

# ***Instrumentum Laboris*, in view of the composition of the *Ratio Evangelizationis***

- The project of the *Ratio Evangelizationis* started with the mandate received from the General Chapter (Rome, 2021) and is proceeding with this the *Instrumentum Laboris*, which we friars of the ECME (Executive Council of Missionary Evangelization) present to you after listening to many friars, both from the Order's Government and from different areas of expertise.

## **Preliminary questions**

We have accepted the call to live the Gospel in the following of Christ, and it is here that we hear the mandate of Jesus to go out into the whole world, adhering to the vocation received by Francis while listening to the Gospel at the Portiuncula. It is here that we discover our call as missionary disciples. Evangelizing for us means, first of all, allowing ourselves to be converted by the Gospel of Christ, which is spirit and life, to live it as brothers and minors, accepting the call to participate in the work of God who in the Spirit transforms the world on the path towards the Kingdom of God. This is why we are called by our way of life to "let the Gospel be seen". Wherever we are and whatever activities we promote, we can thus be a witness to the incarnate presence of God in creation, in people's lives and in the different realities and signs of the times. Evangelizing means collaborating with the work of the Father of Jesus Christ, who, in the power of his Spirit, wants to transform the world towards the fulfillment of his Kingdom. In this perspective, every fraternal presence of ours is in itself already a testimony aimed at Evangelization. This is why we speak of a *Ratio Evangelizationis* as an orientation for our mission in this world. Following Jesus' mandate to proclaim the Good News in all situations, we do not separate Evangelization ad-intra and Evangelization ad-extra, nor do we distinguish between Evangelization and Mission. We prefer to speak of our mission to evangelize according to the context and concrete situations using the term Missionary Evangelization.

## **I. The foundations of the Franciscan evangelizing vocation**

### **A. Biblical-theological foundation**

In addition to the other Gospels, Francis particularly cites the Gospel of Luke (cf. Lk 8:11-15; 9:3.24; 10:1-12; Lk 18:18-30), speaking of how the brothers should go through the world. Luke's Gospel thus offers a biblical basis for the vision of our Evangelization.

The world to which Luke addresses his Gospel reflects the reality of his time, in which many people are not yet aware of believing in Jesus Christ as a matter of faith, while others are open to the discourse of faith.

Luke presents Jesus, who, in the power of the Spirit, turns in a special way to the poor, the excluded, and the sick in body and spirit, to heal and save them. In Jesus' words and deeds, God's merciful and saving will is revealed. The disciples, with the help of the Spirit, are called to participate in this mandate of Jesus by proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed. Missionary Evangelization, to which every Christian is called, bears witness with one's life to the redemptive will of God revealed in Jesus Christ. This is why Evangelization starts with personal adherence to the Gospel, to give witness with

one's works and life. This is why all friars are called to preach through their lives and works. (cf. ER 17:3).

On a biblical basis, being evangelizers means being witnesses and participating in Jesus' mandate: "you will receive power from the Holy Spirit who will come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This testimony is not just a simple proclamation of the Gospel with words but requires the testimony of life, which makes one participate in the self-abasement of God in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, to proclaim his mercy by following in the footprints of "our Lord Jesus Christ".

## **B. Anthropological-theological foundation**

In following the poor and humble Christ (ER 9:1-2), we friars recognize that we are Pilgrims and Strangers in this world. That is why we do not appropriate places, persons, gifts or riches received (LR 6:1-4; Test 24) and are happy to be together with marginalized, ignorant and despised people in this world (cf. ER). Like St Francis and his early followers, as Pilgrims and Strangers, we try to be among people who have no space in this world to witness God's closeness among them.

As Evangelizing pilgrims, we proclaim that God in his Son became incarnate in the reality of this world as our Brother and Servant, sharing human life with patience and humility. Our mission to Evangelize bears witness to the self-emptying of the Son of God through our submission to all creatures, confessing that we are Christians (ER 16:6; SalVirt 17-18).

In the encounter with Jesus Christ, humble and poor, our Brother St Francis recognizes his presence in all his brothers and sisters. Therefore, he asks those who wish to share his vocation to form an evangelizing fraternity. This means sharing the joys and sorrows, the anxieties and hopes of all, and collaborating in conceiving and living the mission.

We want to remain on the road in a spirit of service, and for this, we are open to dialogue with everyone, with different cultures and religions. In a world increasingly characterized by multiculturalism, the fraternal spirit could also be particularly witnessed through fraternities composed of friars from different cultures. A multicultural fraternity can be a model of coexistence. Our witness to the Gospel would thus not be reduced to the transmission of a doctrine but would be an expression of fraternity that declares the Goodness of a God who loves all people and all creation. In the gift of the Spirit of the Lord, our service of Evangelization can express the reality of God, the Supreme Good.

With respect for the dignity of every man and woman, we want to increasingly promote the safeguarding of persons as a constitutive part of our missionary evangelization. On such a path, solicitude and concern for every person are explicitly manifested. To avoid any form of abuse, it is necessary to follow the local civil laws, the general teaching of the Church and the Bishops' Conferences, and the Order's directives.

Few, like Francis, have recognized that the dignity of the human being is also linked to his relationship with all creatures, recognized as brothers and sisters of humanity. Our evangelizing commitment, therefore, calls us also to take care of creation.

Our relationship with people and creation requires that we first allow ourselves to be evangelized based on our conversion to God to return to the primordial communion between people and all creation. It is a conversion that places us at the service of the growth of others according to God's plan of love, which includes a commitment to justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

Starting from the vision of universal fraternity and in the light of the social doctrine of the Church, one can speak of the principle of solidarity that characterizes all our witness, following Jesus, the good shepherd who always seeks the "lost sheep" (Lk 15:1-7) and is considered "the friend of publicans and sinners" (Lk 7:34). At the beginning of his conversion St. Francis embraced the leper (cf. 2 Celano 9), and thus received the gift of fraternity with the poor priests, with those on the margins of society, far from the places of power, beggars and lepers. As friars minor, we are aware that our vocation is marked by this stamp that must accompany our entire witness. Being at the side of those who suffer and being at the service of the least is a source of great joy: "And they must rejoice when they live among the lowly and despised, among the poor and the weak, the sick and the lepers, and among the beggars by the wayside" (ER 9:2).

This presence must have the same effects as that of the Lord: it is a healing presence, a presence that frees from evil and oppression, a presence that proclaims the Gospel, a presence that accompanies each person towards that ultimate goal which is their integral salvation (cf. Lk 4:18-19 quoting Is 62:1-3).

In our spirituality, this is the style of a humble presence, the fruit of conversion, characterized by minority and simplicity, a peaceful presence full of compassion.

It is a presence that addresses "glad tidings to the poor" (Lk 4:18), to the marginalized, the excluded and the most needy to manifest the beauty of God, his compassion and mercy.

When brothers walk together through the world, they establish cordial relationships with people, try to resolve conflicts through dialogue, and prove to be fellow travelers for all women and men in the joys and sorrows of daily life.

### **C. Theological-spiritual foundation**

The theological-spiritual basis of our Evangelization is found in the same vision of God as the Supreme Good, which is revealed in God's love and "liberalitas" (cf. ExhP; PrH 11), diffusive, fruitful, productive, communicative, dynamic, righteous, benign and merciful. This creative love of the Supreme Good bestows reciprocal and participatory communion and is generously manifested in the gratuitousness of mercy. These characteristics of the Supreme Good shape the being and virtues of the Friar Minor as evangelizer. Therefore, and according to St. Francis, to direct the evangelizing commitment in an attitude shaped by the virtues of the Good, "the Spirit of the Lord and his holy operation" is necessary (LR 10:8-10).

In this way, God's Goodness is spread through our evangelizing activities. This requires that our presence becomes dynamic and creative through ever-new forms of service according to the needs and requirements of different times and places

We seek to manifest God's saving presence in this world through the proclamation of love and mercy.

God's presence through us must also manifest itself in a contemplative dimension that is nothing other than nourishing our filial relationship with the Father through the Son in the Spirit.

As an evangelizing fraternity, we reflect God's communicative and dialogical dimension through our relationship with one another. This is why we seek to live in ever deeper communion, lived not only with people but with the whole of creation.

Communicating today means proclaiming faith, hope and charity, which pervade us and enable us to infect many with the joy that springs from the presence of the Spirit in us, who fills the reality that surrounds us with his gifts: manifesting it is the heart of every proclamation.

Our evangelizing work in this context is never "finished". It always includes a deep tension that we carry within us and that continues to groan to respond to the call to "sanctify the name of the Father" and to "spread his Kingdom", a Kingdom that is "already but not yet". It is an insatiable hunger like that of Jesus, whose food in every moment of his life was to "do the will of him who sent me and do his work" (Jn 4:34) at every moment of life.

## II. Context of the world we live in today

"We are living in an epochal change brought about by human action on the planet. Indeed, we are in a time when humanity and the planet are changing very rapidly ... Like most of humanity, friars are striving to make their way through the acceleration of transformation and social change." (PCO, Nairobi 2018, 87.88)

It is clear that the times in which Jesus and Francis lived, indeed, all times in history, have always been marked by wars, conflicts and pandemics, where the *mysterium iniquitatis* is very present and has always left its clouds. Our time, too, is like this, marked by all evils, with an even greater danger in that wars today could end all of humanity. Evil is known more and denounced, but it is always active and imposing. Therefore, we also discover the mystery of sin in our Church and behind the walls of our friaries, and many times it is cultivated in the hearts where Jesus should reign.

In this world, in living as witnesses, we must avoid 'demonizing' today's reality but also use wisdom and prudence, using all means to proclaim and announce the Gospel and make Emmanuel present among the people.

Sometimes we find ourselves in societies and cultures where there is no clear choice for safeguarding and prevention, or there is a lack of ways to deal with cases of abuse with justice and compassion. As we search for them, our service is to raise a prophetic voice to help "baptise the culture" and always defend human dignity.

We know that these abuses are often linked in a particular way to a disordered relationship with money and an erroneous perception of authority. For this reason, we must work in every way so that our relationship with money is "transparent, supportive and ethical" (Cf. Guide of the General Definitory for *Formation on the transparent, supportive and ethical use of our economic resources*, General Curia OFM Rome, 2014), and also so that the understanding and practice of authority as service grows.

It is also significant that we live in a globalized world that is changing rapidly and radically. In the face of this, it becomes increasingly important to learn how to use the new technical and virtual means competently and correctly so that they also become instruments of evangelization.

Similarly, we must consider the economization of life, with the dogmas of permanent growth and profit maximization, which creates new forms of slavery, poverty and floods of refugees. This situation requires not only first aid intervention for the victims but also evangelization as a prophetic commitment to justice and peace.

Considering religion as such, we are often faced either with the disinterest typical of secularization or with a "do-it-yourself" type of faith. The coexistence of different religions also increasingly characterizes our realities, and in some cases, we are faced with a clash of religions and cultures. All this requires a capacity for the authenticity of one's faith and readiness for dialogue.

### **III. Formation for missionary evangelization**

Formation is how we prepare ourselves to live our Christian and Franciscan principles if we are to be consistent with our calling.

It is essential then to say that the entire Formation Program must be a preparation of new evangelizers. Our life is not cloistered, limiting contact with the world to dedicate ourselves only to God, let alone a club, isolated and comfortable within ourselves, but it is an open life, in which our cloister is the whole world in which we dedicate ourselves to the search for God.

The essence of community should be characterized by openness, the ability to relate to each person and to create good, humanly balanced relationships, that lead to salvation.

An essential part of the Formation Program for postulants, novices and all the friars in initial formation should include participating in certain types of evangelization in the Order, especially those which refer to the corporal works of mercy and the kinds of evangelization characteristic of the Franciscan Entity to which the candidate belongs. Candidates are also invited to have the opportunity for participation/immersion in the works of evangelization which are not present in their Entity but are carried out in other entities of the Order. Practical involvement in evangelization projects should be complemented by sociological foundations that allow a critical analysis of the individual situation and thus promote appropriate behavior.

This reliable participation in the various types of evangelization should continue even after initial formation. The Secretariat for Missionary Evangelization, in cooperation with the Secretariat for Formation and Studies, should organize formation meetings with the friars of their own Entity to make the documents of the Order on this theme known, presenting the situation of the Churches as a whole and the activities of the Order with all its challenges, difficulties, failures and successes. This work of ongoing formation of the friars must always be enlightened by the evangelizing qualities of our Franciscan saints.

In the different phases and stages of the friar's life, each Entity is called to offer different experiences of the reality of evangelization (cf. RF 91). Therefore, intellectual formation must include the theme and practice of evangelization. When friars go to theological institutes that do not offer such a course, the Secretary for Formation and Studies and the Secretary for Missionary Evangelisation should find ways to provide the necessary course.

Formation for missionary evangelization must include theological, catechetical, charismatic, scientific, and practical dimensions, and be enriched by different spiritual and human experiences. It is essential to find a balance between these parts in order to favor a harmonious vision without running the frequent risk of concentrating on one dimension to the detriment of the others.

The Secretariat for Missionary Evangelisation should also offer the Government of its Entity themes related to Evangelisation for the monthly and annual retreats of the friars.

All the friars and the Secretariat for Missionary Evangelisation are invited to study new forms of Evangelisation that respond to the concerns and sensitivities of the present context and encourage the friars who feel this call to respond to this need.

Each friar must be personally accompanied in view of his formation for evangelization, which is continuous and ongoing. In this sense, it is necessary to maintain a good balance between personal and community projects.

Aware that "going to evangelize in a culture other than one's own" requires a great deal of balance at all levels, when a friar asks to go be sent to evangelize, his formators and guardians (previous and present) must be consulted on his human, spiritual, professional and charismatic suitability.

The criteria for assessing whether a friar can go out to evangelize in a culture other than his own are the same as those required to be a friar minor, especially the ability to be open to "this going forth". One must also be able to study and learn new languages and fit into other contexts and environments. Moreover, one must have the ability to communicate and create balanced relationships and sow the seeds of God's word everywhere. He must also have a high level of spiritual life so as not to lose his vital relationship with Jesus and the ability to listen and discern the voice of God that guides him. This also includes listening and discerning the needs of the people in the places where he is sent.

It is vital for the evangelizer to have an appropriate community to welcome him, especially the guardian of the house, who will accompany him in a fraternal manner, especially in the initial and crucial phase of his immersion (cf. RF 91).

The friar who evangelizes in a particular project must be followed by the Minister General, through the Secretariat for Evangelization, and his minister provincial.

#### **IV. Evangelization today: a response to God's call**

Evangelization today is a universal response which, starting from our identity as brothers and minors, guides us to respond to God's call according to forms of life offered by our Order in different parts of the world through our presence in so many social and ecclesial realities, rich and diverse according to the continents. It is a service in favor of the proclamation of the Gospel to those who do not know it or have forgotten it, for the poor and the different peripheries of our time, to share a living presence of witness and solidarity.

The following is a non-exhaustive overview of evangelizing activities today.

- Parishes and shrines, schools, education, and pastoral care, youth pastoral care, media and social work, spiritual care/chaplaincy (SFO, Franciscan Sisters, YouFra), health and care services, social services and humanitarian assistance (Aid for Life), hermitages, pastoral care of migrants and those displaced by war or disaster.
- Evangelization activities concerning justice and peace (social issues) and care of creation / integral ecology, not forgetting the Pastoral Care of Migrants.
- Dialogue as a way of Evangelization and mission among all (inter-religious, ecumenical, socio-cultural, etc.).
- Role and participation of formation in missionary evangelization.
- In the areas of collaboration and animation: within the structures of the Order, the offices (JPIC, SFS, Dialogue, Finance, etc.), the Conferences/Entities, the Franciscan Family, the lay collaborators, the local Churches, people of other faiths and cultures, and civil societies.
- Economy: as a means to support our missions of evangelization in a spirit of solidarity and co-responsibility and not as a privilege of appropriation and abuse.
- In cases of scandal and/or abuse in evangelization missions, in a spirit of fraternal responsibility and justice, for the hearers and/or victims concerned.

To offer guidance for evangelization in other distant cultures, it is necessary to consider different evangelization activities:

- dependent on the General Curia, common to several Conferences, entrusted to Provinces/Custodies, presence in complex and critical areas, new forms of evangelization.

## Questions addressed to the friars and laypeople

The questionnaire is divided into different areas that refer to the "*Instrumentum Laboris*" and is helpful in drawing up the *Ratio Evangelizationis* of our Order. The individual questions in each area will inspire reflection on the different issues, preferably in the local fraternities. To facilitate the participation of the Entities of the Order in the drafting of the Ratio, we ask that the answers be sent to the Evangelization Secretariat, preferably before 8 February 2023.

We wish you well in your work and, always, all peace and good in the Lord

Questions:

### **A. Evangelization as a vocational core**

1. What are the principles, means and opportunities that are used to promote the call to evangelization of each friar and fraternity in their Entity?
2. What gifts stimulate evangelization, and what are its obstacles?
3. What are the basic requirements for an evangelization project?
4. What attitudes and activities help ongoing and initial formation to nurture evangelizers adapted to the challenges of their environment?

### **B. The safeguarding of life as an expression of salvific love**

1. How can evangelization projects respond to the complex context of concern for creation, social justice and peace as an expression of saving love?
2. How can formation in respect and care for life be promoted, especially in safeguarding minors?
3. How are the different forms of authority, responsibility, and power lived out to safeguard life?
4. How can the various forms of clericalism and other forms unsuitable for evangelization be overcome?

### **C. The evangelising vocation is particularly fulfilled in being heralds of peace**

1. How are conversion, forgiveness and reconciliation promoted?
2. What tools are needed to analyze social, political, economic and ecclesial realities?
3. What Gospel principles can support commitment to peace, justice and the integrity of creation?
4. What is the role of the laity in collaboration in evangelization and in the promotion of peace and justice?

#### **D. Formation: a process for maturing as evangelisers**

1. How can the theory and experience of the evangelising vocation be integrated into the stages of initial formation? (cf. *Ratio Formationis Franciscanae*, Rome 2003 84-91.)
2. How can the growth process in the evangelizing vocation, r theoretically and practically, be promoted in ongoing formation? (Cf. *Called to Freedom, Document on Ongoing Formation in the OFM, Rome 2008, no. 19-24*).
3. How can the formation of multicultural fraternities be promoted?
4. What type of formation does the service of authority require in view of evangelization as fraternity?

#### **E. The vocation of being sent**

1. What principles help to live a presence in dialogue in a secularized, indifferent world, or a different culture and religion, in political systems that are not favorable to faith, etc.
2. What are the characteristics of suitability that a friar must possess in order to be sent to work in a particular project of evangelization?
3. To what extent, and in which manner should lay people (at whatever level) be included in the decision making process for evangelization projects?