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SPECIAL EDITION



CHAPTER OF MATS & PCO

A CHARISM THAT RENEWS US *in the encounter*



INDEX

CHAPTER OF MATS

A charism that renews us in the encounter 2

The International Chapter of the Mats Begins in Assisi 3

How did the Chapter of Mats come about? 4

The presence of the Franciscan Sisters at the Chapter of Mats 5

Renewing our vision: what characteristics of the charism should we open ourselves to today? 6

Walking according to the style of a fraternity of minors 8

Embracing the Future, Witness and Mission 9

Between the Pilgrimage to Assisi and the Draft of the Final Document..... 11

The Chapter of Mats concluded at Pentecost with renewed hope..... 12

PLENARY COUNCIL OF THE ORDER 2025

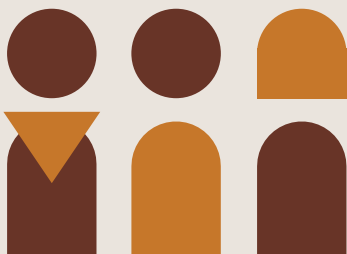
The Plenary Council of the Order begins at Pentecost 14

Dialogue on the future of the Order 15

on the second day of the CPO 15

Chapter of Mats Staff & Officers & CPO 2025 16

Conclusion of the Plenary Council of the Order..... 18



EDITORIAL



A charism that renews us in the encounter

In this special issue of Fraternitas, we wish to share with you the fruits of two historical events that have brought new light to the Order’s journey: the 2025 Mat Chapter and the Order’s Plenary Council. In these meetings there were intense days where the diversity of cultures and experiences were transformed into a source of communion and creativity.

From the 2nd-8th 2025 June, gathered around the Portiuncula, were more than 150 participants including friars, religious and lay people of the Franciscan Family, like those first friars who met with Francis in 1221, in an atmosphere of prayer, mutual listening and discernment in synodal style sat on today’s “mats” to listen to each other, dialogue and allow themselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit.

This meeting was a moment of grace, where the different voices and experiences enriched the understanding of how we live the Franciscan charism today. Through the methodology of the “World Café”, the participants were able to deepen three fundamental aspects: the renewal of the charismatic vision, the prophetic style of fraternity in minority, and the evangelizing mission in today’s world. In the same way, the pilgrimage to the Franciscan places of Assisi and the common prayer strengthened the sense of belonging and the call to live the Gospel.

Subsequently, the Plenary Council of the Order gathered the fruit of the Mat Chapter and projected it into the future, in preparation for the 2027 General Chapter. The PCO constituted a space for discernment on the current challenges of the Order: the creative transformation of structures, formation, shared mission, justice and integral ecology. These themes will guide the next General Chapter of the Order, with the invitation to advance from mere “conservation” towards real co-responsibility and openness to today’s new “areopagus”.

This edition collects the voices, testimonies and reflections of those who have lived these days of grace. In the same way we thank all those who, visible or discreet, have made this fraternal meeting possible.

May the Spirit of Pentecost, who has accompanied us on this journey, continue to inspire the Franciscan Order and Family to be faithful to the charism of St. Francis, “signs of hope and prophecy of communion and peace” in our world.

Br. Byron Chamann Anléu, OFM
Director

Let us retrace together the stages of this journey lived by renewing the Charism, living fraternity in minority, responding to the Mission.

Chapter of Mats 2025

The International Chapter of the Mats Begins in Assisi *2 June, A Day of Encounter and Prayer*



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On the 2nd June 2025, the International Chapter of the Mats began at the basilica of Our Lady of the Angels in Assisi, with a day full of meaningful encounters. The day began with the invocation of the Holy Spirit in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Angels where Br. Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General, lit a candle from the Paschal Candle of the Porziuncola. The candle was then carried in procession, accompanied

by all the participants, to the Conference Hall of the Domus Pacis. Following this, the Minister General, along with Br. Francesco Piloni, Minister Provincial of the Seraphic Province of St. Francis, welcomed all the participants, and the presentations of all those present followed.

During the opening Mass, presided over by Br. Massimo Fusarelli, the importance of this meeting, which has its historical roots, was highlighted: “We gather here around the Porziuncola, in poverty, in the joy of encounter, and in mutual listening to recognize what pleases the Lord.”

The Minister General emphasized that this Chapter represents “a moment of communal discernment, where we allow the Spirit to speak through all the voices that reach us from so many parts of the world.”

In the afternoon, a conference-by-conference presentation methodology was implemented, with a representative from each conference



The opening of the Chapter of Mats

presenting the geographical location of the conference in a 20-minute format and summarizing the most significant conclusions reached during the meetings held at each conference. A 5-minute “buzz” session was used after each presentation. The presentations included the Southern European Conference (CEM), North African and Middle Eastern Conference (CONAMO), English-speaking Conference (ESC), North Slavic Conference (SLAN), South Slavic Conference (SLAS), and East Asian Conference (EAC). The day concluded with prayer in language groups.



Interview with Moema Maria Marques de Mirada, SFO (Brazil)

How did the Chapter of Mats come about?

A brief history from 1221 to the present



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Even today there is no legal definition or regulation of the Chapter of Mats. The term takes its name from the great General Chapter of May 30, 1221: we read in chapter XVIII of the Little Flowers of St. Francis that more than 5000 friars flocked to Our Lady of the Angels. They gathered in groups, in prayer or in dialogue, in an orderly and devout manner: “In that field there were roofs of trellises and mats, and distinguished by crowds, according to the friars of different provinces; and therefore that Chapter was called, the Chapter of trellises or mats” (FF 1848).

It was the Chapter of the meeting between Francis and Anthony of Lisbon; the importance of obedience to Holy Mother Church, of the observance of the most holy poverty, of fasting was emphasized: Francis had asked the friars not to concern themselves with corporal things, including food. But the “chief shepherd, the blessed Christ,” who always cares for His sheep, inspired the people of Perugia, Spoleto, Foligno, Spello, and Assisi to bring food and drink to that “holy gathering.” St. Dominic himself, who was also present at the Chapter, “was greatly edified by the faith of the most holy Francis,

and by the obedience and poverty of so great and orderly a college, and by divine providence and the abundant abundance of every good.”

Br. Chryzostom Fryc, OFM (Director of the Historical Archives of the General Curia) and Br. Giuseppe Buffon, OFM (Professor of Church History at the Faculty of Theology of the PUA) recall how the Chapters of Mats have regained vigor, at the local level, especially after the Second Vatican Council. One could speak of “synodality”, a term very much in force today, but both underline that the original word “chapter” already implied the desire for dialogue, mutual listening, confrontation, and walking together. As evidence of what the friars said, in [the Photographic Archive of the Antoniano of Bologna of the Friars Minor](#) we found shots dating back to May 25, 1966, concerning the celebration of the local Chapter of Mats.

On the occasion of the 800th Anniversary of the birth of the Order, from the 15th to 18th April 2009 an Inter-Vocational Chapter of Mats was held between Assisi and Rome: Friars Minor, Conventuals and Capuchins met to celebrate the “Centenary

of the origins”, to “renew fidelity to the charism and re-encompass all the spiritual heritage” of the founder St. Francis (cf. *Acta Ordinis 2009/A*, pp. 9-43). About 2000 capitulars from all continents participated in it.

The Chapter ended on the 18th April: in the Apostolic Courtyard of Castel Gandolfo, the Ministers General in audience with Pope Benedict XVI renewed their commitment to live according to the Rule of St. Francis in the name of all the friars scattered throughout the world. At Castel Porziano, a delegation of capitulars led by the Ministers General met the then President of the Italian Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, who addressed them, amongst

other things, these words: “Wars change in nature or change in size, but they are never erased, even today they continue to scourge our world, starting with the Holy Land, and, we can say, in a more general and broader way, the dangers of war never cease. [...] We need your presence: we need your work, we need your commitment to carry forward values that must also be continuously renewed and continuously transmitted in our country”.

Thanks to Br. Cesare Vaiani, Br. Chryzostom Fryc, Br. Giuseppe Buffon and Br. Juan Isidro Aldana Maldonado (Secretary of the Chapter of Mats) for the collaboration.

The presence of the Franciscan Sisters at the Chapter of Mats

3 June



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On the second day of the Chapter of Mats, after morning prayer and the Holy Mass in different languages, the remaining Conferences that make up the Order were presented: the Conference of Brazil and the Southern Cone, the Bolivarian, the Conference of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the African Anglophone (ESAC) and the Francophone (CAF), the Transalpine (COTAF), and the South Asia - Australia and Oceania (SAAOC).

Presentations that are arousing much interest in the Capitulars: Sister Bernadeta FMM from Indonesia, for example, was very impressed by the video of the *Guadalupeana* Conference, “because they showed what Pope Francis asked of us in *Evangelii Gaudium*, and that is to be a Church that goes out, towards the extremities and the poor”. A call, in her opinion, that is valid in every part of the world, even in Indonesia.

The Chapter of Mats allows us to meet a part of the great world of the “Franciscan Sisters” in one place: Sister Angelica, of the Conceptionist Sisters of Mexico, said she was very happy to be able to participate in this meeting, especially to learn about other realities in the rest of the world. Along the same lines is Sister John-Marie, of the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist, who from the United States came with great enthusiasm to Assisi to experience the Chapter of Mats, “a true blessing”.

In the afternoon, after a guided tour of the Porziuncola, the assembly met in the Auditorium of the Domus Pacis for the presentation of the working methodology of the “World Café”. Starting tomorrow, in fact, the Capitulars will be divided into 18 tables and will actively participate in answering some questions in the *Instrumentum Laboris*, specifically three for each thematic nucleus (Charisma, Communion, Mission).

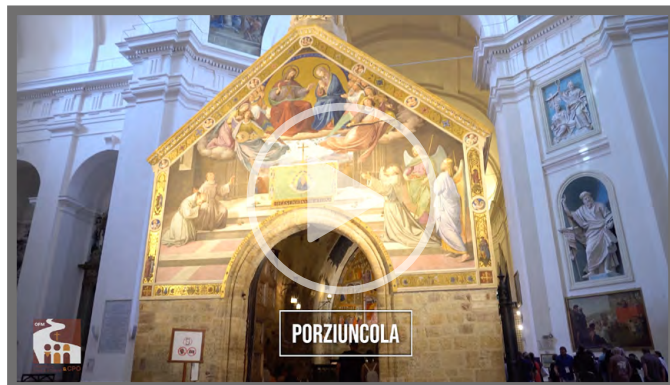
This method, in such a large group, allows for a participatory and constructive exchange between people from different cultures and situations; it allows for dialogue together, sharing opinions and being infected, all feeling part of a single group. It is a method that, through many contacts between people in the small group, al-

lows for an assembly time to be lived with more involved, adequately sensitized and therefore creative people.

The day ended with the prayer of Vespers and, after dinner, an evening in joyful fraternity.



Interview with Sr Sharon Templanza, FMIJ (Philippines)



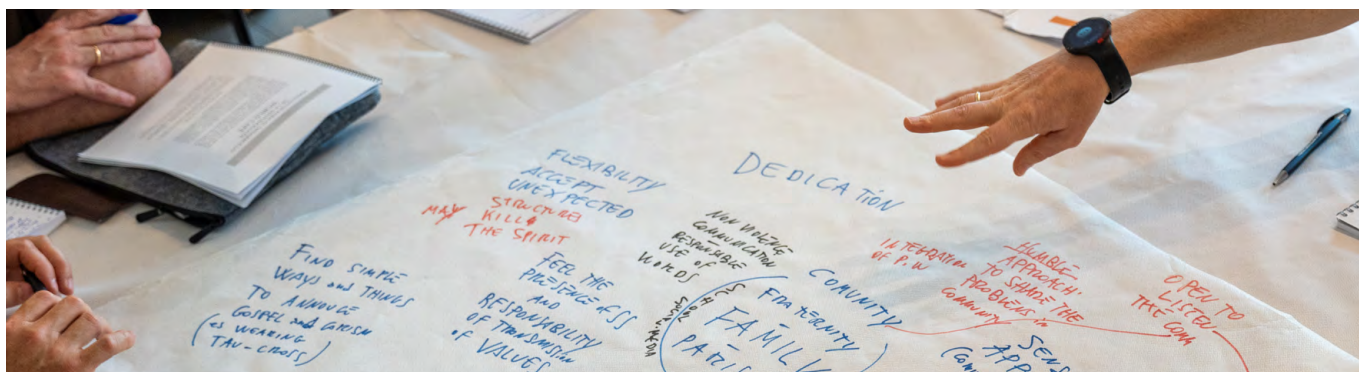
Visit to the Porziuncola

Renewing our vision: what characteristics of the charism should we open ourselves to today?

4 June



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The Chapter of Mats has entered the heart of its journey of mutual listening: the capitulars were involved, with the methodology of the World Café, in dialogue and discussion on the first thematic nucleus regarding the Charism of the Order.

Br. Juan Isidro Aldana, Secretary of the Chapter of Mats, introduced the first moment of the day by recalling some words of the General Definitor Br. César Kulkamp, during his reflection in the morning Mass: "We are called to discern the path to renew the charism, without titles or distinctions: we must listen, obey the Gospel and walk in fraternity". He then introduced Br. Derrick Yap, Custos of the Custody of Singapore-Malaysia-Brunei and

President of the SAAOC Conference (South Asia, Australia and Oceania), called to stimulate those present to reflect on the theme: "Renewing our vision: which characteristics of the charism should we open ourselves to today?".

Br. Derrick began by showing an image of St. Francis and Brother Leo and asking those present what struck their attention the most: two brothers together, the cross, their hands joined in prayer, the absence of other brothers, the cave... "An image," said Br. Derrick, "speaks something to our heart and we must know how to listen to our heart." A speech that really managed to capture the attention of the capitulars: between the exposition of

some key concepts - What is Vision? What and how do we see? Can we see with the eyes of God? - and a bit of entertainment - the phrase You'll never walk alone made football fans smile... - the President of the SAAOC shared some examples of men who were able to embody the Franciscan charism. One of these was Blessed Gabriele Allegra, a Franciscan missionary in China, the first to translate the Bible into Chinese, who was able to read the sign of the times and get close to the last and the poorest: lepers, in his case.

Speaking instead of the writings of Saint Francis, Br. Derrick highlighted how they contain the word "God" 410 times and the word "brother" 306 times: a fraternity capable of living in contemplation - personal and community, priority over many other commitments - in the discernment of how God fills our life. "Initial and ongoing formation must always be centered on Christ: the Gospel must be the center of our life", said Br. Derrick with great emphasis. Taking example from the Chinese language and the saying "Nourish the body with movement, nourish the heart with silence", Br. Derrick focused on the importance of listening among brothers and, in these days, also with the sisters and lay Franciscans: a "synodal" journey, on the same road, which must dispose us to act "sicut mater", like a mother (taking up the letter that Francis wrote to Brother Leo), that is, with love, with compassion, with understanding, in order to transform even pain, physical and moral, into a joyful testimony. The participants then began the working methodology of the "World Café": they were divided in rotation into 18 international tables, that is, not by language and always changing the interlocutors, and they answered the 3 questions expressed in the *Instrumentum Laboris* on the Charism (page 19). The works were then presented in the assembly end-of-day plenary: the secretaries of the tables presented their responses, implementing them with those of other tables. The results of today and the next two days will then be collected in the Final Document of the Chapter of Mats.

[Download Br Derrick Yap's Reflection](#)

A CURIOSITY ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL TABLES: although the capitulars come from about 50 countries around the world, the diversity of languages was not a problem, both because the secretaries of each table spoke several languages, and because - as Br. Cesare Vaiani, General Definitor, said - "the Spirit of Pentecost helped us".



The World Café experience



Interview with Br. Jean Claude Kinombe, OFM (DRC)



Interview with Marko Youssef Louiz Shenouda (Egypt)



Report of Br. Derrick Yap, OFM (Singapore)

Walking according to the style of a fraternity of minors

5 June



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On Thursday, 5 June, the participants of the Chapter of Mats discussed the second topic of the meeting: Communion and walking according to the style of a fraternity of minors.

Sr. Therèse Myriam, Abbess of the Poor Clares Colettine in Assisi, provided the starting point for reflection. Before arriving at the meeting, she had discussed the topic with the 13 sisters of her convent, who range in age from 30 to 87 and are mostly French, along with one Italian, two from Congo and one from Gabon. This discussion raised some questions in her mind, which she put to the assembly.

Sr. Therèse emphasised the geographical and cultural richness of the Order, which is evident and fascinating today. *“Are you able to embrace this reality in light of the story of the authentic Friar Minor, and to be grateful for the existence of others who are different from you?”* she asked those present, recalling St. Francis’s intuition in scheduling the Chapters on the day of Pentecost, when “the Spirit breathes new life

into the Church by inspiring different charisms. This may seem to create disorder, but under his guidance it constitutes an immense wealth because he urges us to embrace difference in communion”.

The Abbess then turned her attention to cloistered life, describing it as a “gift” that enables the sisters to remain together despite their differences. She addressed the assembly again, asking, *“What means do you have to avoid fleeing from the brother who is next to you?”*, and recalled the example of Pope Francis, who described fraternity as spherical, but multifaceted, made up of a thousand nuances, some of which are sharp-edged.

Referring to another quote from the late pontiff about the appearance of the Risen Jesus on Lake Tiberias, which created a family atmosphere around a fire of embers, Sister Therèse asked, *“Do we feel responsible for guarding this fire of embers and rekindling it during personal prayer and heart-to-heart communion with the Lord?”*.

Quoting the Instrumentum Laboris, the Sister referred to the desire to grow in mutual trust despite conflicts. Recalling the final years of St. Francis’ life, during which he was wounded and disappointed by his companions, she noted that he climbed La Verna and, thanks to the stigmata, his vulnerability became a source of healing for Brother Leo.

“Do we recognise vulnerability in our relationships, even when we are in a position of leadership?”, are we able to show our brother our limitations, while also accepting the limitations of those around us? Can we listen to our brothers without choosing in-



Second day of World Café

dividualism over communion? Is this not what it means to be ‘minor and subject to all’?

Like Br. Derrick Yap yesterday, Sister Thérèse also referred to Francis’s “motherhood” towards Leo, emphasising the significance of the Father of Mercy’s presence: “I speak on behalf of many young people, many lay people and many Poor Clares: may your brotherhood and minority grow in the spirit of the Good Shepherd!”.

In her closing remarks, the Abbess thanked the Friars Minor for setting an example of communion, of being “together”, and also thanked the General Curia for its efforts to promote mutual understanding through the Fraternitas newsletter. Her interven-

tion was very intense and stimulated dialogue on the second day of the World Café. Participants reflected on living the Gospel of fraternity, which was structured around three main themes.

The first theme was formation, inviting reflection on how initial and ongoing formative experiences have transformed the way Franciscan values are lived in daily life.

The second theme explored collaboration within the Franciscan Family, emphasising significant experiences between friars, lay people, and other community members to understand what fosters true communion.

Embracing the Future, Witness and Mission

6 June



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The fifth day of the Chapter of Mats of the Order of Friars Minor is dedicated to the third thematic core of the meeting: Embracing the future, witness and mission. Introduced by Br. Juan Isidro Aldana, Secretary of the Chapter, Professor and writ-

er **Eduardo Santos Ribón Badillo**, of the University of San Bonaventura in Cartagena, Colombia, presented his reflection divided into 5 “challenges” to be submitted to the Capitulars.

Listening to the cry of the new poor. Saint Francis is the example of active listening, according to Professor Ribón, because he “strips himself of everything and chooses to live amongst the poorest”. **But who are the poor today?** “We are not just talking about those who lack material goods, but also about those who are discarded by society: migrants without a country, young people without a future, the forgotten elderly, the victims of violence and indifference,” said the speaker, highlighting how far-right policies in Latin America and the rest of the world have exacerbated economic and social differences between peoples. So how can the Franciscan mission be made more relevant to the new poor of the 21st century?



Interview with Sister Angélica de los Santos Rodríguez (Mexico)

An integral ecology as prophetic testimony. The professor pointed the finger at the “**media spectacle**” that revolves around ecology: everyone talks about it, but no one does anything and the situation is increasingly catastrophic. What if we instead opted for alternative paths inspired by Saint Francis? Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si'*, urged us to recognize how everything is connected and that the environmental crisis is also a social crisis. “As Franciscans, our mission is not only to take care of nature, but also to transform hearts so that we adopt **simple and supportive lifestyles**”: how can we integrate ecological justice into our daily lives and our mission?

Overcoming polarization and building peace. Ribón emphasizes how current wars reflect a world deeply divided between ultraconservatives and the left, with consequences in faith communities. These divisions lead to violations of human rights and a culture of exclusion, contrary to the lifestyle of the Holy Gospel.

Like the Seraphic Father who spoke with the Sultan during the Crusades, our mission today is to

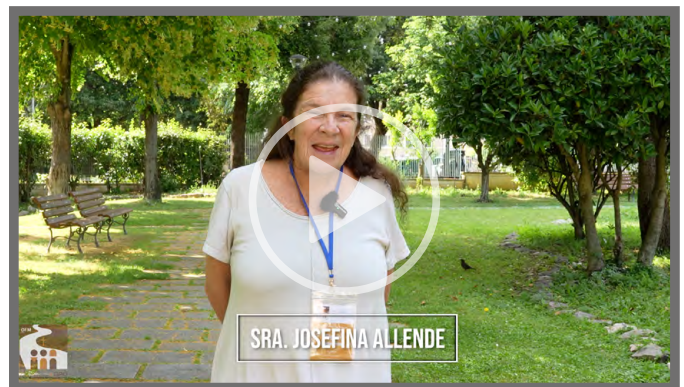
promote dialogue, listening and reconciliation. The challenge remains: how to be peacemakers in such a polarized world?

Openness to the laity: a synodal and co-responsible Church. Faced with the crisis of vocations and by virtue of the Baptism we have received, we are all “missionary disciples,” as Pope Francis emphasized in *Evangelii Gaudium*. Therefore, “Franciscan communities must also open themselves to sharing their mission with the laity, forming men and women who can take on responsibilities in schools, universities, social centres, and other works that risk closing due to the lack of friars.”

Returning to the social doctrine of the Church. Faced with the social, economic, ecological, and cultural crisis of today’s world, “Franciscanism, with its option for the poor, its sensitivity to justice and peace, and its incarnate spirituality, can and must return to draw from this source to **renew its mission.**” But are we forming friars and lay people in these principles so that they can transform reality guided by the Gospel and the Church?



Reflection by Prof. Eduardo Santos Ribón Badillo



Interview with Mrs. Josefina Allende (Argentina)



Interview with Br. José Jesús Alcaraz Valle, OFM (Mexico)



Third day of World Café

The reflection concluded with this exhortation from Prof. Eduardo Santos Ribón Badillo: “May the Lord grant us the **audacity** to dream, the **humility** to listen and the **courage** to act, so that Franciscanism continues to be a light in a wounded world.”

The dialogue and discussion within the World Café tables were fueled by these challenges, accompanied by the provocations left by Prof. Ribón and the questions of the *Instrumentum Laboris* that invited reflection on the concept of «outgoing Church» and its connection with the Franciscan charism, the experiences of shared mission that have strengthened the sense of brotherhood in the community, and finally the importance of fra-

ternal relationships as a source of motivation and support in times of difficulty.

On this day, the work of the World Café which focused on the 3 thematic nuclei of the Chapter of Mats came to an end. The following day, the 7th June, whilst the Chapter members were on pilgrimage to Assisi, the Commission prepared the draft of the Final Document which was first discussed in the language groups for possible contributions and then presented to the plenary assembly.

The vote on the Final Document took place on the day of Pentecost, Sunday 8th June.

Between the Pilgrimage to Assisi and the Draft of the Final Document

7 June



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The sixth day of the Chapter of Mats was marked by a pilgrimage to the city of Assisi, where participants were able to immerse themselves in the Franciscan charism by walking the same streets walked by Saint Francis.

The day began with a visit to the Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi, where the capitulars toured both the lower and upper basilicas, admiring the frescoes that narrate the life of the saint. A particularly moving moment was the prayer before the tomb of Saint Francis and his first companions.

Afterwards, the group moved to the Basilica of Saint Clare, where they experienced a profound moment of prayer with the “O High and Glorious God” and praises to the Most High God. The participants also had a time of personal prayer before the Crucifix of San Damiano and the tomb of

Saint Clare. The day continued with individual visits to other significant Franciscan sites in the city. In the afternoon, upon returning to Our Lady of the Angels, the draft final document was read and discussed. It was the result of three days of work using the World Café methodology. It addressed three fundamental themes related to the Franciscan charismatic identity, as outlined in the *Instrumentum Laboris*.

The first, on the renewal of the charismatic vision, addresses how the charism must be understood as a living dynamism and not as something static. It is an element that requires continuous transformation and conversion, centering on Christ and the evangelical life. The importance of listening to the diversity of voices within the international fraternity is emphasized. The second, on the prophetic style of fraternity in

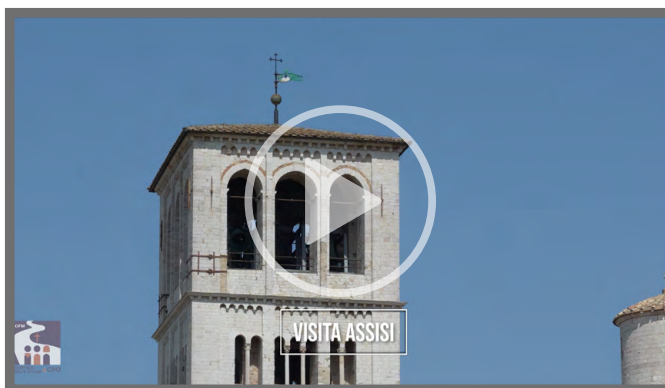
minority, focuses on growth in communion and the need to rethink organizational structures. It does not seek to centralize power, but rather to create a new articulation between unity and differences, between the local and the universal. It also addresses the important relationship with lay people and women in Franciscan life.

The third, on witness-mission, is embodied in evangelization through life and word. This includes the silent proclamation of the Kingdom of God, ecumenical dialogue, presence in social problems, and listening to the Spirit. The Constitutions propose a fraternity oriented toward missionary conversion, focused on reconciliation, justice, and peace.

In the evening, the Chapter participants attended the Rosary in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Angels, reciting the mysteries in different languages.

The prayer concluded with the procession of the Virgin Mary inside the Basilica.

All this work was concluded with the approval of the Final Document on Pentecost Sunday.



The pilgrimage to Assisi

The Chapter of Mats concluded at Pentecost with renewed hope

Signs of hope and prophecy of communion and peace



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On a significant day for the Order of Friars Minor, the Chapter of Mats came to a close on Pentecost Sunday. The day began with the presentation and voting on the Final Document, after which the Secretary of the Chapter, Br. Juan Isidro Aldana, thanked all those who had participated and contributed to making it possible. The Minister General, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, then delivered his final address, expressing his satisfaction with the progress of the Chapter and emphasising that this meeting had shed “new light on the charism itself”.

He emphasised the importance of maintaining this synodal dynamic within the Franciscan Family through dialogue and listening, noting that this experience would influence the preparation of the next General Chapter.

The Chapter culminated in a Solemn Eucharist in the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels, presided over by Vicar General Br. Ignacio Ceja. During his homily, he recalled the profound significance of celebrating this moment at the Porziuncola, where

St. Francis requested that the Ministers of the Order gather every three years. He added: “This week, during the Pentecost novena, we have gathered near the Porziuncola to listen to one another, engage in dialogue and discern in a synodal spirit about our life and mission today, so that we may truly be a prophetic sign for our world.”

The Chapter brought together 150 participants from around the world, including religious and lay people. Working in a synodal spirit, they came together to discern the life and mission of the Order in today’s world. As Br. Cesare Vaiani pointed out, this meeting demonstrated that “the Spirit of Pentecost helped us” to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers.

As the Chapter drew to a close, participants returned to their Provinces with a renewed commitment to “being signs of hope and prophecy of communion and peace”, ready to implement the conclusions reached during those days of intense work and fraternity.

[Read the homily by Br. Ignacio Ceja](#)

Download the [Final Document of the Chapter of Mats](#)

Download the summary of the final document of the Chapter of Mats by Sr Chiara Codazzi:
[Italiano](#) - [English](#) - [Español](#)

SEE THE PHOTO GALLERY ON FLICKR





Plenary Council of the Order 2025

The Plenary Council of the Order begins at Pentecost *In view of the General Chapter 2027*



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On the solemnity of Pentecost, the Portiuncula welcomed the beginning of the Plenary Council of the Order (CPO), which began immediately after the conclusion of the Chapter of Mats.

The meeting began with the report of the Minister General, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, OFM, who stressed that the CPO was born from the grace of the International Chapter of Mats that ended on the same day. For seven days, friars, religious women and lay members of the Franciscan Family from all continents reflected on charism, fraternity (communion) and mission in our time.

The Minister General emphasized that “we cannot limit ourselves to maintaining what we have received, nor continue to settle for marginal adjustments. We need the audacity to rethink our way of being fraternity, both international and local, our structure and the capacity for greater collaboration”.

Br. Massimo also spoke of the need to renew initial formation and the meeting with young people, to carry out a review of the *Ratio Formationis Franciscanae* and to adapt the General Definitory to the new Franciscan geography. He also indicated that

for the General Chapter 2027 crucial issues such as the Franciscan identity in the change of epoch, the Government of the Order, and the role of the Conferences in authentic co-responsibility are envisaged.

Subsequently, Sister Chiara Codazzi presented a summary of the final Document of the Chapter of Mats, underlining the importance of opening to the Holy Spirit as the protagonist of the journey. “It is He who has raised up the Franciscan *forma vitae* and only He can vivify it, renew it and open new horizons”.

The program also included the approval of the regulations and the election of the Economic Affairs Council of the CPO. The day ended with the recitation of Vespers in linguistic groups.

This Plenary Council marks an important moment to discern the steps necessary for the future of the Order, especially in view of the General Chapter of 2027.

[Download the Minister General's report \(Italian\)](#)

Dialogue on the future of the Order on the second day of the CPO *Four speakers address key challenges*



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The second day of the Order's Plenary Council explored fundamental issues for the future of the Order. The day began with the celebration of Lauds and the Eucharist in language groups in the chapels of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Angels.

During the morning, the Vicar General Br. Ignacio Ceja presented a detailed evaluation of the mandates and orientations of the 2021 General Chapter. His speech highlighted how these mandates embrace different areas of Franciscan life, from our fundamental identity to specific aspects such as the economy, fraternal life, the protection of minors, mission and evangelization, formation and studies, JPIC and the governance structures of the Order. "We hope that this Plenary Council will give us a new impetus not only to review and reprogram what is indicated by the Chapter, but above all to open ourselves to the Spirit and live today with renewed fidelity our vocation as friars and minors sent into the world as witnesses of peace and reconciliation," said the Vicar at the end of his speech.

Subsequently, Br. Cesare Vaiani, Definitor General, addressed the theme of accompaniment in the degrowth and transformation of the Entities. His analysis focused on the phenomenon of numerical decline and its structural implications, presenting a historical reflection on how the Order has responded to these challenges in recent decades.

Br. Cesare commented that, in early 2025, the Order evaluated the processes of unification of the Entities through a general consultation. The results revealed several positive aspects: mixed fraternities demonstrated greater openness to

change, a more solid Franciscan identity and a more efficient management of resources. However, important challenges also emerged: difficulties in managing large territories, resistance to change, limited mobility of the friars and a continuous decline in vocations.

At noon, the Definitor General, Br. John Wong, presented an analysis of the structure of the Conferences in the OFM, emphasizing their role as a forum for regional coordination and collaboration. These structures serve as meeting places to allow the Provincial Ministers to meet and dialogue on issues important to the Order.

Currently, there are 13 Conferences strategically distributed for similar geographical and cultural regions. Their main mission is to strengthen unity and cooperation within the Order, especially in areas such as training new members and addressing specific regional challenges.

Br. John Wong further stated that the Conferences face several significant challenges, communication between Entities does not always flow optimally, and there is a tendency toward "provincialism" that can hinder collaboration. In addition, long-term planning is a constant challenge that requires attention. Looking to the future, the Conferences are working to strengthen collaborative ties, especially in the field of training. Efforts are made to consolidate existing structures and develop common projects of evangelization from which the whole Order can benefit.

The talks concluded with the Definitor General, Br. Konrad Cholewa, who presented a reflection on

the number of Definitors General and the functioning of the Definitory, raising important questions about the governance structure and its adaptation to the current needs of the Order.

Br. Konrad presented the profile of the General Definitor, which requires experience in animation and governance, international work skills, openness to change, and mastery of an official language. His reflection on the role of the Definitor General is part of a broader effort to adapt the structures of governance to the current reality of the Order, taking into account both demographic changes and the need to provide more effective accompa-

niment to the friars.

The day's work concluded with sessions in working groups, allowing participants to deepen the themes presented and prepare concrete proposals for the future of the Order.

Download reports:

Br. Ignacio Ceja: [Italiano](#) - [English](#) - [Español](#)

Br. Cesare Vaiani: [Italiano](#) - [English](#) - [Español](#)

Br. John Wong: [Italiano](#) - [English](#) - [Español](#)

Br. Konrad Cholewa: [Italiano](#) - [English](#) - [Español](#)

Chapter of Mats Staff & Officers & CPO 2025

Commitment to the service of the friars, brothers and sisters



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In the recently concluded Chapter of Mats and, these days, in the Plenary Council of the Order held at Our Lady of the Angles in Assisi, there are many brothers and sisters who “have no voice”, but who give voice to the Capitulars by providing a fundamental service for the success of the two great events of the Order of Friars Minor.

Interpreters, translators, verbalists, secretaries, cooks, technicians and support staff: people who perform functions necessary for the success of meetings and who often remain invisible.

So we have decided to give them a voice as well, to express our gratitude for their very important service.

Fr. Gil Noriega, OFM, interpreter during the events

Fr. Gil shared his experience as an interpreter both in the Chapter of Mats and in the Plenary Council of the Order. Coming from the Franciscan Missions Office in Waterford, USA, where he is in charge of fundraising for the OFM Missions, Fr. Gil

was one of the three interpreters summoned for these important events.

During his service as a performer, he highlighted the extraordinary symphony of the Franciscan Family present: Poor Clares, friars, lay people and members of the Franciscan Third Order gave life to a true experience of Franciscan synodality. He highlighted the high level of commitment shown by all the friars of the various Conferences and the depth of the discussions, which led to innovative perspectives for the renewal of the Franciscan identity.

Fr. Filippo Campolo, OFM, recording secretary

As secretary of the Chapter of Mats and the Plenary Council of the Order, Fr. Filippo, of the Province of the Holy Martyrs of Calabria (Italy), described his role as a bridge between the present and the future. His main task was to document not only the words, but also the spirit of fraternity and grace that characterized these days of encounter.

Fr. Philip stressed that the work of the verbalists goes beyond the simple bureaucratic aspect: it is about preserving a history of salvation and the dream of St. Francis for future generations of friars. By carefully documenting events, they contribute to building a heritage of experiences and reflections that will serve as a source of inspiration for the future of the Order.

Fr. Ángel Edwin Montoya Montoya, OFM, responsible for the liturgy

As director of liturgy, Fr. Ángel shared his experience in organizing liturgical moments during these important events. He highlighted the special value of each celebration, which allows the Franciscan family to live intensely the Paschal Mystery of Christ through the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours.

A particularly significant moment was the opening of the event with the invocation of the Holy Spirit in the Chapel of the Portiuncula, during the Easter Season, in preparation for Pentecost. The Chapter of Mats then concluded with the Feast of Pentecost, at which time the Spirit of the Lord blessed the friars and sisters before they returned to their respective realities.

One of the main challenges was the preparation of liturgical texts in different languages, so that all participants could feel fully involved in the daily celebrations. Thanks to the collaboration of the student friars of the International College of St. Anthony, prayers of the faithful were prepared in several languages for the main celebrations.

For Fr. Ángel, this experience represented a “vocational awakening”, which allowed him to meet friars and sisters from different realities, united by the same Spirit and the desire to respond to the challenges of today’s world through the life of the Order.

Our most sincere thanks to all of them, in the certainty that their generous service has contributed to writing an important page in the history of our Order:

Br. Sergiusz Bałdyga, OFM (CPO Secretary)
 Br. Alvin Artemio Paras, OFM (CPO Deputy Secretary)
 Br. Juan Isidro Aldana, OFM (Secretary of Mats Chapter)
 Sr. Chiara Codazzi (Vice-Secretary of the Mat Chapter)

Br. Claudio Durighetto, OFM (Canonist)
 Br. Joseph Condren, OFM (Secretary - English)
 Br. Filippo Campolo, OFM (Secretary - Italian)
 Br. Danilo Bellorin, OFM (Secretary - Spanish)
 Br. Saulo Duarte, OFM (Bursar)
 Br. Byron Chamann, OFM (Communications Officer)
 Melania Bruno (Communications)
 Claudia Cirulli (Communications)
 Paolo Sbraga (Communications)
 Br. Salvador Burgos, OFM (Translation Officer)
 Br. Marco Mendoza, OFM (Interpreter)
 Br. Federico Gandolfi, OFM (Interpreter)
 Br. Gil A. Noriega Muniz, OFM (Interpreter)
 Br. Matteo Giuliani, OFM (Methodologist)
 Br. Vjekoslav Milicevic, OFM (Liturgy)
 Br. Angel Edwin Montoya Montoya, OFM (Liturgy)
 Br. Keith Warner, OFM (Final Document Drafting Committee)
 Br. Carlos Salto, OFM (Drafting Commission of the Final Document)
 Br. Lorenzo Raniero, OFM (Drafting Commission of the Final Document)
 The Staff of Domus Pacis



Interview to Br. Gil Noriega, OFM (Waterford, USA)



Interview to Br. Filippo Campolo, OFM (Italia)

Conclusion of the Plenary Council of the Order

Discernment and dialogue on the future of the Order



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On the 11th June, 2025, in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Angles at the Porziuncola, the Plenary Council of the Order of Friars Minor, a significant moment of discernment and dialogue on the future of the Order, ended.

The final day, moderated by Br. Jean Claude Kinombe, began with the fifth session dedicated to the proposal and choice of themes, modalities and place for the 2027 General Chapter. Subsequently, in the sixth session, the proposals were voted on and the report of the Council for Economic Affairs of the CPO, presented by Br. Saulo Duarte, Vice-Treasurer General, was heard.

The PCO outlined seven fundamental themes for the upcoming 2027 General Chapter:

- The mission shared with the Franciscan Family
- Living the Franciscan charism in synodal style
- The Franciscan charismatic identity
- Rethinking structures
- Ongoing and initial formation
- Evangelization
- Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation

As for the duration, an extension to 21-25 days has been proposed to allow for a deeper experience of synodality and contemplation. There are several places proposed to host the 2027 Chapter, with preference for places where the Order is experiencing a new spring.

In his final address, the Minister General, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, emphasized three profound movements that run through the Order: the transition from conservation to creative transformation, the movement from centralization to effective co-re-



Interview to Br. Francisco Gómez Vargas

sponsibility, and the transition from the historical geography to the current geography of the Order.

“We are not giving up,” said the Minister General. “Let us not fall into the temptation of the exiles of Babylon who said: ‘Our bones have withered, our hope has vanished’. Just as Francis did not allow his evangelical inspiration to be limited by the ancient monastic rules, we too choose the path of reform, with faith and boldness.”

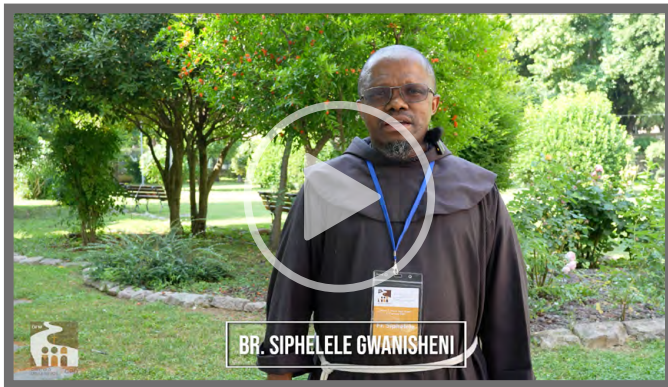
The Council concluded with a solemn Eucharist in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Angles, presided over by the Minister General. In his homily, reflecting on the figure of St. Barnabas, Br. Massimo invited the friars to be “children of consolation” in today’s world: “Like Barnabas, we are called to lighten our burdens. How many ballasts we carry

with us! How many structures that once served and have now become cages! How many “golds, silvers and sacks that slow us down on the way”! The Gospel asks us for freedom, lightness, agility to reach the ‘areopaguses’ of our time: the places where people live, suffer, hope.”

With an eye to the future and its heart anchored to the charism, the Order of Friars Minor continues its journey of renewal, faithful to the legacy of St. Francis and open to the signs of the times.

Read the address of the Minister General: [Italiano](#) [English](#) - [Español](#)

Read the homily of the Minister General: [Italiano](#) [English](#) - [Español](#)



Interview to Br. Sipehelele Gwanisheni



The CPO in pictures: watch the video

SEE THE PHOTO-GALLERY ON FLICKR



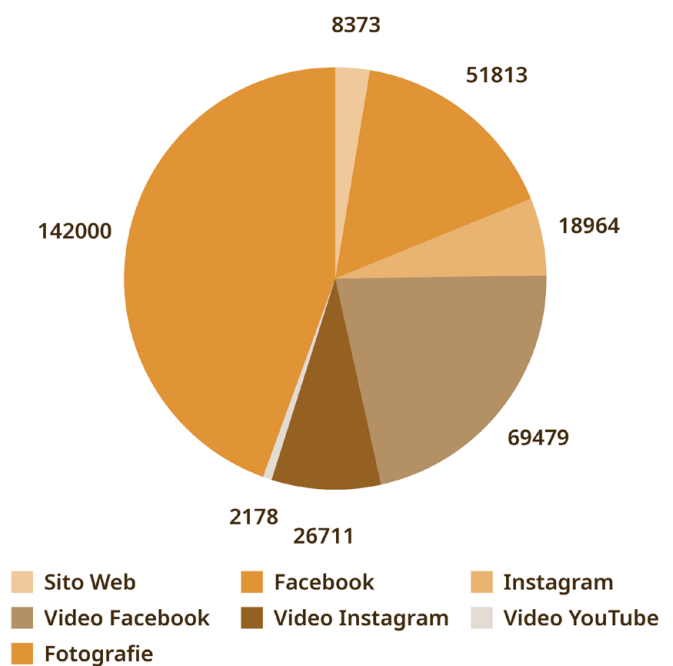


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Ordo Fratrum Minorum
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