is born of the intimate solidarity of God with the human race and history: “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son” (*Jn* 3, 16). Christianity seeks to prolong creatively, in each historical moment, the mission of the Son, who, under the action of the Spirit, brought the joy of the Kingdom. Along these lines, on returning to the essential of our Franciscan spirituality, we remembered that “the world is our cloister” (cf. *SC* 63) and that our mission in it is to make known the voice and lordship of God. We wish, therefore, to

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have our heart where our only treasure is: the Kingdom (cf. *Mt* 6, 21; *RH* 3) and we recognise Jesus as the paradigm of all evangelisation and mission. We therefore make His programming discourse our own: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, for He has anointed me to bring the Good News to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord “ (*Lk* 4, 18-19). As Friars Minor, we do not wish to go in our own name, but to be sent by the Lord who speaks to us through the community. We do not desire to choose arbitrarily the places where we go to live; we wish to let ourselves be seduced by the forgotten cloisters, the inhuman cloisters where the beauty and the dignity of the person are continually sullied (cf. *Rnb* 9, 2). We wish to broaden the space of our tent (Cf. *Is* 54, 2) in order to make the joys and sadness of the poorest and of those that suffer most our own. The Church has entrusted to us the mission of “spreading the spirituality of communion” -first of all in our internal life-, “in the ecclesial community and even beyond its boundaries, by opening up or continuing a dialogue in charity, especially where today’s world is torn apart by ethnic hatred or senseless violence” (*VC* 51a). We do not wish to go as owners of the truth, but as humble servants (cf. *Rnb* 23, 7) of a message that we gratuitously received and which we must give gratuitously (cf. *Gal* 3, 18). Our heart wishes to announce to each and every creature that we meet their condition of sons and daughters of the same Father, our brothers and sisters, bearers of the same hope and to assume coherently the practical implications of this announcement. What we do for the least of our world, we will have done for the Lord Himself (Cf. *Mt* 25, 31-46).

38. Our main mission is “written in the very heart” of our form of life in fraternity and minority (cf. *VC* 25a). Our life of Friars Minor has to be an eschatological sign, a parable of the Kingdom. “The more committed to the apostolate, the more personal their dedication to the Lord Jesus is, the more fraternal their community life, and the more ardent their involvement in the Institute’s specific mission” (*VC* 72d) of Friars Minor, the more authentically we will be evangelisers. “The

more one lives in Christ, the better one can serve Him in others, going even to the furthest outposts and facing the greatest dangers” (VC 76).

39. From this profound harmony with the person and work of Jesus Christ, we invite others to celebrate the diversity of charisms that the Spirit gives rise to among the Friars and which is translated into new forms of presence and of evangelisation. There is nothing further from Franciscanism than a uniform and homogenous vision in the methods of evangelisation. On the contrary, it is up to our charism to detect, animate and celebrate the initiatives that seek to incarnate the Gospel in a creative and radical way. The intuitive words that Francis spoke to his brothers can be applied to the context of evangelisation: “Let the brothers who know how to work do so and exercise that trade they have learned, provided it is not contrary to the good of their souls and can be performed honestly” (*Rnb* 7, 3). We are equally invited to show with prophetic clarity the sign of plurality and of insertion through an evangelising activity carried out hand in hand with the laity, men and women, young and old.

40. Of particular significance are the international fraternities that, in the midst of a culture of systematic negation of the other, give witness to communion between peoples, races and cultures. We have the firm desire to insist that our life, wherever we may find ourselves, must clearly announce the possibility of an accepting, just, tolerant and pacified world.

41. We Friars Minor feel ourselves strongly committed to evaluating, in humility and truth, our whole life, structures and evangelising activities to see if they give witness in a significant way to the spirit of the Beatitudes and truly cooperate in the transformation of the world according to God. We know that, despite our infidelities, the Lord maintains His trust in us alive and says to us unceasingly: “Come” (*Jn* 1, 39) and “Go” (*Mk* 16, 15). Let us allow ourselves be conquered anew by Him (cf. *Phil* 3, 12).

Fraternal Sanctity

“O how holy and how loving, gratifying, humbling, peace-giving, sweet, worthy of love and, above all things, desirable: to have such a Brother and such a Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ!” (1LtF 13).

42. During the Chapter we have said time and time again: “Our way of life is our primary way of evangelising” (cf. *GGCC* 87, §§ 1-2). We are a Fraternity-in-mission that visibly shows the joy of faith in the sanctity of God, who is a loving communion of three persons. “Be yourselves holy in all your activity, after the model of the Holy One who calls us, since scripture says, ‘Be Holy, for I am holy’ (*Lev* 11, 44)” (*1Pe* 1, 15-16). We were created in the image of God. And in this image, unity, individuality and communion co-exist in harmony. The realisation of this image is our gospel project of Fraternity-in-Mission. “Just as the Father has loved me, remain in my love” (*Jn* 15, 9). “When the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you to the complete truth, since he will not be speaking of his own accord, but will say only what he has been told; and he will reveal to you the things to come... Everything the Father has is mine” (*Jn* 16, 13-15). In the context of our fraternal conversion to others through the journey of faith, dialogue and itinerancy, we must give witness to a God that is communion in diversity and diversity in communion.

43. According to the experience of Francis and of his Brothers and Sisters, we receive the project of being holy as God is holy in the prayer of Jesus. Through the grace of Jesus and in his footprints, our lives remain open to the future. We must commit ourselves to healing the wounds of our world and to communicating to all the unity that comes from our origin and common destiny. “Holy Father, I pray not only for these but for those who through their teaching will come to believe in me. May they all be one, just as Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me” (*Jn* 17, 20-21; cf. *Rnb* 22, 43-55). Our response to the question: Who are you,



Lord, and who am I? (*ABF IX 41*, cf. n. 22 above), finds its nucleus and meaning in the practice of fraternal sanctity.

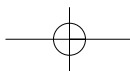
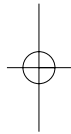
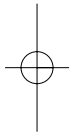
44. This form of life or *conversatio* requires a faith that stimulates us to travel the path of encounter and dialogue. It leads us to the places of social fracture where we unite with our brothers and sisters in a common project of peace and justice (cf. *GGCC 69*). It must be changed into an “example and mirror for those that live in the world” (*TestCl 20*). It is incarnated in the local, provincial and international places and structures in which we live together as “members of one family”. It becomes a symbol and example of future life when we express it (*Rb 3, 1-4; 6, 7-9; 5, 1; 10, 1-5; Test 16-22*):

- in our manner of praying together (cf. *GGCC 23 §§2-3*);
- in our manner of living together, sharing what we are and what we have (*GGCC 39-42*);
- by being “simple and subject to all” (*GGCC 64*);
- in the way we look after the sick (*GGCC 44*);
- by being sincerely pleased and “rejoice when the work of others is successful” (*GGCC 42 §1*);
- by saluting all creatures and the whole of creation with the greeting: “The Lord give you Peace” (cf. *LegP 101f; MP 26*).

45. “How good, how delightful it is to live as brothers all together” (*Ps 133, 1*). Even then we have discovered that the task of changing ourselves into a Fraternity-in-mission carries with it the great challenge of conversion. We seek in our hearts and minds, through our hands and in our languages the ways to make the reality of our vocation visible: “The missionary methodology that encounters greatest resistance is precisely that of the Gospel, going two by two throughout the world, reconciled in Fraternity”. (G. Bini, *Presentation-Summary of Report to the Chapter*, III. 5).



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Vocavit nos Deus ut eamus per mundum

46. On concluding our reflection, we propose -and invite all the Friars to do the same- to assume a solid journey of ongoing and initial formation that considers study as one of its essential components (cf. *RS* 31), as a formative journey of conversion that affects all the dimensions of our life (Cf. *RFF* 45). In this time of crisis of faith and of ethics in which we live, we need, keeping ourselves faithful to our epoch, to return to the sources of our tradition enlightened by its saints, by its leaders, by its spiritual, intellectual and evangelising masters. May we know how to act in our time as they knew how to act in their time: they will accompany and enlighten our journey.

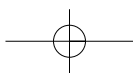
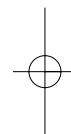
The words and challenges seem to be fairly simple. It is a matter of the way of the Gospel. The Word came in joy and simplicity, in the form of dialogue and itinerancy. He came in minority to preach the Good News. The Lord, the Word made flesh, did not disdain to be our brother. He gave His life for His friends. He resurrected to remove our doubts and fears.

One day we promised God “to follow the Gospel and the footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ more closely” (New Formula of Profession; *GGCC* 5 §2). May the Lord permit us to pronounce, once again and always, our small “yes” to the great gift of the incarnate God.



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*Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God,
give us miserable ones
the grace to do for You alone
what we know you want us to do
and always to desire what pleases you.
Inwardly cleansed,
interiorly enlightened
and inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit,
may we be able to follow
in the footprints of Your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
and, by Your grace alone,
may we make our way to You,
Most High,
Who live and rule
in perfect Trinity and simple Unity,
and are glorified
God almighty,
forever and ever.
Amen.
(LtO 50-52).*



Acronyms and Abbreviations

Sacred Scripture

Ap	<i>Apocalypse.</i>
Ex	<i>Exodus.</i>
1 Cor	<i>First Letter to the Corinthians.</i>
2 CorS	<i>cond Letter to the Corinthians.</i>
Gal	<i>Letter to the Galatians.</i>
Gen	<i>Genesis.</i>
Heb	<i>Letter to the Hebrews.</i>
Is	<i>Isaiah.</i>
Jn	<i>The Gospel according to John.</i>
1Jn	<i>First Letter of St. John.</i>
Lev	<i>Leviticus.</i>
Lk	<i>The Gospel according to Luke.</i>
Mk	<i>The Gospel according to Mark.</i>
Mt	<i>The Gospel according to Matthew.</i>
1Pet	<i>First Letter of St. Peter.</i>
Phil	<i>Letter to the Philippians.</i>
Ps	<i>The Psalms.</i>
Rm	<i>Letter to the Romans.</i>
1Ts	<i>First Letter to the Thessalonians.</i>
Wis	<i>The Book of Wisdom.</i>

The Writings of St. Francis

Adm	<i>Admonitions.</i>
1LtCus	<i>First Letter to the Custodes.</i>
1LtF	<i>First Letter to the Faithful.</i>
2LtF	<i>Second Letter to the Faithful.</i>
LtO	<i>Letter to the Order.</i>
PrCr	<i>Prayer before the Crucifix of San Damiano.</i>
Rb	<i>The Approved Rule.</i>
Rnb	<i>The unapproved Rule.</i>
RH	<i>The Rule for Hermitages.</i>
Test	<i>The Testament of St. Francis.</i>

*Capitulum generale Assisi 2003***Biographical Sources of St. Francis of Assisi**

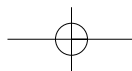
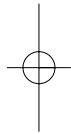
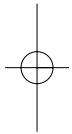
ABF	<i>The Deeds of St. Francis and his Companions.</i>
1Cel	<i>Celano: First Life of St. Francis.</i>
2Cel	<i>Celano: Second Life of St. Francis.</i>
LegP	<i>Legend of Perugia.</i>
L3C	<i>Legend of the three Companions.</i>
MP	<i>Mirror of Perfection.</i>
SC	<i>Sacrum Commercium.</i>

Other Acronyms

EN	Apostolic Exhortation <i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i> , 1975, Paul VI.
GGCC	<i>General Constitutions</i> of the Order of Friars Minor.
GS	Pastoral Constitution <i>Gaudium et Spes</i> , 1965, II Vatican Council.
LG	Dogmatic Constitution <i>Lumen Gentium</i> , 1965, II Vatican Council.
3LtCl	<i>Third Letter of St. Clare to Agnes of Prague.</i>
NMI	Apostolic Letter <i>Novo Millennio Ineunte</i> , 2001, John Paul II.
OA	Apostolic Letter <i>Octogesima Adveniens</i> , 1965, Paul VI.
RFF	<i>Ratio Formationis Franciscanae</i> , prepared by the General Secretariat for Formation and Studies, Rome, 2001.
RS	<i>Ratio Studiorum</i> , “ <i>In notitia veritatis proficer</i> ”, prepared by the General Secretariat OFM for Formation and Studies, Rome, 2003.
SRS	Encyclical <i>Sollicitudo Rei Socialis</i> 1987, John Paul II.
TestCl	<i>The Testament of St. Clare.</i>
VC	Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation <i>Vita Consecrata</i> , 1996, John Paul II.



**FOR PERSONAL AND
FRATERNAL REFLECTION**



1.

“We wish to echo God’s “yes” to all creation...; His coming to be with all men and women...; and His final “yes” to all creatures living in peace and justice. We wish to embody this message of hope in our personal and fraternal lives...” (n. 1).

• **Read**

To Fill the Whole Earth with the Gospel of Christ (FEGC), n. 59; *Starting Afresh from Christ (SAFC)*, n. 33.

• **Reflect**

What requirements does this mission carry with it on the personal and fraternal levels? What changes does this mission entail? Point out three definite aspects in which these changes could be made specific.

2.

“We see especially the need not to domesticate the prophetic words of the Gospel in order to adapt them to a comfortable style of life... We recognise in this context the urgency of returning to the essentials of our experience of faith and of our Franciscan spirituality” (n. 2).

• **Read**

The entire *Approved Rule* and the *GGCC* 1 and 5; *SAFC*, nn. 24 and 45.

• **Reflect**

What is our attitude, on the personal and fraternal levels, in the light of the radical demands of the Gospel and Rule?

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What elements do you consider to be essential in our spirituality? What should be strengthened on the personal level and in the local and provincial fraternity? In the light of the text of profession, which aspects of your life do you think you must strengthen in order to respond better to the requirements of the following of Christ?

3.

“We cannot be satisfied with praising the works of our predecessors, but must inspire ourselves by them in order to carry out the part that corresponds to us in our own historical period” (n. 3).

- *Read*

Admonitions 6 and 7; *Vita Consecrata*, n. 110.

- *Reflect*

Do you think that we Friars Minor are writing the page in Franciscan history that corresponds to us at this time? What positive aspects could you point out? What are you missing? Make two proposals that respond to this call of the Spirit.

4.

“One of the essential elements of the Christian journey is the ongoing capacity to examine the signs of the times and to interpret them in the light of the Gospel” (n. 6).

- *Read*

Lk 12, 56; *GGCC* 102 § 2.

- *Reflect*

What consequences for your personal life and for the life of the fraternity follow on from these texts? In your opinion, which are the most important “signs of the times” at this time in the Church, in society and in your personal life? What are the positive signs of the “seeds of the Gospel” in the reality that it is our fate to live?



5.

“We feel called to undertake... the path of gospel discernment” (n. 7).

• Read

Vita Consecrata, n. 73; *SAFC*, n. 12; *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 3; *You are All Brothers*, III, 7.

• Reflect

Do you live in an attitude of discernment in order to “distinguish what is of the Spirit from that which is contrary to Him” (VC 73c)? What means do you employ in this task? Does the local and provincial fraternity to which you belong live in an attitude of discernment? Point out two specific aspects on which you base your reply. How does your Entity face up to the need to re-found our life and mission on gospel and Franciscan values and to the need to re-dimension our presence with the aim of making it more significant?

6.

The tensions and crises that affect present-day men and women also affect us, Friars Minor. Like them, we also feel the tension “between the market economy and an economy of solidarity” (nn. 12-13), between fundamentalism and dialogue (nn 14-15), between attention to the image and the challenge of the symbol (nn. 16-18). We also feel in our own flesh –and we often pay a high price for it- the crisis of faith, the crisis of ethics (n. 19) and many other “elements that we criticise in our society” (n. 20).

• Read

To Fill the Earth with the Gospel of Christ, nn. 190-194.

• Reflect

How do you and how do the Friars of your local and provincial fraternity live these tensions? Is it as a moment of grace that obliges us to re-create our believing experience in tune with the challenges of an epoch in crisis or as a situation of death? In what measure do the “signs of death”, which we

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discover around us, affect us? Point out some signs of hope in the midst of these tensions.

7.

“There are tensions among us at the moment of deciding, in our world of continuous change, on how to harmonise the reality of a worldwide Fraternity and the inherited structures of the Order.” (n. 20).

- **Read**

PCO/2001, *Final Document*, pp. 5-8; *Report to the PCO/2001* by Br. Giacomo Bini, pp. 33ff; *Vocavit nos Deus ut eamus per mundum*, The Report of Br. Giacomo Bini to the General Chapter, nn. 199-201.

- **Reflect**

What is your attitude to the necessary re-dimensioning of our structures in order to put them at the service of life? What are your personal attitude and the attitude of your Entity to the needs of the worldwide Fraternity? What is the degree of solidarity –on the level of personnel, finance, contribution of ideas...- with the projects of the Order? How can the sense of solidarity be strengthened?

8.

“We recognise the continuous need of creating environments of greater trust and of stimulating mutual unity” (n. 20).

- **Read**

Rb 6, 7-8; *GGCC* 38-42; *The Order Today: reflections and perspectives*, III, 1; *Evangelising in dialogue, Guidelines; Ratio Formationis Franciscanae*, nn. 70-76; *Fraternal Life in Community*, nn. 29-35; *You are all Brothers*, III, 6; *Vocavit nos Deus ut eamus per mundum*, Report to the General Chapter, n. 202; *SAFC*, n. 28.

- **Reflect**

Dialogue carries with it the exercise of various virtues: reverence, humility, respect, kindness and peace. What virtues



do I associate with dialogue? What degree of dialogue, homeliness and collaboration is found in your fraternity? Is there an awareness of belonging to a family: local, provincial or worldwide fraternity? What means could be used to increase the sense of belonging? How do we form ourselves for a real life of communion in fraternity?

9.

To “re-create the significance of our existence in the bosom of a culture of unimportant and passing images” (n. 24) is one of our greatest challenges with regard to the present and future of our life and mission.

- **Read**

SAFC, nn. 12-19; *To Fill the Earth with the Gospel of Christ*, nn. 190-194.

- **Reflect**

What does this entail in our personal and fraternity life? Which specific aspects need conversion in order to give significance to our life?

10.

“In itinerancy and dialogue we share in the life of our neighbours and we offer our greatest effort in order to create, with them, an alternative culture of signs that are capable of making the joy and passion for life contagious” (n. 24).

- **Read**

To Fill the Earth with the Gospel of Christ, nn. 122-126.157-164.

- **Reflect**

Which signs of life do we make contagious? To what extent are we makers of a culture of hope and peace (n. 33)? What attitudes, on the personal and frater-

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nity levels, is the said culture asking of us? What specific means are we called on to put into practice in order to create this culture in the environment in which we live and carry out our mission as Friars Minor?

11.

“Faith is not only knowledge, but is an always-open dialogue between a God that speaks to man in history and a man who responds to God from history: a continuous alliance” (n. 25).

- **Read**

Mt 13, 31-32; Novo Millennio Ineunte, nn. 32-39; *SAFC*, nn. 24-26; *Ratio Formationis Franciscanae*, nn. 66-69.

- **Reflect**

What do we mean when we speak about faith? Can you give some examples of people that are giving a real testimony of faith? In the light of n. 27, what specific dimensions of our life of faith do you think must be emphasised more at this time? How do we form ourselves for a real life of communion with the Lord?

12.

“Dialogue commits all the dimensions of our life to creation, to society, to the fraternity and to the mission” (n. 28).

- **Read**

To Fill the Earth with the Gospel of Christ, nn. 157-170.

- **Reflect**

How do we form ourselves for dialogue? How do we form ourselves for dialogue in all its aspects? In the light of numbers 30-32, point out three specific aspects in which you feel you are called to grow and feel that your fraternity must grow in relation to dialogue as a path of peace.



13.

Numbers 30-32 of the *Document of the General Chapter* invite us to reflect on three dimensions of dialogue.

• **Read**

The texts quoted in the above mentioned numbers.

• **Reflect**

Choose three attitudes/behaviours that favour “conversion to a relationship” or to dialogue.

14.

“We wish to insist that, from a perspective of faith, these changes enable us to share the fate of our brothers, whom this world has made poor, and to understand the real dimensions of their hope” (n. 34).

• **Read**

SAFC, n. 23; *Ratio Formationis Franciscanae*, nn. 77-83.

• **Reflect**

How are you living and how does your fraternity live the changes brought about in the Church, in the Order and in the world, with resignation or with passion?

15.

“On this [our] itinerant journey we feel a strong call to the sanctity of the fraternity” (35).

• **Read**

The Order Today: reflections and perspectives, I; *Vocavit nos Deus ut eamus per mundum, The Report to the Chapter...*, nn. 149ff.

• **Reflect**

How do you nourish your itinerancy (cf. n. 36)? What does the expression “sanctity of the fraternity” suggest to you?

**16.**

“The more committed to the apostolate, the more personal the dedication to the Lord Jesus, the more fraternal the community life, and the more ardent the involvement in the Institute’s specific mission of Friars Minor, the more authentically evangelisers we will be. The more one lives in Christ, the better one can serve Him in others, going even to the furthest outposts and facing the greatest dangers” (n. 38).

• Read

GGCC 83-88; SAFC, n. 9; *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 40; *Vita Consecrata*, nn. 94-95; *To Fill the Earth with the Gospel of Christ*, nn. 47-104.

• Reflect

What does the expression ‘Nobody gives what he has not got’ suggest to you? Point out some causes for which, while some go ‘even to the furthest outposts of the mission’ and ‘face the greatest dangers’, others are afraid to go out to fulfil their specific mission as Friars Minor? What is your/our real experience of an evangelising fraternity?

**17.**

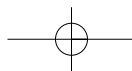
“There is nothing further from Franciscanism than a uniform and homogenous vision in the methods of evangelisation. On the contrary, it is up to our charism to detect, animate and celebrate the initiatives that seek to incarnate the Gospel in a creative and radical way” (n. 39).

• Read

Rnb 7; Rb 5; GGCC 76-82; *Vocavit nos Deus ut eamus per mundum*, Report to the Chapter..., nn. 156-160.

• Reflect

What methods of evangelisation are found in your provincial fraternity? Do they respect the principle of the necessary attempt to “incarnate the Gospel in a creative and radical way”? Point out some other method of evangelising that could be established in your local and provincial fra-



ternity to respond better to the specific demands of the situation, in which the Friars live and work.

18.

“We must give witness to a God that is communion in diversity and diversity in communion” (n. 42).

- **Read**

SAFC, nn. 28-31.

- **Reflect**

Is our life a “sign” of a God who is communion? Point out some positive and other negative signs.

19.

Our form of life “requires a faith that stimulates us to travel the path of encounter and dialogue. It leads us to the places of social fracture where we unite with our brothers and sisters in a common project of peace and justice” (n. 44).

- **Read**

GGCC 89-110; *The Vocation of the Order Today*, nn. 20-25.31-35; *The Gospel Challenges us*, nn. 24-38; *Instruments of Peace* (cf. Index).

- **Reflect**

Who are the “preferred” in our evangelising activity? Where and at whose side, do we place ourselves? Does our local and provincial fraternity have a project of peace and justice?

20.

“Being a Fraternity-in-mission carries with it a great challenge of conversion” (n. 45).

- **Read**

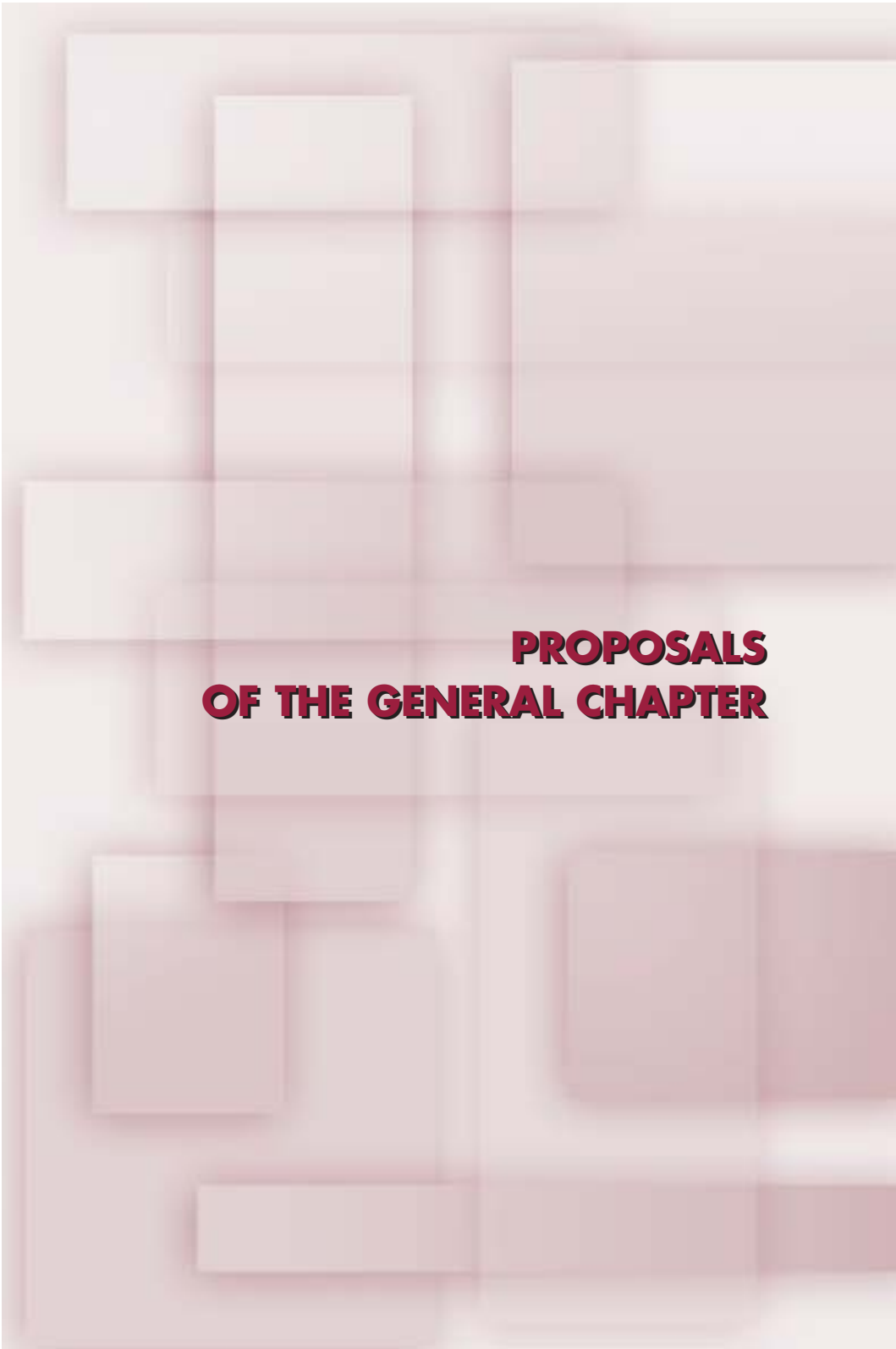
GGCC 83-88; *PCO/2001, Final Document*, pp. 7-8; *You are all Brothers*, II,8; *Ratio Formationis Franciscanae*, nn. 84-91; *Ratio Studiorum OFM*, nn. 28-31.

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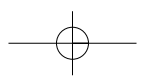
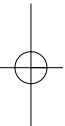
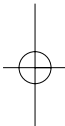
- **Reflect**

How do we form ourselves and how do we form our candidates for the ministry of evangelisation?



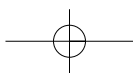
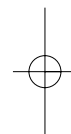


**PROPOSALS
OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER**





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The “Pentecost Chapter”, celebrated in St. Mary of the Angels from the 25th May to the 21st June 2003, approved the following proposals for the six-year period 2003-2009:

I. THE ANIMATION OF THE LIFE OF THE ORDER

DEFINITORY GENERAL

1. The formative meetings offered by the General Curia to new Provincials, General Visitators and Directors of initial and ongoing Formation should be continued and should be reviewed with regard to the number of meetings, duration, methodology, style of animation and cost.

2. In order to stimulate a more profound dialogue, the Minister General and the General Definitory should meet with the Conference or Conferences at least once during each six-year period and the General Definitory for the region should regularly attend the meetings of the group of Conferences or of the Conference.

3. The General Definitory and the Conferences should continue the animation of the Order on the basis of the Priorities of the previous six-year period – The spirit of prayer and devotion, Communion of life in fraternity, Life in minority, poverty and solidarity, Evangelisation and mission, Formation and Studies -, in the light of the Report of the Minister General and with particular attention to the values of itinerancy and dialogue.

4. The *Moratorium* (Cf. Report of the Minister General, n. 69) should be changed into an opportunity for the personal project for the life of the local fraternity and for the provincial plan. The General Definitory should help the study in depth, with formative instruments, of the meaning and modalities so that it may become a mentality in the Order.

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5. The Visitor General must be appointed at least one year before the celebration of the Chapter of the Entity.

6. The General Definitory should establish an International Commission that would study the problem of the sexual abuse of minors or of vulnerable adults committed by Friars Minor and would draw up guidelines so that the Entities may be provided with suitable procedures for confronting this problem. These guidelines must be redacted before the year 2005.

**GENERAL SECRETARIAT
FOR FORMATION AND STUDIES**

The General Chapter requests the GSFS to:

7. Convoke all those entrusted with ongoing formation to formative meetings.

8. Help the Conferences and the Entities with aids for ongoing formation.

9. Help the Ministers with methodologies that could facilitate ongoing formation in their respective Entities.

10. Elaborate formative orientations to help the Entities to develop programmes of accompaniment for Friars in difficulty.

THE ENTITIES

11. Each Entity and each local fraternity, taking into account the cultural differences with regard to authority and responsibility, should help the Friars, through animation and accompaniment, to use time well in both their undertakings and their care of the spiritual life, so that there may be a deep sense of corresponsibility and interdependence in fraternal life. All Friars and Fraternities must become involved in ongoing formation.

12. The community project should be an instrument for harmonising and evaluating the Priorities of the Order in its own everyday journey.

13. The General Chapter reaffirms the need for Local Chapters and Chapters of Renewal. All Entities must provide the necessary training to make it possible for all Friars to benefit from this experience.

14. All Entities should present to the General Definitory, before the year 2004, all the legal procedures they introduced on cases of the abuse of minors and of vulnerable adults committed by the Friars.

15. The Definitory of an Entity should present three names for appointment as Visitor General that the Minister General can consider when choosing the Visitor General.

II. INTERPROVINCIAL COLLABORATION

16. Interprovincial collaboration -in formation and studies, in *ad gentes* and popular missions and in situations of common fracture and projects-, is the future of the Order. Therefore, The Entities should open up to the interprovincial dimension, not because local limitations oblige them to do so, but in order to re-create a worldwide spirit in the Order.

17. The Entities, including the poorest in Friars, must feel obliged to generously make Friars available to the Order in order to participate in the missionary activities and projects of the worldwide Fraternity.

18. The General Chapter recommends the General Definitory to increase the international fraternities (of the Brussels kind) in order to prepare Friars for projects of Franciscan presence in frontier zones and for projects of co-

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participation in diversity and of the implantation of the Order in emerging zones.

III. EVANGELISATION

SECRETARIAT FOR EVANGELISATION

19. The Secretariat for Evangelisation should continue to review the pastoral work in parishes so that evangelisation is carried out in fraternity, minority and corresponsibility.

ENTITIES

20. Let the Provinces and Custodies encourage the creation and strengthening of itinerant and fixed evangelising fraternities that might recover the personal encounter with the world and, in this way, be a visible presence of the Friars in the places of suffering and of proximity to the most estranged.

THE CUSTODY OF THE HOLY LAND

21. The Ministers and Custodes should give privilege to solidarity with the Custody of the Holy Land during this six-year period as a prophetic sign of unity and of diversity for the present-day world.

22. The General Chapter wishes to show its proximity and support to all the Friars that work in regions tried by violence, particularly to all that work in the Holy Land.

IV. - FORMATION

GENERAL DEFINITORY

23. *A House for ongoing formation*

The General Government of the Order should decide which of the existing Houses could best give this service.

24. *Pedagogical Institute for the formation of formators*

The General Definitory should study the possibility of setting in motion a Pedagogical Institute for the formation of formators during this six-year period and it should give preference to the incorporation of this institute into the Institute of Spirituality at the PAA.

25. *Pontificium Athenaeum Antonianum*

The new Government of the Order should continue the effort of the previous Government in improving the quality and the administration of the PAA, offering the help necessary for this.

26. *Other Study and Research Centres*

The new Government of the Order should contribute to the strengthening of the Research Centres (Grottaferrata, Scotus Commission, Muski, that of Cairo,...) and of the Study Centres that exist in some Entities. To do this, the Chapter requests the General Secretariat for Formation and Studies to publish an aid with the necessary information about all the Study Centres of the Order.

27. *On the via pulchritudinis*

The new Government of the Order should appreciate, through the General Secretariat for Formation and Studies, the *via pulchritudinis* as a way to meet with the Creator and should animate the Friars that dedicate themselves to the arts (music, painting, architecture, sculpture...).

**GENERAL SECRETARIAT
FOR FORMATION AND STUDIES**

28. *Courses for formators and proposals on ongoing formation*

The courses of ongoing formation for formators should be continued and courses of ongoing formation for the other services and ministries of the Order should be given. These cours-

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es, organised by the General Secretariat for Formation and Studies, must be complemented by the Conferences.

ENTITIES AND CONFERENCES

29. *Postulancy*

The Provinces should draw up and put into practice a well-defined postulancy programme, with stable companions, as the beginning of the gradual and progressive process of the formative itinerary.

30. *Specifically Franciscan formation*

All the Provinces should incorporate a significant, intensive, theoretical-practical time of specifically Franciscan formation during the period of temporary profession.

31. *A solid intellectual formation*

All the Entities of the Order should continue to propose and make possible a solid intellectual formation during initial formation and should motivate all the Friars to study, reading and intellectual study in depth during all stages of life.

32. *Ongoing formation*

- a.** The Provinces should redact and put into practice an ongoing formation project that includes the whole existence of the person and should pay special attention:
 - to the formation of Guardians, the primary animators of fraternal life, and of others that are responsible for the animation of the life of the Friars,
 - to the accompaniment of the Friars after their solemn profession for the purpose of favouring their continual insertion into the life of the Fraternity. This accompaniment should span five to ten years.
- b.** The said ongoing formation project should tend towards facilitating human, Christian and Franciscan development, which lasts the whole of life.

33. *Sabbatical periods*

Each Friar should have “the courage to declare a moratori-

um” (*Report*, 69). For this, the Provinces or the Conferences should prepare a programme that would give to each one of the Friars the possibility to recover and reaffirm the grace of his vocation, his relationship with God and with the Friars and his theological and professional updating.

34. *On Ratio Studiorum*

Those responsible for the Entities of the Order, with the collaboration of the GSFS, should promote the knowledge and careful study of the contents of the *Ratio Studiorum*.

35. *On the study of the three official languages in the Order*

English, Italian and Spanish are the official passive languages in the Order. It is entrusted to those responsible for all the Entities to make it possible for the Friars to learn one of these passive languages, besides his own, especially during the period of initial formation.

36. *The Faculty of the Flagellation*

The Order and the Provinces should have a special interest in the Faculty of Biblical Science and Archaeology of the Flagellation, in Jerusalem, and should commit themselves to guaranteeing it professors capable of responding to the orientations and expectations of the Church.

37. *The Fund for Formation and Studies*

The *Fund for Formation and Studies* should be maintained and continued with the contribution of all the Entities.

V. JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION

GENERAL DEFINITORY

38. The Chapter requests the General Definitory to provide the JPIC Office with adequate personnel and means to achieve its objectives.

*Capitulum generale Assisi 2003***ENTITIES OF THE ORDER**

39. The General Chapter requests that, during the six-year period 2003-2009 and with the help of the Office of JPIC, all the Entities of the Order should:

- a.** examine our style of life and its impact on creation, take on more responsible behaviour with regard to the environment and defend the justice of the environment;
- b.** promote a non-violent but active style of life and pay particular attention to the resolution of conflicts;
- c.** pay special attention to refugees, migrants, ethnic minorities, landless people and fugitives.

40. The General Chapter requests that, during the three-year period 2003-2006, the Council for Economic Affairs, on the general and provincial levels, should draw up guidelines for the responsible use of its resources.

PONTIFICIUM ATHENAEUM ANTONIANUM

41. The General Chapter requests that courses dedicated to JPIC, in which special attention is paid to the topics of creation and non-violence be established at the PAA of Rome and recommends that similar courses be given in all the Franciscan Institutes of Higher Education.

THE SERVICE OF DIALOGUE

42. The General Chapter underlines the importance of the *Service of Dialogue* in ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue and in dialogue with cultures and requests that:

- a.** this Service be inserted into the proposed Secretariat for Evangelisation
- b.** and that special attention be paid to dialogue with Islam.

PROVINCIAL AND CONFERENCE SECRETARIATS FOR FORMATION AND STUDY

43. The General Chapter requests that the Secretariats for Formation and Studies of the Provinces and Conferences should continue to encourage and cultivate studies and the capacity for dialogue and that they should offer practical experiences of dialogue with other cultures and religions during initial formation.

VII. - MASS MEDIA OF COMMUNICATIONS

44. The mass media of communications are an efficient instrument of evangelisation today. It is necessary to train the Friars

- a.** to work in the mass media of communications for a better service to the Gospel;
- b.** for a responsible use of the same;

VIII. - JOINT PARTICIPATION IN GOODS

ECONOMIC FUNDS FOR THE HOUSES DEPENDENT ON THE MINISTER GENERAL

The General Chapter determines that:

45. Significant economic reserves should be created in order to meet the costs of the necessary maintenance of the Houses dependent on the Minister General.

46. The General Definitory, the Treasurer General and the Development Offices of the General Curia and PAA should develop alternative sources of income in order to meet the present and future needs of the Houses and Projects dependent on the Order.

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47. The Houses dependent on the Minister General should be immediately examined with regard to the management of buildings and of personnel.

**ECONOMIC SUPPORT OF THE PROVINCES
FOR THE HOUSES DEPENDENT ON THE MINISTER
GENERAL AND THE FORMATION OF A RESERVE FUND.**

The General Chapter decides that:

48. All the Entities of the Order should introduce into its accounts a general fund for the purpose of establishing reserves for the maintenance of the three Houses dependent on the Minister General.

49. This fund will be formed:

- a.** through voluntary donations from the Provinces and Houses of the Provinces;;
- b.** through a 1% tax, set aside for the Curia, on all sales of property made by the Provinces or by the Houses.

**FINANCING THE IMPROVEMENTS
TO THE AULA MAGNA OF THE PAA**

The General Chapter determines that:

50. The Aula Magna of the PAA should be restored in order to fulfil the architectural norms of the European Union.

51. The proposal of the General Definitory to repair and improve the Aula Magna and its adjoining areas, so that it can then be rented out, is accepted.

52. As there is no economic fund to carry out these works of repairs and improvement, all the Entities of the Order must

contribute, during the coming 24 months, half the amount necessary to carry out the above mentioned works –that is, one and a half million Euro of the three million estimated–through the system of “bands” used for the annual contributions to the General Curia. Each Entity, then, will be levied annually with a proportional supplementary contribution. If this method should prove difficult to any Entity, it can appeal to the Minister General for possible clarifications.

53. The Minister General should see to it that, at the same time, a project is put in motion to collect the remaining amount from other sources of finance.

54. The annual return in rent (162.000 Euro) should be used for the architectural maintenance of the Houses dependent on the Minister General.

THE COLLEGE OF ST. BONAVENTURE AT GROTTAFERRATA

The General Chapter requests the General Definitory:

55. To appoint a commission to study possible alternatives for the House of Grottaferrata.

56. To make a decision on Grottaferrata during the six-year period, once the opinion of the Presidents of the Conferences has been heard.

THE DIVISION OF THE PROVINCES INTO TAX BANDS FOR THE ANNUAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE GENERAL CURIA

57. The General Chapter requests a review of the modes of contribution to the General Curia of the General Definitory. The General Definitory should submit this review to the Presidents of the Conferences within two years.

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58. The General Definitory should present an updated calculation of the system of contribution by the Entities to each General Chapter.

**AUTHORISATION FOR A PROFESSIONAL COMPANY
TO REVIEW THE ACCOUNTS**

59. The General Definitory should entrust the certification and review of the accounts of the Treasurer General to an external professional Company.

