

INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS FOR THE 2015 GENERAL CHAPTER

PRESENTATION

1. This document, the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the OFM 2015 General Chapter is based on investigations requested by the General Chapter of 2009, the 2013 *Lineamenta* and the responses to the *Lineamenta* received by the Secretariat of the General Chapter. A sub-committee, appointed by the General Definitorium, studied all the material received and, in view of the theme of the Chapter, *Fratres et minores in nostra aetate*, organized the present document into two major themes: *to live as brothers* and *to live as minors*. The purpose of the *Instrumentum Laboris* is to facilitate the reflection and the decisions to be taken in the context of the chapter itself, without pretending to describe exhaustively or to interpret the wealth of material that was used in the preparation of the Chapter.
2. Each theme receives first a description of the current situation, based on the *Report of the Study on the State of the Order*, followed by some insights or reflections on the situation, based on the responses of the brothers and Entities of the Order, with references to Franciscan and ecclesial texts, in particular to the apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. The presentation of each topic is followed by some suggestions that emerged from the responses to the *Lineamenta*, to assist in the drafting of any proposals during the work of the General Chapter.

Approach for the work

3. The *Instrumentum Laboris* serves as a pedagogical tool to stimulate fraternal dialogue among the capitulars, the sharing of experiences, concerns and hopes and finally, for the formulation of proposals to be considered at the level of the General Chapter of the Order and, consequently, in our Entities and especially in the life of each brother.
4. To achieve this, initially in the Chapter, there will be time for working in language groups. During these meetings, the groups are asked to evaluate, choose the suggestions discussed and make some proposals.
5. In a second phase the proposals drawn up in the groups will become the subject/object for the work of the Chapter Commissions, in keeping with the topics and with other reports presented during the General Chapter (the reports of the general Minister, Offices, the Loyalty and Perseverance Service, etc.). The approach to the work envisions the classification of the proposals into *Mandates, concrete Decisions and Guidelines*.

I: TO LIVE AS BROTHERS

INTRODUCTION

6. As is usual every six years, the Order has been called to celebrate its ordinary General Chapter from May 10 to June 7, 2015 in Santa Maria degli Angeli in Assisi, having as its main theme *Brothers and Minors in our Day*. In its declaration, the title is meant to articulate three elements: brotherhood, minority and the present time. We point out that the underlying question (to the theme) is how to be Brothers and Minors today.
7. The first part of this *Instrumentum Laboris* is dedicated to the theme of brotherhood today. Our *General Constitutions* express concisely the nature and implications of brotherhood when it presents it as an integral part of the radically evangelical life to which we are called and places it in connection with the spirit of prayer and devotion, penance and minority, with universal brotherhood and sisterhood and with the proclamation of the Gospel of justice, peace and the care of creation.¹ This perspective was gathered and developed by the General Chapter of 2009 as the logic of gift, introducing the new topic of dialogue with culture.² This perspective has inspired the content of this first part of the *Instrumentum Laboris*. We will leave for the second part the theme of minority and of the care and safeguarding of creation.

BROTHERS IN OUR LIFE WITH GOD

Situation

8. In the *Summary Report of the Study on the State of the Order* we discover clearly that about two-thirds of the brothers (59.2%) participating assiduously in common prayer, but then about 65% cannot establish the balance between work and prayer life. The imbalance is felt mainly by young and middle aged friars up to 65 years.
9. Almost half (45.1%) will complain that they do not see the Word of God valued in Community with a *prayerful communal reading* of it, and more than half (57.7%) said that there is no sharing of spiritual experiences in Community. The Communities are poorly prepared for the prayerful reading of the Word of God (*Lectio Divina*) (40%) and for the sharing of life and faith experiences among the friars (60%).
10. The same *Summary of the Report* says that while interest in the events of the local and the universal Church is statistically significant (85.1%), there is less attention given to socio-political events (69.1%) and to sharing with the poor and marginalized (63.9%). According to experts, it would seem that attention to the signs of the times, as ideal motivation for their own spirituality, has been replaced by the dominance of privileged attention given to the immediate context of each of the brothers, both the geographical and personal context (*a spirituality attentive to the signs of one's immediate context*); or, to put it better, *a spirituality of everyday life*.

Insights

11. According to St. Francis, the one who has made a religious profession “is received into obedience”.³ Meaning that attentive listening to the Word of God has an essential role in the life and service of the friars. Life in brotherhood, therefore, acquires the

¹ Cf. *CCGG* art. 1 §2. Online: <http://www.ofm.org/ccsogg/>

² Cf. “The Lord Speaks With Us On The Road,” Final document of the 2006 extraordinary general Chapter, 26-47. Online: <http://www.ofm.org/01docum/capgen06/docfinENG.doc>

³ Cf. *Rb* 2,11.

character of being a true “theological place” (*locus theologicus*), in as much as it is an environment conducive for listening to the voice of God. This presupposes that the spirit of discernment has a determinant role in our lives.⁴

12. The privileged space for listening is the Chapter, which should have “dealing with the things of God”⁵ as its top priority. This means that there should be a strong connection between moments of prayer (listening to God) and those dedicated to encounters among the brothers (listening to the brothers).
13. The question we have to ask ourselves during this Year is if and how we too are open to being challenged by the Gospel; whether the Gospel is truly the “manual” for our daily living and the decisions we are called to make. The Gospel is demanding: it demands to be lived radically and sincerely. It is not enough to read it (even though the reading and study of Scripture is essential), nor is it enough to meditate on it (which we do joyfully each day). Jesus asks us to practice it, to put his words into effect in our lives.⁶

Suggestions for drawing up proposals

- a. Review the form and content of common prayer.
- b. Resume the practice of *lectio divina*.
- c. Learn to listen to the voice of God through the reading of the “signs of the times” as they are the Word of God through which God speaks to us today, according to *Dei Verbum* 2.
- d. Use the practice of Franciscan discernment.

THE EVANGELICAL QUALITY OF OUR FRATERNAL RELATIONS

Situation

14. The survey carried out by the friars of the Order underscores that the greatest difficulties in living with joy our religious and Franciscan profession are represented by the lack of interpersonal communication in Community (46%), lack of internal organization (23.6%) and non-participation in the Community’s decision making (21%). The lack of satisfactory relationships in the life of the Community is also described as the greatest difficulty that makes it problematic and fragile the observance of the vow of chastity (41.8%). Moreover, the vow of obedience is often questioned by the strong desire for personal autonomy or individualism (36.1%), and attitudes of personal pride and arrogance (25.6%). From a structural and organizational level this seems to speak to the low value given by the Community to their local chapter (14.9%). Fellowship (fraternal communion) is often rendered difficult by an excessive workload and daily routines that alienate one from the life of the brotherhood (34%), with the added and grave problem of the lack of support from the brothers (30%).

⁴ Cf. *Gaudium et Spes* 4; *Bearers of the Gift of the Gospel, Final Document of the 2009 Extraordinary General Chapter*, 29-30. Online: <http://www.ofm.org/ofmnews/?p=2575>

⁵ Cf. *Rnb* 18,1.

⁶ *Apostolic Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to All Consecrated People on the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life (ACP)*, I,2. Online: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_lettera-ap_20141121_lettera-consacрати.html

15. In other words it is the painful and dramatic complaint of many friars which translates into forms of isolation, of individualism, of not enough brotherly love, lack of accompaniment and involvement, lack of care and concern for one another as to the life of the brothers, their personal work. (There is a) lack of the loving and friendly interest (not curious and gossipy), which makes the brotherhood ... a real family. In a word, we can identify it as the difficulty of creating and managing a continuity of satisfactory interpersonal relationships.⁷
16. The *Report* also highlights a problem of loneliness and the abuse of social media (Internet, mobile ...: 26.6%), as well as the lack of balance in friendships with women and the emergence of other affective fragilities.
17. On the other hand on a more positive note, the Survey demonstrates that the vocational choice of 27% of the Friars was motivated by the life of fraternity among the brothers.
18. 44.3% of the friars claim that their Community reveals *plenty* openness, dialogue and brotherhood with people of different cultures and religions, while for 20.7% the answer is even more positive, and they speak about *a lot* of openness, dialogue, etc ..
19. 53.9% of the friars also reveal the desire and necessity of an improved quality of the fraternal relations in Community for the revitalization of the Order.

Insights

20. According to St. Francis, our Vocation is to simply be Friars Minor:
21. ... let all in general be called Friars Minor⁸.
22. And among themselves let them observe what the Lord says: “Whatsoever you would that people should do to you, do you also to them,” and “what you do not wish done to you, do not do it to others.”⁹
23. And wherever the brothers are and may find themselves, let them mutually show that they are members of the same family. And let each one make his needs known to the other with confidence, for, if a mother nourishes and loves her son in the flesh, how much more earnestly ought one to love and nourish his brother in the Spirit!¹⁰
24. Even Pope Francis invites all Christians and therefore us, friars minor:
25. I especially ask Christians in Communities throughout the world to offer a radiant and attractive witness of fraternal communion. Let everyone admire how you care for one another, and how you encourage and accompany one another: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (*Jn* 13:35). This was Jesus’ heartfelt prayer to the Father: “That they may all be one... in us... so that the world may believe” (*Jn* 17:21). ... Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the ideal of fraternal love!¹¹
26. On the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life, Pope Francis invites us:
27. Men and women religious, like all other consecrated persons, have been called, as I mentioned, “experts in communion”. So I am hoping that the “spirituality of communion”, so emphasized by Saint John Paul II, will become a reality and that you

⁷ *Summary Report of the Study on the State of the Order*, p. 67.

⁸ *Rnb* 6,3.

⁹ *Rnb* 4, 3.

¹⁰ *Rb* 6,7-8.

¹¹ Pope Francis (Apostolic Exhortation) *Evangelii Gaudium: On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World (EG)* (Rome 2013), 99 and 101. Online: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html#The_special_place_of_the_poor_in_God%E2%80%99s_people

will be in the forefront of responding to “the great challenge facing us” in this new millennium: “to make the Church the home and the school of communion.”¹².

28. Consecrated men and women are also called to true synergy with all other vocations in the Church, beginning with priests and the lay faithful, in order to “spread the spirituality of communion, first of all in their internal life and then in the ecclesial Community, and even beyond its boundaries”¹³.

Suggestions for drawing up proposals

29. Promote training processes for Ministers, Guardians and those who have the task of animating the Communities.
30. It is urgent to take care of our personal formation throughout the whole of our existence with special attention to brotherly and personal accompaniment, with a particular attention given to the brotherly and personal project of life and mission.
31. Cultivate Community life with programmed and well planned prayer, with the Eucharist in Community, prayerful reading of the Word, spiritual exercises, celebrations of our saints ...
32. “Work” on human maturity: our woundedness, self-knowledge, the human and spiritual conditions of life in brotherhood. Special attention should be given to the emotional maturity/sexuality in relation to the vow of chastity; speak clearly about the issue and address it openly; help to balance the affective relationships and take care of affective-sexual problems.
33. Educate ourselves about the responsible use of communication tools;
34. Search for adequate and qualified means to manage conflicts in Community.
35. Reestablish the Chapter as the primary place of mediation and animation of Community life, (as the place) to develop the project of our fraternal life, to learn and exercise discernment, to hear the Word of God and the brother.

LAY BROTHERS

Situation

36. The survey on the current state of the Order provides data that invites reflection on the theme of our lay brothers. Faced with 66.8% of the friars of the Order who are clerics, 25% are lay. This is consistent with the fact that 21.3% of the brothers claimed that from the beginning of their vocational call they cultivated a desire to be priests, while only 9.5% said they have felt attracted by the vocation of the lay Franciscan life from the beginning. When it comes to identifying difficulties that prevent joyfully living their religious consecration 25.4% of the friars interviewed noted the highlighted clericalism of our formation and mission. This last figure seems to be confirmed by the fact that of the 14 pastoral areas where the brothers work 63% of the personnel of the Order are concentrated in parish and shrine ministry alone.

Insights

37. In light of the data reported and the coinciding *Year of Consecrated Life* with our General Chapter, it seems opportune to return to deal with the theme of the lay brothers. Pope Francis invites us to do so when he says that this type of findings related to the declining number of lay religious, which are sometimes found in other

¹² ACP II,3.

¹³ ACP II,3.

contexts, is not in itself a sign of the times that signals the end of the lay religious vocation, but rather an invitation to discern what the Lord is asking us.¹⁴ We cannot overlook his vigorous denunciation of clericalism as one of the worst evils in the Church and of hypocrisy as its fruit, so much so that he calls all to fight it at all levels, including the formation houses and seminaries.¹⁵

38. In this sense, the lay brothers in the Order offer a valuable counterpoint to clericalism because they remind us that in the moment of its foundation, the “little group of brother, the seed of the Franciscan Order, in this founding moment precedes any distinction by ministry. They are just believers who wish to take the Gospel seriously”.¹⁶ This is something that we should not forget in this time when in the Order we are talking insistently about the need to reflect on our identity..
39. The Order, for its part, has offered a number of points to be taken into account especially for formation. The 2009 General Chapter reaffirmed the need for a united formation program for all the brothers, but always respectful of each (candidate’s) gift and of the different vocations awakened by the Spirit. The Chapter wonders if clericalism in the Order has to do with the fact that some formandi with a lay vocation choose the clerical option “simply because they do not find spaces with other dynamics of formation outside the clerical *cursus*.”¹⁷ It also seems convenient to invite the Chapter to reflect seriously on the specific inclusion of the lay brother in the life and mission as a sign of the “ecclesiological conversion” suggested by the 2009 General Chapter.¹⁸

Suggestions for drawing up proposals

40. The Chapter needs to once again make a request to the Pope so that what was accepted in the 1994 Synod on Consecrated Life (the decision on the so-called “mixed institutes”) be brought to fulfillment as announced in *Consecrated Life*, 61.
41. Evaluate the opportunity to promote regional and/or general meetings of lay brothers.

EVANGELIZING BROTHERS

42. Evangelization is an element that is strictly tied to our life as brothers. The Survey shows that when it comes to the area of evangelization, the greatest area of commitment is that of parish ministry and preaching (50.6%).
43. At a certain distance are other areas of engagement: social commitment to the poor, the sick, the elderly (22.1%), preaching/spiritual direction (21.1%), youth ministry and vocation (19.3%). Even less is the commitment to pastoral education in schools/colleges (15.7%), the pastoral care of Shrines (12.4%), the administrative services of the Order (11.2%), missions to the people (10.1), in collaboration ‘lay associations (8.4), openness to new forms of evangelization (7.7%), the artistic and

¹⁴ Antonio Spadaro, S.J. “Wake up the World!: Conversation with Pope Francis about the Religious Life” with the *Gathering of General Superiors*, held in Roma the 29th of November 2013; published in Italian in *La Civiltà Cattolica* 3925 translated by Donald Maldari, S.J. (2014) 8..

¹⁵ “Wake up the World!” 8.

¹⁶ *Bearers of the Gift of the Gospel*, 6.

¹⁷ *Bearers of the Gift of the Gospel*, 26.

¹⁸ *Bearers of the Gift of the Gospel*, 25.

cultural field (7.1%), the field of journalism and new media (6.2%), volunteering and international trade (1.7%).

44. To a request for evaluation of the nature of the Franciscan evangelization, more than half of the responses to the questionnaire (54.7%) considered most appropriate to the Franciscan charism a ministry that consolidates an ecclesial life that is truly communal and supportive, alongside a second choice majority (49.6%) that favors giving silent testimony by good example.

4a. Evangelizers in fraternity

45. An ecclesial and truly fraternal life that is supportive and communitarian is not only the fruit but also the subject of Franciscan evangelization. Therefore we need to focus on the theme of *evangelizing in brotherhood*, not just as individuals.

Situation

46. Where a Community is engaged in an evangelization project designed and managed in common we find positive results were recorded primarily in terms of fraternal life: brotherly relations grow, (the brothers get) to know and value each other better, they actually have some shared experiences. Even the practical management of pastoral commitments becomes simpler: if a friar is missing it is not a problem to replace him with another. There are also positive results in terms of pastoral effectiveness: people notice the difference between this proposal and other testimonies. They perceive it as a different, more effective and more Franciscan proposal. On the other hand it was found that cooperation within the Community is sometimes difficult, sometimes even impossible. The failure of this project can create ruptures between brothers, members of the Community. Some brothers in the same Community do not want to participate in a shared project, and therefore sometimes only some brothers get involved, but not all.

Insights

47. Our *General Constitutions*¹⁹ affirm the relationship between Brotherhood and evangelization:
48. §1 The whole fraternity, that is the Order, the Province, the House, as well as every friar, is not to live for itself alone; it must benefit others, and seek for that same fraternal fellowship with all mankind which it cultivates in its own midst.
49. §2 Since this fraternal fellowship, based on prayer and penance, is the first and foremost witness to the Gospel and a prophetic sign of a new human family, the manner of life of the friars among the nations is to be such that whoever sees or hears them will glorify and praise the heavenly Father.
50. And Pope Francis, addressing us, the consecrated, writes:
51. We can apply to the consecrated life the words of Benedict XVI which I cited in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*:
52. “It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but by attraction”. The consecrated life will not flourish as a result of brilliant vocation programs, but because the young people we meet find us attractive, because they see us as men and women who are happy! Similarly, the apostolic effectiveness of consecrated life does not depend on the efficiency of its methods. It depends on the eloquence of your lives, lives which radiate the joy and beauty of living the Gospel and following Christ to the full.²⁰

¹⁹ CCGG Art. 87 §1.2.

²⁰ ACP, II, 1.

Suggestions for drawing up proposals

- ^{53.} Verify the possibility and eventually propose that each Community come up with at least one pastoral project that can be shared by the entire Community

4b. Evangelization and cultural formation

- ^{54.} Culture is another (important) element of Franciscan evangelization. The percentages mentioned (above) clearly express the tendency to conceive the commitment to evangelization just at a parish level and not as a cultural dialogue. This tendency should be called into question. We are less and less prepared to evangelize in the sense of encounter and dialogue with contemporary cultures.

Situation

- ^{55.} Work and commitment in the cultural field seems to be quite neglected by us, although it must be noted that the friars who work in arts - cultural (7.1%) are especially friars with a high academic degree (38%), but also with at least a bachelors degree (34%); almost half are young people under 45 years of age; they are primarily priests, but the presence of lay brothers is particularly high (36%); they operate especially in Western Europe (44%) in South and Central America (19%).
- ^{56.} As regards this situation, we need to remember the recent situation of some of the Order's centers of study and research which are in trouble and/or in crisis.

Insights

- ^{57.} Our *General Constitutions* affirm the need for a commitment on the part of the Order for the promotion of a solid intellectual formation for the friars:
- ^{58.} §1 Franciscan studies, as well as philosophical and theological studies, are to be encouraged and pursued with special care in the Order and in the Provinces.
- ^{59.} §2 The greatest attention is to be given to forming teachers skilled in spirituality, Franciscan history, philosophy and theology, who are to minister spirit and life according to the mind of St. Francis and the other Masters of the Order²¹.
- ^{60.} Intellectual preparation is important for evangelization of cultures and for the Inculturation of the Gospel. So says Pope Francis:
- ^{61.} In countries of Catholic tradition, this means encouraging, fostering and reinforcing a richness which already exists. In countries of other religious traditions, or profoundly secularized countries, it will mean sparking new processes for evangelizing culture, even though these will demand long-term planning. We must keep in mind, however, that we are constantly being called to grow. Each culture and social group needs purification and growth.²²

Suggestions for drawing up proposals

- ^{62.} How do we begin an organic and sustained (ongoing) project for re-founding a cultural/intellectual level in the Order? The elements of such a project are:
- ^{63.} Rethinking our centers of study (restructuring or the creation of new centers), possibly at an inter-Franciscan level.
- ^{64.} Preparation of highly qualified friars.

²¹ CCGG art 166.

²² EG 69.

4c. Brothers in Shared Mission

Situation

- ^{65.} We should not forget the *ad extra* dimension: shared mission with those who are not part of the Order. In the laity in general and the Franciscan in particular we have a great potential for evangelization of which we cannot deprive neither the Church nor the Order.
- ^{66.} But the survey results show that only 16.8% of the brothers considers shared mission as a priority for the revitalization of the Order and only 17.1% (see it) as an effective support for evangelization.

Insights

- ^{67.} The 2009 General Chapter affirmed:
- ^{68.} We, (friars minor), feel ourselves called to promote evangelization with the laity as an act of authentic *response to* the Gospel, gift of God for all His Church. In this way the laity exercise their right and duty of *keeping, practicing and professing the faith they have received*.²³ The lay person is an evangelizer by right, not by gracious concession, even less as a kind of substitute to supply for a lack of personnel. As a consequence, we must enter into an “ecclesiological conversion” that will help us overcome the clerical mentality that still prevails among some brothers²⁴.

Suggestions for drawing up proposals

- ^{69.} We need to encourage new forms of spirituality and participation of the laity in our lives and in our spirituality, even through the various forms of “associate members”²⁵.

²³ *Dei Verbum*, 10.

²⁴ *Bearers of the Gift of the Gospel*, 25.

²⁵ Cf. John Paul II (Apostolic Exhortation) *Vita Consecrata: On the Consecrated Life and its Mission in the Church and in the World*, (Rome 1996), 56. Online: http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031996_vita-consecrata.html

II. LIVING AS MINORS

Introduction

70. Having dealt with the theme of Brotherhood we now turn to take care of its complement: Minority. In the union of both we find our identity because, according to the Old Testament biblical tradition, identity resides in the name. Our name speaks of an eminently relational identity: we are brothers and we are minors. If Brotherhood specifies the *type* of relationship that we are called to establish with all, Minority defines the place from which to establish this relationship: not as indefinite affirmation of the subject rather as an attitude and spirituality that leaves space for the existence of the other.
71. In this regard it is useful to remember that in a short intense and beautiful text, the 2006 Extraordinary General Chapter indicated that Minority, besides determining both our fraternal relations and our commitment to evangelization, is also a matter of mystic because it leads us to discover in every “other” that we encounter the presence of God, the radically Other.²⁶ Having begun to walk on this path, we Friars Minor are called to be the relationship that recognizes and affirms otherness in all its dimensions: human, cosmic and divine. Our name is a whole way of life, action and spirituality.

MINORS CONFRONTED WITH GENTRIFICATION/SECOLARIZATION

Situation

72. Given the responses of the survey, it can be noted that 19.2% of the friars expressed the desire for a more radical evangelical choice, expressing the will to live a greater sobriety and austerity in their own religious life. 26% consider the lifestyle of the Order too bourgeois (they speak of a *bourgeois tranquility*), with a negative impact on the spiritual life. This situation is capable of causing a crisis of faith and a loss of the friar’s Franciscan identity (25, 5% 9). Still, 48% of younger friars aspire to a radical evangelical witness. Among the emerging priorities (there is a) demand for a more explicit commitment to a simpler and supportive lifestyle (47%). The responses to the *Lineamenta*, many deal with this point, in different entities of the world: the responses (especially, but not only, from Africa and Europe) show a desire for a simpler life (in clothing, food, lifestyle) and a concern to give example of a simple life. The responses also ask for the relinquishment of the superfluous. Some speak of a lifestyle that is too “maiores!”
73. On a more positive note it is observed that in some Provinces and countries the brothers live the simplicity of their vocation and are careful to use their property more simply and poorly. They are happy with this and the simplicity of their life becomes a testimony and revelation for the people. In some countries of northern Europe secularization, which has existed for a long time, has allowed the Community to choose a simpler lifestyle (that is) closer to the poor.

²⁶ Cf. “The Lord Speaks With Us on the Road,” 28.

Insights

- ^{74.} In chapter 10 of our *Rule*, St. Francis admonishes the friars “in the Lord Jesus Christ to beware of all pride, vainglory, envy, avarice, care and solicitude of this world”²⁷.
- ^{75.} He expresses himself in this way in *Admonition 19*:
- ^{76.} Blessed is the servant who does not regard himself as better when he is esteemed and extolled by people than when he is reputed as vile, simple, and despicable: for what a person is in the sight of God, so much he is, and no more, Woe to that religious who is elevated in dignity by others, and who of his own will is not ready to descend. And blessed is that servant who is raised in dignity not by his own will and who always desires to be beneath the feet of others.
- ^{77.} Pape Francis insists on the authenticity of religious life: “It depends on the eloquence of your lives, lives which radiate the joy and beauty of living the Gospel and following Christ to the full.”²⁸
- ^{78.} The Pope admonishes us forcefully in *Evangelii Gaudium* to “go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the “peripheries” in need of the light of the Gospel.”²⁹ He cautions us against the ecclesiastical gentrification, which is “worldly spirituality.” He describes it very well:
- ^{79.} Spiritual worldliness, which hides behind the appearance of piety and even love for the Church, consists in seeking not the Lord’s glory but human glory and personal well-being. It is what the Lord reprimanded the Pharisees for: “How can you believe, who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?” (*Jn 5:44*). It is a subtle way of seeking one’s “own interests, not those of Jesus Christ” (*Phil 2:21*).³⁰

Suggestions for drawing up proposals:

- ^{80.} How do we deal with the crisis of faith connected gentrification and lack of accompaniment.
- ^{81.} How do we help the brothers live in this time of secularization without losing their Franciscan identity.
- ^{82.} How do we help the brothers choose a simpler lifestyle, both personally and in Community? How do we do ongoing and suitable formation and accompaniment for discernment and a more simple and sober use of goods (car, internet, clothes, food)?
- ^{83.} How do we live with the poor and as the poor?

MINORS WITH/FOR THE POOR**Situation**

- ^{84.} Given the responses to the *Lineamenta*, we recognize that the poor today are identified in an extraordinarily diverse range of categories, which go far beyond just the materially poor. We recognize as poor the sick, the excluded and marginalized, the despised and forgotten, the desperate and devoid of meaning of life and of hope, the hungry of food and of God, the most fragile, the less gifted, women excluded and abused, the unborn child, the homeless, drug addicts, migrants, victims of human trafficking, refugees, indigenous peoples and those in the peripheries, the abandoned elderly and also the exploited and manipulated creation.

²⁷ *Rb* 10, 7; Cf *Rnb* 17,9.

²⁸ *ACP* II,1.

²⁹ *EG* 20.

³⁰ *EG*, 93; especially consider the section on worldly spirituality (93-97).

85. According to the *Report* of the survey on the situation of the Order, a fairly large number of friars is engaged in the field of social services for the poor, the elderly and the sick (22.1%) and the attention to the poor has a certain importance for the very life of the friars. The survey also reveals other significant data. The simple life of the people with which the friar works becomes a source and a stimulus for his own spiritual development (89.1%). Less incisive is the sharing of life with the poor and the marginalized (28%). The need for more direct immersion in the lives of the poor/marginalized is felt by 30.8% of the sample: about one in three friars. It is a sentiment that recalls the above mentioned priority referring to a simple and supportive lifestyle. About a third of the brothers feel the need to work for the poor, drug addicts, AIDS patients, alcoholics, and homeless people (32.9%). There is a rather low number of brothers who ask to have a common life with the poor, the marginalized, the drug addicts, so as to share everything with them (24.6%). Lower still is the percentage of those who feel the need to share material goods with the poor (14.7%) or to work to alleviate poverty of others (13%).

Insights

86. For our (brother) St. Francis, the encounter with the leper was a decisive experience in his itinerary of conversion. He recognized it as a true grace from the Lord:
87. for when I was in sin it seemed to me very bitter to see lepers, and the Lord Himself led me among them and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, that which had seemed to me bitter was changed for me into sweetness of body and soul. And afterwards I remained a little and then I left the (world).³¹
88. Francis indicates to his brothers a life led among the poor and marginalized as the place of true joy:
89. And they ought to rejoice when they converse with lowly and despised persons, with the poor and the weak, with the infirm and lepers, and with those who beg in the streets.³²
90. In our *General Constitutions* the option for the poor is widely stipulated and developed. It is first of all an imperative for all the brothers, because it's part of the "sequela" of Christ who became poor for us (Cf. Art. 97§1), it means to live among them and learn from them (Cf. Art. 66 §1 and 93§1), to share goods with them (Cf. Art. 72§3), to observe events and read reality from their (point of view) (Cf. Art. 97§2). Helping and serving the poor must contribute to their coming to a greater awareness of their dignity, so that they (themselves) will defend it and grow in it (Cf. Art. 97§2), and it also means to defend their rights and denounce anything that affects them (cf. Art. 69§1-2), to struggle for justice and peace (Cf. art. 96§2). This claim of rights must start from the (perspective of) minority, by closely monitoring against any temptation of power with the practice of nonviolence (Cf. Art. 69§1), avoiding even to judge the great, the powerful and the rich (Cf. Art. 98§1).
91. From the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis has given witness with words and actions a particular predilection for the poor. The choice of his name was inspired by St. San Francis, especially because of his love for the poor. (The Pope) desires a poor Church for the poor. For him, the Church's "option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one.

³¹ *Test* 1-3.

³² *Rnb* 9, 2.

God shows the poor ‘his first mercy’.”³³ According to him, no one can remain far from the poor.

92. Spiritual conversion, the intensity of the love of God and neighbor, zeal for justice and peace, the Gospel meaning of the poor and of poverty, are required of everyone.³⁴
93. According to the Pope, we should be capable of taking a position in the face of the present economic and cultural model:
94. today we also have to say “thou shalt not” to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. ... Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded. We have created a “throw away” culture which is now spreading.³⁵
95. Faced with such a reality, Pope Francis asks all Christians openness and good will “to seek, as a Community, creative ways”³⁶.

Suggestions for drawing up proposals

96. Enhance Franciscan evangelization with the following elements: sharing bread with the poor, participation in social movements of liberation and initiatives in favor of human rights and the resolution of human problems; creating spaces for the poor to exercise their creativity with our support; proclamation of the good news of the Gospel, accompanied by compassion towards people who suffer.
97. Create new forms of life, of service, of presence and witness to the Gospel, especially in geographical and spiritual “margins, even accepting the inevitable downsizing connected with these choices.”
98. Create Communities of insertion, as a presence in the “margins,” (Communities) of closeness and service to (those who are) “without”, to the poor, the marginalized, the “invisible and disposable” of our society and (Communities that) defend their rights and claims, denouncing the injustices of the powerful . A greater use of this type of Community can stimulate more to live the radical nature of our charism.
99. Orient initial and ongoing formation in the perspective of minority, so that it promotes encounters with the poor as the place of our conversion, of our seeking God, of communion with the realities-limits of the human being that help us to avoid the “comfortable life” to overcome the culture of individualism, consumption, prosperity so as to embrace our life as friars minor freely.

MINORS IN ECONOMY

7A. TOWARDS A TRANSPARENT ECONOMY

Situation

100. In light of the responses to the *Lineamenta* it seems that (only a) few brothers find it important to make a living with their labor (18%). On the other hand, there are signs that indicate it is hard to be minors and to live as minors; (signs such) as the standard for a safe and comfortable lifestyle in Communities that are not affected by the general economic crisis, the widespread practice of unduly "appropriating" money received, as well as roles, assets and jobs (which are) considered personal. The reports of the General Visitors on this point generally agree that often, too often, in the

³³ EG 198.

³⁴ EG 201.

³⁵ EG 53.

³⁶ EG 201.

Provinces there is no transparent economy. In many cases it is individual, focused on (personal) well-being rather than solidarity and communion.

- ^{101.} On the other hand, we find that many brothers feel the need to recover a deeper meaning to minority in that dimension that concerns the living *sine proprio* and in solidarity. Many Communities in the Order live in simplicity, with an austere lifestyle, open to giving of the "surplus" of their local economies, open to (assisting with) the challenges and emergencies that come to their attention. In fact, 47% of respondents call for a direct and explicit commitment to a simpler and supportive lifestyle. A commitment that they can transform every friar into "a prophetic (sign) by the example of their lives, in order to refute "the false values" of our age"³⁷.

Insights

- ^{102.} Being minors is the radical expression of the *sequela* of Christ, who emptied and humbled himself (*kenosis*), who washed feet and entered into solidarity with fragile and sinful humanity. Minority is the concrete means of living *sine proprio*, of avoiding undue appropriation regarding God, our brothers and sisters, ourselves and all of creation.
- ^{103.} Let those brothers to whom the Lord has given the grace of working labor faithfully and devoutly, so that in banishing idleness, the enemy of the soul, they do not extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion, to which all temporal things must be subservient. They may, however, receive as the reward of their labor, things necessary for the body for themselves and their brothers, with the exception of currency or money, and let them do this humbly, as befits the servants of God and the followers of most holy poverty³⁸.
- ^{104.} Our General Constitutions state: "All the friars are to use money in a way that befits the poor"³⁹.
- ^{105.} Pope Francis claims that when money is transformed into an idol, a fetish, people become its slave and in fact deny the primacy of the human person. The Pope strongly affirms: "Money must serve, not rule!"⁴⁰; because of this we need to recover an ethic that send us to a God that is outside and above all market laws⁴¹.
- ^{106.} The general Definitorium in its letter to the Order for the Feast of St. Francis in 2012⁴², asked itself how we can live our choice of poverty today in a more faithful and significant manner. It proposed "a demanding assessment of our way of life, of the effective implementation of the *sine proprio*, the economic organization of our institutions." And it asked itself:
- ^{107.} How do we justify personal bank accounts or keeping goods for oneself (wages, pensions, offerings, etc.) that belong to the fraternity and which should be shared with the poor in most need? Are we being honest with society by paying the taxes? Are we doing the right thing under the law with our workers? [...] How can we instill courage and hope in the new poor, if we ourselves cannot manage to do without many "unnecessary needs"⁴³.
- ^{108.} In the most recent resource *The Franciscan Management of Finances* states:

³⁷ CCGG art. 67.

³⁸ Rb cap. 5; Cf. Test 20-22.

³⁹ CCGG art. 82 § 1.

⁴⁰ EG 58.

⁴¹ A deeper analysis of this can be found in EG 52-59.

⁴² "Supportive and Responsible: The Friars Minor in the Current Crisis." Letter of the General Definitorium - Feast of St. Francis (2012).

⁴³ "Supportive and Responsible."

- ^{109.} Entities that receive grants from any source (even from the general Curia) must be sure to administer the funds transparently, exercising great care to use them for the purposes for which they were requested, and meet all requirements of the funding agency when the project is finished. Regarding donations there must be careful discernment. Some are good and create no problems. Others should not be accepted, not even to be used later for good purposes, because they come from unjust circumstances or from “dirty money”. From the earliest times Christian tradition has asked that the Church not accept this type of offering.⁴⁴

Suggestions for drawing up proposals

- ^{110.} Propose specific strategies to implement fraternal and transparent economy both in terms of the Order and the individual Provinces and local fraternities.
- ^{111.} Render a financial report to the Community of personal bank accounts. Investigate the banks where we put our money, controlling what types of investments are made with our money.
- ^{112.} Review our spaces, our property in view of a more effective promotion. Be more effective and practical in the exercise of our poverty, taking as reference the poor of our time.
- ^{113.} Reinforce solidarity between the Provinces of the Order at all levels (economic, competencies, organizational).

7B. TOWARD AN ECONOMY OF COMUNION AND SOLIDARITY

Situation

- ^{114.} The *Summary of the Report on the State of the Order* gives answers regarding the poor sharing of goods between the different Communities of the same Province, especially in those regions where there is great poverty; in short, (there is) a certain asymmetry in the distribution of assets among the different fraternities. On the other hand, the survey shows that the need to work for a fair and supportive economy is still very low among the brothers (19.2%) or (the need) to promote forms of political, social and cultural participation (12.2%).
- ^{115.} The *Lineamenta*, citing the report, says that few friars believe in the importance of sharing of material goods with the poor (14%), or to practice an effective solidarity with the victims of injustice or alleviate the poverty of others (13%).

Insights

- ^{116.} Our spirituality and tradition offer us very important keys for understanding and discernment. St. Francis was convinced that all goods, spiritual and material, belong to God who gives them for the good of all: they do not belong to us personally.⁴⁵ We have received them as administrators to place them at the service of all.
- ^{117.} To this is connected the restitution. For Francis sharing or solidarity is a logical consequence of his concept of ownership. For him, God is the sole owner of all goods that He distributes generously to all people.⁴⁶ The use of things is determined by the

⁴⁴ *Franciscan Management of Finances: A Formation Aid from the General Definitorium on the Use of our Economic Resources in Ways that are Transparent, Ethical and in Solidarity* (Roma 2014) 19. Online: http://www.ofm.org/documentsOFM/Sussidio_Economia_EN.pdf

⁴⁵ Cf. *Rnb* 17,18.

⁴⁶ Cf. *2Cel* 77.

- need: things are for those who need them. For Francis the gift of the coat to the poor is nothing more than restitution, understood as justice: he felt like a thief if he did not share what he had with those who needed it most.⁴⁷
118. In our profession we have promised to use all things “in poverty and humility,” and to use our goods in such a way as “to be shared for the benefit of the poor.”⁴⁸. The *General Constitutions* request that all friars “consider work and service as a gift of God. For this reason they are to present themselves as (minors) of whom no one is afraid, because they seek to serve and not to dominate”⁴⁹.
119. Admitted that our poverty is always a bit anomalous, because it never indicates insecurity or a total lack of security, we recognize that the word “poverty” (for us) “does not indicate an absolute absence of goods, but rather, a responsible and justifiable use of things – an *aesthetic of what is a sufficiency*, as opposed to the prevailing culture of consumerism. [...Secondly] If we desire to be poorer, including in a material sense, we begin by sharing the goods we use with the poor of our time.”⁵⁰
120. Pope Francis tells the Christian Community, including us: “I exhort you to generous solidarity and to the return of economics and finance to an ethical approach which favors human beings.”⁵¹.
121. And in the previously mentioned letter for the 2012 Feast of St. Francis, the general Definitorium affirms:
122. Our choices in the area of consuming, saving, and sharing are important contributions (or deprivation) to build a solidarity economy that is in service of the person and of all peoples. For this reason, we must also be aware that this new solidarity economy will not only be the result of high economic policy decisions, but will also stem from what we can offer by the way we live and act. ... a sharing economy really makes us brothers of the poor and the least.⁵²

Suggestions for drawing up proposals

123. Establish specific strategies to implement a broader economic solidarity with the poor by participating in initiatives already in place in society (for example with the "micro-credit").
124. To question ourselves if the money that is given to the poor is actually used completely for the poor.
125. Reflect on the possibility of use of the property on behalf of the poor.

MINORS IN THE SAFEGUARDING OF CREATION

Situation

126. According to the results of the investigation on the current state of the Order only a 8.3% of the Friars include ecology in their notion of minority, far below of being

⁴⁷ Cf. *2Cel* 87; 92.

⁴⁸ *CCGG* 72 § 1.3.

⁴⁹ *CCGG* 76 § 1.

⁵⁰ *Pilgrims and strangers in this world: Resource for Ongoing Formation from Chapter IV of the OFM General Constitutions* (Roma 2008), 89 Online: http://www.ofm.org/documentsOFM/Pellegrini_sussidioING.pdf

⁵¹ *EG* 58.

⁵² “Supportive and Responsible.”

agents of justice and peace (15.9%). A fifth of respondents (21%) believe that the commitment to justice, peace and protection of creation should be a priority in the next six years, although, paradoxically, this commitment is put in third place among the forms of evangelization most typical of the Franciscan charism. On a scale measuring "very much - enough - little - not at all," the care of the material things in a spirit of respect towards creation is located in an average between very much and enough while safeguarding creation, understood as a personal and communal commitment of the friars in the face of new global challenges and (our) OFM priorities, stands at an average of between little and enough. It is noteworthy that the safeguarding of creation does not appear among the needs of initial formation. With reference to this subject, ongoing formation has not been taken into account in the *Report*. In short, we can say with the *Lineamenta* there is a lot lacking to develop a real "Franciscan ecology" and that the latter has not entered at all in the overall sensitivities of the friars.

Insights

- ^{127.} The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, which has a programmatic character for the life and mission of the Church in the coming years⁵³, indicates as one of the main tasks evangelizing of the Church today the delicate care of fragility in all its manifestations, human and cosmic, which are threatened by the economic model in which we are immersed and the culture of success and privatization, generated by this model.⁵⁴ The *Lineamenta* situate themselves in the same line of thought when they denounce the relationship between economy and ecology emphasizing that the system of market economy in which we live promotes a "scrap" economy, which is one of squandering and exploitation that lacks an ethics of natural resources.
- ^{128.} Therefore we, Friars Minor, find highly significant and feel challenged by the expressions with which Pope Francis concludes the discussion on the care of universal fragility:
- ^{129.} Small yet strong in the love of God, like Saint Francis of Assisi, all of us, as Christians, are called to watch over and protect the fragile world in which we live, and all its peoples⁵⁵
- ^{130.} But how should we understand the expression "like St. Francis of Assisi?" Not just or primarily *by his example*, but rather *in his own way*, and that way is marked by Minority. It is beginning with (a sense of) minorite brotherhood that Francis establishes a new relationship with creation. By calling "brother and sister" all creatures, he exempts them from the self-referencing domination of humanity who assigns to them the only end of serving humankind. Francis rather, sees (all creatures) as an end in themselves and therefore beings with their own dignity. So, Minority lies at the origin of a new way of relating with the creation. The Extraordinary General Chapter of 2006 signaled very clearly the consequences (of this) for the evangelizing mission of the friars.⁵⁶

⁵³ EG 18, 25.

⁵⁴ EG 209-215.

⁵⁵ EG 216.

⁵⁶ "The Lord Speaks With Us On The Road," 30.

Suggestions for drawing up proposals

- ^{131.} Promote in the Order a process of ecological conversion inspired by the resource *Care for Creation in the Daily Life of the Friars Minor*, published by the Office of Justice and Peace in 2011.⁵⁷
- ^{132.} Promote in initial and ongoing formation an understanding of Minority which includes the safeguarding of creation as an indispensable element.
- ^{133.} Make the necessary choices to make our economy an alternative to the current economic model, in a spirit of respect for the human person and the environment.
- ^{134.} Find forms of participation and collaboration with organizations involved in the management of environmental justice issues.

PRAYER

- ^{135.} Lord, together with the grace of work,
grant us the *Spirit of prayer and devotion*,
to commit ourselves with greater enthusiasm to your creative work;
brotherhood to live in communion, to discern, choose and do our work together;
minority and *humility*, to overcome all forms of fear and power;
liberty, to keep from appropriating works and to initiate new forms of presence;
gratuity, to put out all desire for wealth and accumulation;
solidarity, to sensitize ourselves to and be with and work with the poor;
justice, to abandon all forms of abuse;
honesty, so as to use goods in a poor and fraternal manner.
Lord, through our lives and our commitment,
may we *return to You* by way of the poor and needy,
all the goods that we have received from You. Amen!

⁵⁷ *Care for Creation in the Daily Life of the Friars Minor*, published by the Office of Justice and Peace in 2011. Online: http://www.ofm.org/01docum/jpic/DailyLifeEcology_ENG.pdf