



VI Chapter of Mats Under Ten OFM

Instrumentum Laboris

(Assisi, July 4-12, 2026)



ORDO FRATRUM MINORUM

MINISTER GENERALIS

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PRESENTATION BY THE MINISTER GENERAL

Yaoundé (Cameroon), June 8th, 2026

It is with joy and gratitude that I present and deliver this *Instrumentum laboris*, the fruit of a shared journey and preparation for the Sixth Chapter of the Mats *Under Ten* OFM, which will gather us in Assisi in July 2026. We do so in a singular time of grace: we are in the heart of the Franciscan Centenary of the Easter of St Francis of Assisi (1226-2026), a grateful commemoration of that event that marked the fulfillment of a life entirely conformed to the poor and crucified Christ.

From the letter of convocation, we have desired that this Chapter be not a meeting designed for you, but a journey built with you. For this reason, welcoming the indication of the General Definitory and the synodal style that the Church is giving us, the Preparatory Commission promoted a broad consultation among all friars with less than ten years of solemn profession and then led five continental pre-chapters. More than five hundred of you responded to the survey, and just as many took part in the continental meetings, offering questions, expectations, struggles, and dreams. The pages that follow gather the fruits of this listening and present them for the common reflection of the entire Order.

From this process, two transversal cores clearly emerged: being **brothers on mission**. These are not abstract words. They refer to a fraternity lived between hope and fragility, in intergenerational dialogue, in the relationship between clerical and lay friars, in authority understood as service and care; and a mission that seeks the peripheries of our time, inhabits the digital continent with creativity, and protects the health and emotional balance of our brothers. You have been able to honestly name both the joys and the wounds: I thank you for this frankness, because shared truth is already an act of fraternity.

It is in this context that the Gospel words chosen as our motto resounded forcefully: "**You are all brothers**" (Mt 23:8), taken up by Saint Francis in the Earlier Rule (Rnb 22:33) and placed as the title of Chapter III of our General Constitutions. It is a word that reminds us that fraternity is not an achievement of our own, but a gift received – "the Lord gave me brothers" (Test 14) – and that it is precisely from this given identity that a credible mission arises.

I therefore entrust this text to you not as a conclusion, but as a common basis for prayer, reflection, dialogue, and discernment during the days of the Chapter. I ask you to approach it with the heart of those who return to the source: to the Porziuncola,

where everything began, and to the Gospel, where everything finds meaning. Your enthusiasm, your creativity, and your capacity for discernment are a gift for the entire Order, also in view of the General Chapter of Pentecost 2027.

May the living memory of Saint Francis, the protection of Our Lady of the Angels, and the ever-renewed action of the Holy Spirit accompany our journey, so that this Chapter may be an authentic encounter with the Lord, an experience of fraternal renewal, and a sign of hope for the future of the Order.

Yours fraternally,



Br. Massimo Fusarelli
Br. Massimo Fusarelli, OFM
Minister General

Prot. MG 089/2026

Introduction

The Sixth Under Ten OFM Chapter of Mats is being held at a particularly significant moment for the entire Franciscan Family, as we find ourselves in the midst of the Franciscan Centenary commemorating the Passover of Saint Francis of Assisi (1226–2026), a grateful remembrance of that event which marked the culmination of a life wholly conformed to Christ, poor and crucified.

In his letter of convocation for this gathering, the Minister General, Fr. Massimo Fusarelli, recalled that the Chapter takes place “in the heart of the Centenary of Saint Francis,” and presented it as a “precious occasion” to renew our gaze and our fidelity to the Gospel, following in the footsteps of our Seraphic Father. Likewise, he expressed the desire that the young friars may offer the Order their enthusiasm, creativity, and capacity for discernment in order to face the challenges of the present and prepare for the future.

The Sixth Under Ten OFM Chapter of Mats seeks to be, as the Minister General noted, an occasion for listening, participation, and shared reflection, in which the friars themselves are protagonists through their contributions and proposals. The Chapter aspires to become a true space of fraternal communion, discernment, and co-responsibility for the journey of the Order.

At the same time, this gathering is set within the horizon of the General Chapter of Pentecost 2027. For this reason, it is expected that the participants will contribute actively to the common reflection of the Order, offering proposals born from the realities, hopes, and challenges experienced by the Friars Minor in the various cultural and pastoral contexts of the world.

The preparatory commission, following the directive of the General Definitory, promoted a broad consultation through a survey among the Under Ten friars of the Order and subsequently organized various continental pre-chapters, with the aim of listening to the voices, concerns, dreams, and worries of the new generations of brothers.

Therefore, this *Instrumentum Laboris* gathers the fruits of that process of listening and offers a common basis for prayer, reflection, dialogue, and discernment during the days of the Chapter.

May the living memory of Saint Francis, the protection of Saint Mary of the Angels, and the ever-new action of the Holy Spirit accompany our journey, so that this Chapter may be a true experience of encounter with the Lord, of fraternal renewal, and of hope for the future of the Order.

Historical Synthesis of the Under Ten OFM Chapters of Mats

The Under Ten OFM Chapters of Mats were born as an initiative of the General Government of the Order of Friars Minor to listen to the voice of the younger brothers and to foster their active participation in the life and future of the Order. Inspired by the historic Chapter of Mats convened by Saint Francis in 1221, these international gatherings have sought to strengthen communion, Franciscan identity, fraternity, and discernment regarding the challenges of the mission in each era.

First Chapter of Mats (September 1995) – Santiago de Compostela, Spain

“Walking together”

The first gathering brought together more than 200 friars from 55 countries. The motto “Walking together” was developed as an itinerary of faith and fraternal encounter: walking together as fraternity, united in diversity, as pilgrims and itinerant brothers, in the joy of penance and open to the future.

Convened by Br. Hermann Schalück, Minister General, as an international experience of communion, it sought to listen to what the Spirit was saying to the Order through the young friars. The Chapter reflected on fraternity, cultural diversity, itinerancy, formation, vocations, mission, and the contemporary challenges of Franciscan life. The participants highlighted the importance of fraternal love as the force that sustains vocation and expressed the desire to build the future of the Order from hope, justice, peace, and solidarity.

Second Chapter of Mats (21-29 July 2001) – Canindé, Brasil

“Lord, what do You want me to do?”

The success of Santiago led the General Chapter of 1997 to request the continuation of the initiative. In Canindé, 168 brothers from 58 countries participated, representing the fifteen Conferences of the Order. For the first time, the profile of the participants was clearly defined: friars under 35 years of age and with less than ten years of solemn profession. The objectives were to promote communion, fraternity, and mission in the new millennium. The gathering, convened by Br. Giacomo Bini, Minister General, insisted on the need to recover the charismatic freshness of Franciscan origins and to avoid allowing religious life to become trapped in overly institutionalized structures.

Third Chapter of Mats (1-8 July 2007)) – Holy Land

“According to Your Word”

Celebrated in the context of the preparation for the Eighth Centenary of the foundation of the Order, this Chapter had listening as its central axis. The Minister General, Br. José Rodríguez Carballo, presented it as an opportunity to listen to the dreams, hopes, difficulties, and fears of the young brothers, as well as to renew Franciscan profession in the places where the Christian faith was born.

The pilgrimage to Nazareth, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Mount Tabor made it possible to unite reflection, discernment, and spiritual experience. The participants renewed their commitment to the Gospel and received the Rule of Saint Francis as a sign of their vocation. The implicit motto of the gathering was to return to the sources in order to listen to the Word and renew life.

Fourth Chapter of Mats (2–10 June 2012) – Guadalajara and Mexico City, Mexico

“The Beatitudes and the Franciscan Identity”

With the participation of approximately two hundred friars, the Fourth Chapter was held under the theme “The Beatitudes and the Franciscan Identity.” Following the itinerary proposed in the letter of the Minister General, Br. José Rodríguez Carballo, “Rekindling the gift of the vocation that is within you,” the participants reflected especially on the first three Beatitudes as the foundation of the life of the Friars Minor.

The gathering was marked by intense intercultural dialogue and by a deepening of Franciscan identity as a condition for a meaningful mission in the contemporary world. From Zapopan to Guadalupe, the Marian dimension accompanied the process of mutual listening and vocational renewal.

Fifth Chapter of Mats (7–14 July 2019) – Taizé, France

“Friars in dialogue”

The Fifth gathering was held in the context of the eighth centenary of Saint Francis’ encounter with Sultan Malik al-Kamil. For this reason, the central theme was “Friars in Dialogue” as an expression of the Franciscan vocation to fraternity. In the ecumenical and contemplative environment of Taizé, the participants reflected on dialogue with God, with the brothers, with other religions, and with the contemporary world.

The Minister General, Br. Michael Perry, emphasized that fraternity is born from the interdependence of all creatures and that dialogue is a path of conversion, transformation, and the building of peace. The gathering strengthened the universal dimension of Franciscan fraternity and the need for a culture of encounter in a world marked by polarization.

Towards the Sixth Under Ten OFM Chapter of Mats

Across its five editions, the Under Ten Chapters of Mats have shown remarkable thematic continuity. Santiago de Compostela emphasized walking together; Canindé, communion and mission; the Holy Land, listening and discernment; Mexico, Franciscan identity; and Taizé, dialogue and universal fraternity. Each gathering has been a concrete expression of the Order’s willingness to listen to its younger friars and to recognize in them a privileged place where the Spirit continues to renew the charism of Saint Francis.

In order to prepare the Sixth International Under Ten Chapter of Mats, the General Definitory, in its session of 23 September 2025, constituted a preparatory Commission composed of Br. Daniel Rodríguez Blanco, OFM, Director of the General Office for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC), as coordinator; Br. Héctor Gonzalo Collipal Osses, OFM, Rector of the Fraternity “Blessed Gabriel Allegra,” as vice-coordinator; and the brothers Br. Anicetus

Evaristus Jebada, OFM (Indonesia), Br. Josip Jazvić, OFM (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Br. Daniel Cavalieri, OFM (United States of America), and Prof. Richard Kakule Mahamba, OFM (Democratic Republic of the Congo).

This Commission has accompanied the preparation process of the Chapter through the listening to the Under Ten brothers of the entire Order, the drafting of the present *Instrumentum Laboris*, the design of the working methodology, and the coordination of the various logistical, formative, and organizational aspects of the gathering.

The Sixth Under Ten OFM Chapter of Mats, to be held in Assisi in July 2026 under the motto “You are all brothers” (Mt 23:8; *Regula non bullata* 22:33), appears as a mature synthesis of this historical journey. It takes up the two major axes emerging from the survey carried out among all Under Ten friars of the Order and confirmed by the continental pre-chapters—fraternity and mission—and places them at the very heart of the Franciscan experience, inviting the young friars to return to the sources of the Gospel and of the charism in order to renew together their vocation in the context of the eighth centenary of the Paschal mystery of Saint Francis.

Survey and Analysis of Results

The Minister General, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, and the General Definitory asked the Preparatory Commission for the Sixth Under Ten OFM Chapter of Mats to organize the gathering following the synodal model that the Church is promoting, especially in its participatory methodology.

In addition, the brothers of the General Government of the Order requested that a theme be proposed from which to develop the gathering. In light of these indications, the members of the Commission decided to prepare a survey addressed to all Under Ten friars of the Order, with the aim of exploring the concerns, frustrations, hopes, desires, and challenges of this emerging group.

Based on the results of the survey, an analysis was carried out that made it possible to identify the most relevant and transversal themes for the Under Ten OFM.

Working Instrument

The recipients of the survey were the friars with less than ten years of Solemn Profession in the Order of Friars Minor. According to the database of the General Curia OFM, as of November 2025 there were approximately 1,610 Under Ten brothers, which constitutes 100% of the target population.

The survey was designed by the Preparatory Commission with the help of the subsidium published by the General Curia OFM *Our Vocation*. Between Abandonment and Fidelity (Rome, 2019), and was prepared in the three official languages of the Order, namely English, Spanish, and Italian.

The survey was sent in Google Form format on 8 January 2026 to the Secretaries of the Entities, Secretaries of Formation and Studies, and Moderators of Ongoing Formation, with a response deadline of 31 January 2026. Participation in the survey was voluntary.

518 Under Ten brothers responded to the survey, representing 32.17% of the total population. The distribution of participants by language was as follows:

English: 184 (11.43%)

Spanish: 191 (11.87%)

Italian: 143 (8.88%)

Among the possible reasons why 67.83% (1,092) of the brothers did not respond to the survey, the following may be noted:

Personal lack of interest.

The survey did not reach the intended recipients in some Entities.

The instrument was available only in three languages, which may have made it difficult or discouraging for those who do not master those languages.

The timeframe established was short or not sufficiently suitable.

Although the survey was not completed by the entire population, it is considered valid, as it reflects the representativeness of the various regions of the world where the OFM is present, as well as different years of Solemn Profession and age ranges. This is evidenced by the participation percentages by Conferences:

CEM (Europe): 48 (9.27%)

San Jerome – SLAS (Europe): 32 (6.18%)

Northern Slavic (Europe): 13 (2.5%)

ESC (Europe, USA, Canada): 25 (4.83%)

COTAF (Europe): 14 (2.7%)

CONAMO (Holy Land, Egypt, Morocco, Turkey): 17 (3.28%)

ESAC (Africa): 26 (5.02%)

CAF (Africa): 80 (15.44%)

Brazil – Southern Cone (Latin America): 76 (14.67%)

Bolivarian (Latin America): 40 (7.72%)

Santa María de Guadalupe (Latin America): 69 (13.32%)

SAAOC (Asia): 16 (3.09%)

EAC (Asia): 62 (11.97%)

Total: 518 (100%)

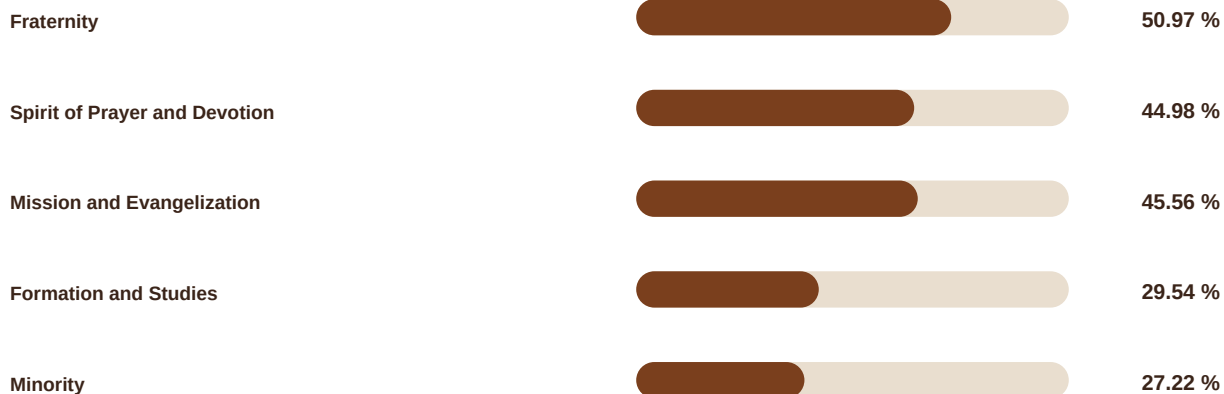
The margin of error is high, since the response was anonymous, allowing a person with access to the link to respond even if they did not belong to the surveyed population segment, or to respond more than once, thereby potentially affecting the validity of the sample.

Results of the Survey

The six questions in the questionnaire—five closed-ended and one open-ended—were preceded by some informational questions, such as the Conference of belonging, the year of Solemn Profession (with an average of 2020), age (average age 36.82), and whether the brother was a clerical brother (73%) or a lay brother (27%).

The following presents the results of the first five questions.

Question 1. Based on the priorities of the Order, with which of them do I feel vocationally satisfied?



Spirit of prayer and devotion

Mission and evangelization

Formation and studies

Fraternity

Minority

Question 2. Where do I find the greatest satisfaction in my life?



The realization of my personal life project in my Entity

Continuity between initial formation and ongoing formation

The quality of fraternal relationships

Prayer and devotion

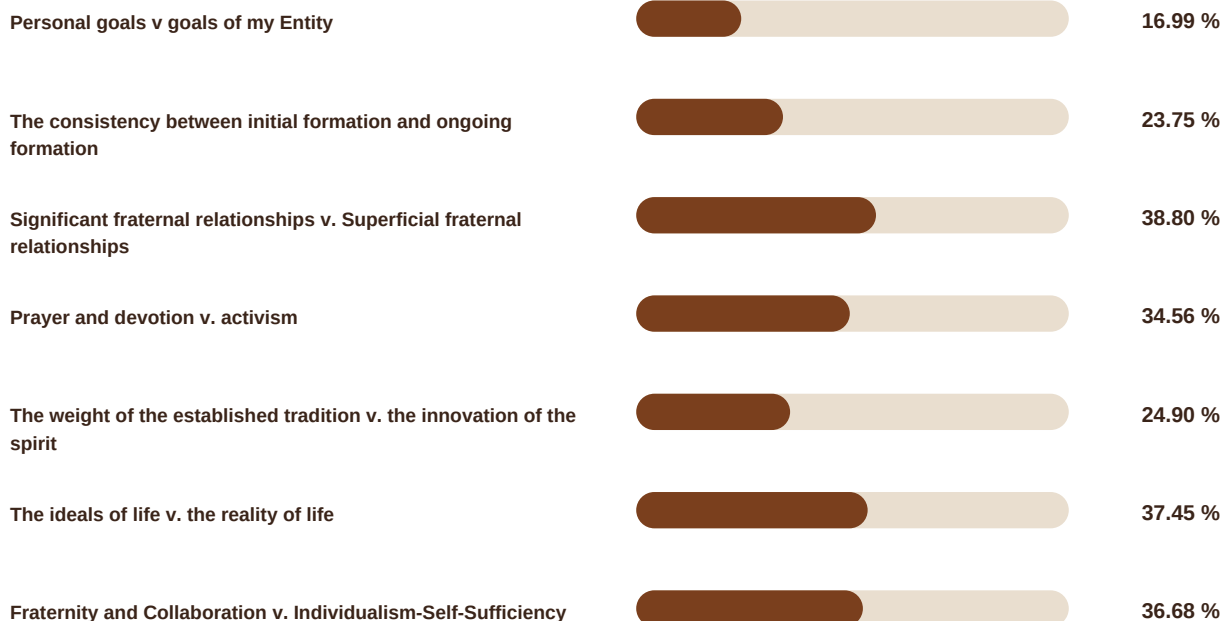
Work/service

The sense of belonging in my Entity

Coherence and testimony of personal and fraternal life

Other.

Question 3. What are the greatest tensions that accompany you at this moment in your life?



Personal life goals vs. the goals of my Entity

The consistency between initial formation and ongoing formation

Meaningful fraternal relationships vs. superficial fraternal relationships

Prayer and devotion vs. activism

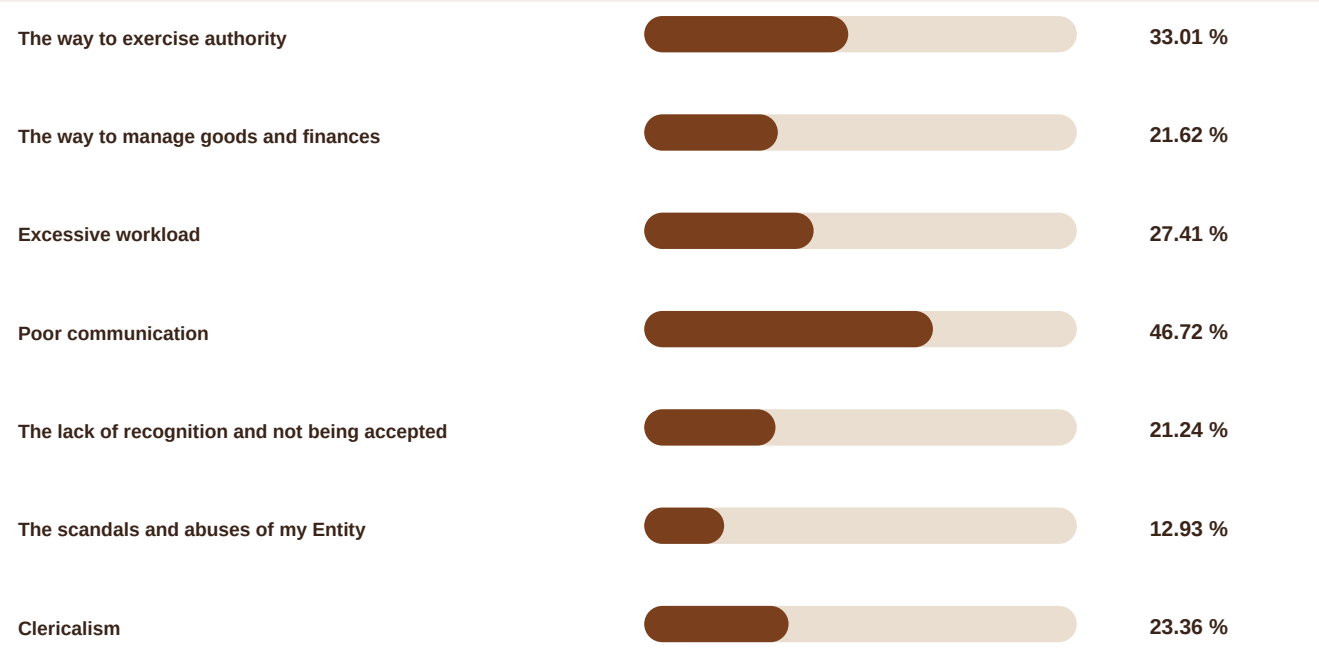
The weight of structures vs. the novelty of the Spirit

The ideals of life vs. the reality of life

Fraternity vs. individualism/self-sufficiency

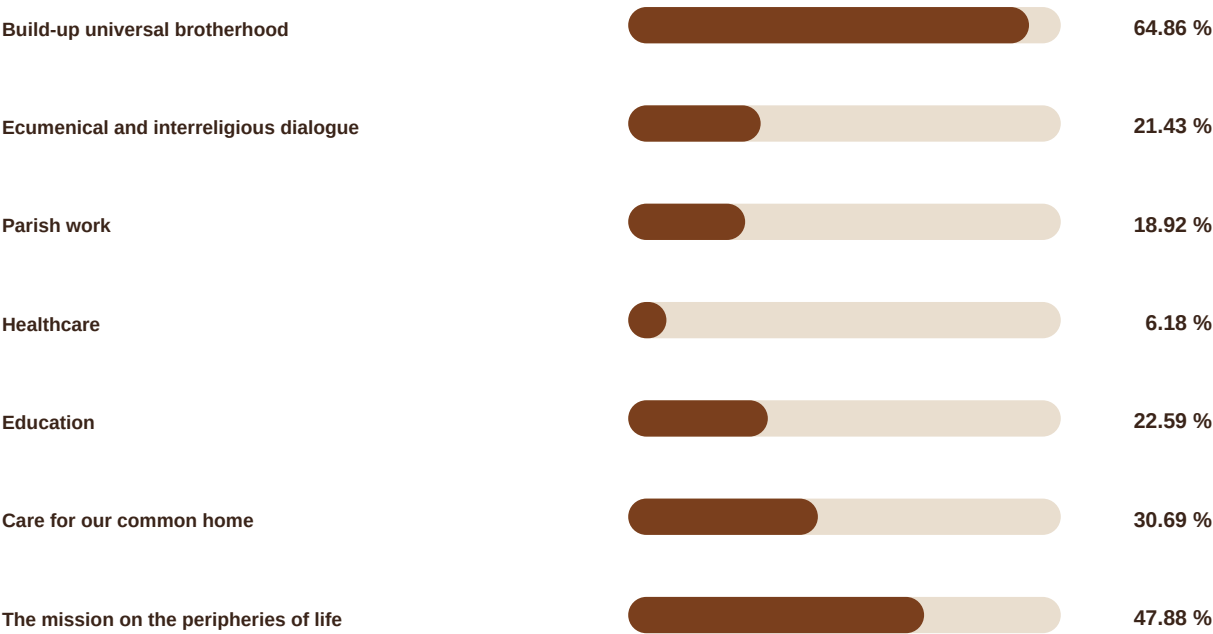
Other.

Question 4. Which of the following items produces the most frustration for you?



- The way authority is exercised
- The way goods are managed
- The excessive workload
- The lack of communication
- The lack of recognition and welcome
- Scandals and abuses in my Entity
- Clericalism
- Other.

Question 5. In your view, what is the most important singular contribution that, as an Order, we can offer to the world?



- Building universal fraternity
- Ecumenical and interreligious dialogue
- Parish ministry
- Healthcare service
- Education
- Care for our common home
- Mission in the peripheries
- Other.

Analysis of Results by Themes

To the results presented above, a broad and rich variety of thematic proposals was added, gathered in response to Question 6, formulated as follows: “Propose two themes that you would like to see addressed in the next Under Ten OFM Chapter of Mats.”

The Preparatory Commission, with the help of artificial intelligence and two external professionals, undertook the task of interpreting the survey results by developing thematic cores from which it was possible to discern the key themes for the Sixth Under Ten OFM Chapter of Mats.

Fraternity. Between Hope and Vulnerability

The first theme, confirmed in a very strong and consistent way, was that of fraternity, understood as a central and priority theme, that is, the strongest and most transversal core. Fraternity appears as the greatest source of vocational satisfaction and, at the same time, the principal space of conflict. In practice, it is experienced with various tensions between the ideal and the real. At least three sub-themes related to fraternity are highlighted.

■ Intergenerational Dialogue

The young Franciscan friar has often lived his first years surrounded by peers of the same generation. After ten years, the reality of the Order invites him to live with people of different ages, cultures, and perspectives.

In the survey, some of them express a generational clash, as they do not succeed in achieving a form of coexistence marked by close and trusting communication with older friars,

characterized by a lack of equality, integration, collaboration, understanding, recognition, respect, and mutual appreciation

experienced as a need to create intergenerational bridges that allow each generation to be and do what is proper to it, while maintaining and strengthening communion.

Therefore, some:

ask: “How can we strengthen understanding, trust, and collaboration between generations of friars, while respecting tradition and responding to present realities?”

hope for: “Equality in fraternal relationships: older friars should not look down on younger ones simply because of their age. We may have less experience, but we have great enthusiasm.”

suggest: “Intergenerational fraternity dynamics.”

express the need for: “Practical approaches to living fraternity: conflict resolution, shared responsibilities, and mutual support in mission.”

highlight: “The role of young friars in aging provinces: the possibility of developing new projects, the right to dream.”

propose: “Involving younger friars in provincial leadership (fresh blood).”

call for: “Sharing concrete experiences among young friars: mutual support, listening, service.”

ask: “What are the expectations and vision regarding the care of the elderly, given the growing percentage of elderly friars in our province and in others that may be in a similar situation? Given the decrease in vocations, what are the expectations and the role of younger or newly arrived friars with regard to the care of the elderly?”

recommend being “fraternal and compassionate, as well as realistic and sincere.” and suggest “that all provinces have a geriatric residence for the care of elderly friars and those with terminal illnesses.”

In short, it is not a question of rebelling against the older friars nor of passively submitting, but rather of developing an intergenerational dialogue in which the religious brings his own perspective without losing his sense of belonging to the concrete fraternity.

■ Between Friar Priests and Lay Brothers

Characterized as unequal, discriminatory, and affected by clericalism: “In some countries, a significant distinction is made between lay brothers and priestly brothers. In many fraternities, lay brothers feel less valued or less involved in decision-making and in the mission.”

Therefore, some:

ask: “How is formation provided from the very beginning to both priest friars and lay brothers in order to live mutual respect, shared responsibility, and fraternity without hierarchies, where different ministries serve a common vocation?”

see the need to: “reflect on concrete ways of promoting equality, shared responsibility, and mutual respect between lay brothers and priestly brothers, so that we may truly live as one fraternity, under one Rule and with one heart.”

suggest: “an increasingly active and recognized participation of lay brothers.”

propose: “to empower lay brothers to assume major responsibilities in the Order, even without being priests, since all are Brothers of Saint Francis of Assisi,” with the aim of achieving “an authentic fraternity and a co-responsible synodality in the governance dynamics of the Order.”

emphasize the “importance of meaningful relationships and group dynamics to foster interaction and a sense of belonging,” and “authentic and high-quality fraternal relationships,” as well as the need to “heal wounds in fraternity” and “live as brothers and not as clerics.”

■ **Minority and power: authority as service**

The survey shows that young religious value fraternity and communion, but struggle with authoritarian and rigid structures of governance. They express the need to be formed in a synodal model in which the young friar feels that his voice and vision are valued and contribute to the community.

Likewise, a tension between superiors and subjects is noted, characterized as “abuse of power and authoritarianism,” deficient communication between both, and negligence in the exercise of authority.

Therefore, some:

ask: “How can we foster a renewal of the vocation of being Friars Minor that strengthens the relationship between superiors and the other friars, whether members of the community or in formation stages?”

suggest: “to analyze the impact of abuse of power and authoritarianism on communities and spiritual life, and to promote accountability and resistance, as well as respect and servant leadership.”

propose: “dialogue with authority.”

broaden the theme to the exercise of authority “in the life shared between friars and lay people who collaborate with us.”

consider that: “We must also seriously address the lack of communication among those responsible. They do not seek to communicate with their peers.”

propose: “reviewing fraternal communication within the fraternity,” including “provincial communication between the provincial government and the communities.”

point to examples of negligence such as:

“the ‘double life’ of some brothers;”

“friars who commit serious moral or fraternal faults and are not invited to leave the Order;”

“friars who steal and remain, leading us to consider misappropriation of goods as something normal;”

“brothers who simply do what they please;”

“brothers who remain in the same community for a long time.”

Identity–Mission in the Face of a Global Shift of Era

The survey expresses a need to redefine what it means today to be a Friar Minor, how to live this identity in today’s world, and what is to be done in the face of an era shift.

The most important contributions that the Under Ten friars believe the OFM can offer to the world, while fully corresponding to the charism of the Order, largely coincide with the priorities in which friars experience the greatest vocational satisfaction:

- a. Building universal fraternity**
- b. Mission in the peripheries**
- c. Care for our common home**

Therefore, some ask:

“How can we live the charism today and what is expected of friars in the present time?”

“How can we maintain Franciscan spirituality and charism in our time?”

“On what practical elements should true fraternity be built in the current context?”

“Given the ongoing historical transition, what are we called to leave behind and what are we invited to manage?”

“How do we remain faithful missionaries without losing ourselves as brothers? (Mission in a changing world: poverty, migration, digital culture; avoiding burnout and isolation; living minority and humility in leadership and ministry).”

“The lifestyle of friars, in particular the balance between apostolic work, ongoing formation, and fraternal life, in light of current pastoral and existential challenges.”

“What can be the role and contribution of a young Friar Minor in a world torn by massacres, wars, violence, injustice, and neutrality? The case of the criminal situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.”

“How do we preserve Franciscan wisdom and the intellectual and spiritual tradition in these contemporary times of great change, as we begin our journey toward the millennium?”

“What does the Franciscan missionary tradition offer to an increasingly small world, where ‘the other’ is no longer across the sea?”

“How do we frame this tradition within current narratives in order to offer continuity of the Franciscan tradition to future generations?”

“How to proclaim Christ the Savior in Europe?”

“How can we live the Franciscan charism in a world flooded with so many influences (social media, artificial intelligence, fashion, etc.)?”

“How to accompany the vocational discernment of young people today?”

“How can we grow Franciscan works and presences in different contexts so that they become more attractive to people today?”

“How can the Franciscan spirit of prayer and devotion help us give a true and authentic witness for peace in a world so fractured by war?”

“How can Franciscans practice ecological conversion and care for creation in daily community life?”

Therefore, some suggest:

“Returning to the origins of Franciscanism.”

“Concretely updating our charism in today’s world.”

“Simplification and revision of structures, assessing their economic and psychological impact on fraternities, so that they do not become a burden but remain authentic instruments at the service of the mission.”

Reflecting on “the poverty of Christ — the poverty of Saint Francis: what does it mean for us today and how do we live it?”, “the vow of poverty today,” and “a poverty lived for the Gospel”:

“the management of finances”

“the distinction between ‘without property’ and ‘poverty’”

“our poverty in the face of the poverty of the world”

“transparency in the administration of goods”

Reflecting on “Franciscanism and its dialogue with diversities: queer movements, ecologists, ancestral traditions, post-humanists.”

Developing “more agile forms of fraternity; new paths in youth ministry/pastoral work (especially with the ‘far away’).”

Encouraging “openness to a renewed Franciscan mission in the Western world.”

Offering “an opportunity to those who wish to live forms of ‘new evangelization’ within their own provinces.”

Strengthening “the spirit of prayer and devotion, and life within fraternity, in the face of activism and functionalism.”

“Giving new meaning to our presences” so that they become “evangelically significant.”

“Doing so from existential and structural peripheries.”

“Caring for our common home.”

“Being promoters of peace in a world of violence.”

Bearing in mind that “the vocations knocking at our doors require a change of mentality among the formators who receive them.”

■ Franciscan presence in today’s peripheries

There is a missionary impulse in the younger generations of Friars Minor that leads them to a generous self-giving to the “lepers of the 21st century.” They express the need for ongoing formation that enables them to exercise a prophetic role and to have a greater impact in the pastoral and social action they are beginning to develop with the accompaniment of more experienced friars.

The crisis of “sterile activism.” Many young religious find themselves immersed in demanding administrative or pastoral roles. The need here is not to allow doing (teacher, parish priest, administrator) to weaken the being of the consecrated Friar Minor.

The relevance of the Franciscan charism in the 21st century: care for our common home, cosmic spirituality, minority, peace, the poor.

Evangelization in existential and structural peripheries.

Poverty and existential peripheries today.

The role of each Friar Minor as an instrument of peace and reconciliation, following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi (War in Congo).

Young consecrated religious and their role in political engagement in society.

Caring for the “lepers” of our time.

Sustainable projects and initiatives for the care of our common home.

■ Digital identity and evangelizers on the web

It is possible that this is the first generation of friars who are digital natives, having appropriated technological advances with their advantages and disadvantages. For the young consecrated religious, the digital continent is a mission territory as real as a physical parish. They use technology not only to inform, but to create real relationships and to accompany spiritual processes at a distance.

Su lenguaje es visual, interactivo y simbólico. Saben traducir conceptos teológicos y pastorales complejos a formatos breves, estéticos y directos. Algunos se han hecho profesionales en el manejo de las TICs como medios de compartir el carisma franciscano con el mundo.

Their language is visual, interactive, and symbolic. They are able to translate complex theological and pastoral concepts into brief, aesthetic, and direct formats. Some have become professionals in the use of digital technologies as a means of sharing the Franciscan charism with the world.

The Under Ten friars are raising questions related to

■ The impact on identity, way of life, and mission.

■ “The Franciscan in a culture of digital speed and fragmentation.”

■ “How technology and artificial intelligence affect prayer, study, relationships, and discernment among younger friars, and how these tools can be used wisely without weakening human presence, simplicity, and fraternal life.”

- “The use of the internet in our houses.”
- “How to accompany friars who suffer from addiction; how to preserve health and prevent various forms of dependency.”
- “How can we take advantage of this technological surge and become voices of hope in a world full of noise?”
- “Digital evangelization and the proper use and care required in relation to artificial intelligence.”
- The impact on the widening of the generational gap
- “How can we, as Franciscans, live together and communicate with the new generation in this era of artificial intelligence? (For example: we have already entered the era of artificial intelligence, and in the next 5 to 10 years we will live in an even more advanced era. Moreover, within the fraternity a generational gap is emerging in terms of understanding (between those in their 20s–30s, 40s–50s, and 60s–70s), and the pace of generational change is accelerating. Consequently, I believe we need a Franciscan vision for the changes in our lives, the changes within our communities, and our communication with the world.)”

Metal and emotional health

Formation should focus on a healthy sexual and emotional balance among friars, enabling self-giving without selfish withdrawal, especially in the face of the loneliness that can arise in the early years of mission outside formation houses.

Current Church research highlights a marked psychological fragility and a strong subjectivism in younger generations. There is a need to learn how to name emotions, fears, and desires in order to live from personal truth rather than from an institutional mask. The main cause of abandonment in this period is affective loneliness within communities. Consolidating identity requires networks of priestly or religious friendship that are spaces of fraternal accompaniment and mutual support, not only of pastoral work.

Among the main internal crises that have intensified with the era shift, some suggest addressing:

“Affective deficiencies.”

“Lack of recognition and welcome.”

“Affective and sexual crises.”

“Homosexual affectivity in formation houses.”

“Addictions and pornography.”

“Psychological violence in religious life,” “different types of harassment (moral, sexual, etc.).”

“Suicide in religious life, burnout in religious life.”

“Friars suffering from undiagnosed but perceptible mental disorders that affect fraternal life.”

“Personality disorders and other psychological problems among friars, and the responsible handling of these issues.”

Therefore, some propose:

“The care of mental health, in order to respond more fully to the mystery of God as Friars Minor, in the simplicity and humility of our existence in the world, as instruments of peace and goodness.”

Greater emphasis on “mental health in religious life” and the “physical and mental well-being of the brothers.”

That “chastity be addressed from the perspective of sexuality, approached without taboos.”

The promotion of “fraternal care and accompaniment.”

The provision of “psychological guidance to preserve vocations and care for interpersonal relationships in these first years after solemn profession.”

Linking:

“Mental health and life goals.”

“Human formation and psychological accompaniment.”

“Living fraternity and the importance of healthy solitude.”

“Personal life and care of body and soul.”

Seeking ways to “avoid gossip, intrigues, misunderstandings, resentments, and prejudices that divide and harm us.”

Preventing situations in which “the lack of friars forces us to assume so many tasks that our fulfillment as friars is compromised and we become cogs in a machine, rather than persons.”

Theme, Motto, and Logo of the Sixth Under Ten OFM Chapter of Mats

Once the survey results had been interpreted, the themes were organized around two fundamental transversal cores—fraternity and mission—as a synthesis of the thematic areas identified through the survey.

From these, the motto of the Sixth Under Ten OFM Chapter of Mats was defined: “You are all brothers” (Mt 23:8; Rnb 22:33), followed by a brief explanation. Finally, the logo and its symbolic meaning are presented.

Themes

As a synthesis of the previous section, the survey results were grouped under the following three thematic areas:

- Fraternity: Between Hope and Vulnerability
 - a.1) Intergenerational dialogue
 - a.2) Friar Priests and Lay Brothers
 - a.3) Minority and power: authority as service
- Identity–Mission in the Face of a Global Shift
 - b.1) Franciscan Presence in Today’s Peripheries
 - b.2.) Digital Identity and Online Evangelizers
- Mental and emotional health

These thematic axes led to the identification of two fundamental cores: fraternity and mission. These emerge as transversal pillars of the Under Ten encounter.

Motto: “You are all brothers” (Mt 23:8; Rnb 22:33).

Based on the themes expressed above, a motto was sought that could meaningfully articulate the main axes emerging from the process of listening and discernment. In this context, the Gospel passage resonated with particular strength within the Preparatory Commission: “You are all brothers” (Mt 23:8), taken up by Saint Francis of Assisi in the Earlier Rule (Rnb 22:33) and also adopted as the title of Chapter III of our General Constitutions.

This expression gathers in a simple yet profound way the desire expressed by the Under Ten friars to live an authentic fraternity, rooted in the Gospel, open to mission, and capable of offering a credible presence in the Church and in the world.

A brief biblical and Franciscan reflection on the texts inspiring the motto of the Sixth Under Ten OFM Chapter of Mats is now presented.

“You are all brothers” (Matthew 23:8)

The controversy of Jesus with the leaders of Israel reaches its climax in chapters 21–23 of the Gospel of Matthew. The opposition comes to its peak in chapter 23, which opens with words of Jesus addressed to his disciples and to the crowd, among whom are also his opponents, the recipients of the severe reproaches developed in the second part of the chapter.

To his disciples, Jesus instead addresses an exhortation that highlights the behavior of scribes and Pharisees as an example that must not be imitated. In this context, he makes a fundamental statement about the identity of the disciple community: “you are all brothers”, an expression inserted into a repetitive literary unit (vv. 8–10), structured around three prohibitions followed by three theological affirmations, which culminate in a teaching on service and humility

(vv. 11–12).

The passage constitutes a critique of the honorific titles used by certain Jewish authorities such as Abba (πατήρ), Teacher (διδάσκαλος), or Rabbi (ῥαββί), insofar as they expressed prestige, recognition, and authority. Jesus reinterprets these terms in light of a sapiential teaching centered on humility and service (cf. Mt 20:26–27).

It is, therefore, a critique of the human tendency—also present within the Christian community—to establish hierarchies based on honor and power, generating divisions between superiors and inferiors, leaders and subjects. However, the text is not limited to an ethical denunciation; it also constitutes a true Christological confession of faith.

Indeed, the affirmation that God is the “one heavenly Father” and Christ the “one Teacher” grounds the identity of the disciples as brothers. In this way, fraternity emerges as an essential vocation of the Christian community and one of its most eloquent witnesses. The Christological density of vv. 8–10 allows us to understand the radical nature of this teaching, whose reception in the Christian spiritual tradition was particularly significant. In this sense, Francis of Assisi’s intuition in incorporating this Gospel passage into the Earlier Rule is especially illuminating.

“You are all brothers” (Earlier Rule 22:33)

Among the vocabulary that Francis uses to speak about fraternal communion, the first and most important noun is brother. This term, used by Francis 306 times, is the most frequently used noun in his writings, after Lord, which appears 410 times. It is the name Francis gives to himself 15 times, and it is the name he uses—together with fraternity, which appears 10 times in his writings—to designate those who, with him, chose to “follow the life and poverty of our most high Lord Jesus Christ and of his most holy Mother” (UltVol 1).

For Francis, what is primary and most fundamental about us, from the Gospel, is being brothers, so that from this we become all the other things we are called to be: brothers who pray (Rb 3:1–9), brothers who go through the world (Rb 3:10–14), brothers who do not receive money (Rb 4), brothers who work (Rb 5), etc.

In the Friars Minor, nothing precedes or stands above fraternal relationship, nor above the unity and equality of all under the sole lordship of Christ and his Gospel (Rnb 1:1; Rb 1:1). In fraternal communion, being brother is the most fundamental of all realities.

And because the term brother is essentially relational, being a brother consists in the personal relationships that one actually has with other brothers. This means that one cannot be a brother alone, and that what is primary in Francis’ fraternity is the relationship of brother to brother, between brother and brother (Rnb 11).

But this relationship must be interpersonal. Francis highlights and privileges this dimension through a series of words and expressions found in his writings. Thus, reciprocally appears 7 times; alternately, 4 times; among themselves, 4 times; “they must serve one another as they would wish to be served,” 8 times; “one to another,” 4 times. To these expressions one could add others such as: “wherever they are and meet one another” (Rnb 7:15; Rb 6:7), “to see one another again” (Rnb 7:15), “as oneself” (2LtF 27, 43; Rnb 4:5; 6:2; Rb 6:9), “before him” (Adm 25), “towards them” (Rb 10:5), “the minister with his brothers” (Rnb 18:1), “to separate from one’s brothers” (Adm 3:9; CtaO 3, 14, 17, 20). All these expressions proclaim the extent to which Francis’ writings emphasize the interpersonal dimension of a relationship of love that is even more than maternal among the Friars Minor.

Francis therefore highlights the unavoidable reciprocity and intersubjectivity implied in personal relationship. In his life and writings he privileges reciprocity, being-with, for, in, and with the brother: “Let each one confidently make known to the other his own need, so that he may find what is necessary and provide it for him” (Rnb 9:10). All are therefore patient and familiar with one another (Rb 6:7–9). All live face to face and body to body with one another. There is responsibility of all for all, mutual gift of one to another, to the point that, as Celano says of Francis, they are “ready to give themselves entirely, even to the point of exhausting themselves” (2Cel 181), or, as the Three Companions say of the first brothers, they considered it “an easy thing to give their bodies to death, not only for love of Christ, but also for the good of the soul or body of their brothers” (TC 41).

(Excerpt from All of You Are Brothers. Permanent Formation Subsidy for Chapter III on the General Constitutions, Rome, 2002.)

Therefore, the motto: “You are all brothers” allows us to articulate the themes of fraternity and mission in light of the Franciscan experience. In both cases, fraternity is understood as a gift received from God, not as a human achievement.

From this received identity, mission flows as credibility—that is, as the capacity to make visible, in concrete life, the grace that has been given. Within this horizon also stands evangelical minority, expressed in the choice of geographical and existential peripheries and in the commitment to walking together as brothers.

In the present context, we recognize ourselves as heirs of this gift, called to actualize it in the face of contemporary challenges, among which stand out the experience of mission, the impact of artificial intelligence, the risk of clericalism, and the responsibility to discern what, as a fraternity, we are called to offer to the world.

The choice of this Gospel passage also responds to the recognition that Saint Francis of Assisi embraced the fraternity proposed in the Gospel of Matthew as the foundation of his experience of God and his way of life.

Logo and its description



The logo of the Sixth Under Ten OFM Chapter of Mats, designed by Br. Gonzalo Collipal, OFM, and Br. Hugues Rakotondrainibe, OFM, expresses in a simple and profound way the identity and mission of the Friars Minor in the current context of the Order and of the Church.

- At the center are three friars, represented with different skin tones, a visible sign of the intercultural richness of the Order. This diversity is not only geographical, but also cultural and charismatically expressed. Friars coming from different peoples and cultures are united by a single vocation received as a gift. Fraternity is thus presented as the core of the logo. It is not a human construction, but a grace that arises from God's initiative, in continuity with Saint Francis of Assisi's experience: "The Lord gave me brothers" (Testament 14). For this reason, the friars do not appear in isolation, but in relationship, evoking the Chapter's motto: "You are all brothers" (Mt 23:8; Rnb 22:33).
- The composition is set in the Porziuncola, Assisi, a symbolic place where everything began for Francis and his first brothers. Returning to Assisi is not simply going back to a geographical location, but rather returning to the source of the vocation, rediscovering the origin of the charism, and rekindling the call to live the Gospel in fraternity and minority.
- This return acquires an even deeper meaning in the context of the eighth centenary of the death of Saint Francis (1226–2026). The logo therefore does not only look to the past, but also projects into the future: it invites the Under Ten friars to renew their identity and mission from the roots, in order to respond with creativity and fidelity to the challenges of the contemporary world.
- In this way, fraternity and mission are intertwined: from the identity received as brothers emerges a credible mission, capable of proclaiming the Gospel in the new Areopagi, with a style marked by closeness, simplicity, and peace.

Continental Under Ten OFM Pre-Chapters

With the desire to involve all Franciscan friars of our Order with less than ten years of Solemn Profession in the preparation of the next Under Ten encounter, the so-called continental Pre-Chapters were organized in a virtual format.

The aim of this initiative was to create a space of encounter between the General Government and the Under Ten friars of each continent, in order to share the results of the survey conducted in January and, on that basis, to reflect on several themes to be addressed in the Sixth Under Ten OFM Chapter of Mats.

In general terms, each of the Pre-Chapters followed the following agenda:

Welcome by one of the Conference Presidents.

Presentation of the survey results (Preparatory Commission).

Reflections on the continental survey results by members of the General Government of the Order.

Group work (Zoom breakout rooms).

Message from Br. Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General.

Presentation of the synthesis of the group work (Preparatory Commission).

Final prayer and blessing by Br. Massimo Fusarelli.

Message from Br. Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General

A synthesis is presented of the messages that the Minister General, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, OFM, offered to the participants of the five continental Pre-Chapters. The structure of these messages remained consistent across each encounter, while also being adapted to the particular realities of each continent. In any case, the reflections proposed by Br. Massimo are grounded in the results of the survey carried out among more than five hundred friars of the Order with less than ten years of Solemn Profession.

General Synthesis

Br. Massimo's interventions are based on a shared conviction: the Under Ten generation is not seeking prefabricated answers, but rather the possibility of walking an authentic and truthful path within the Franciscan vocation. The responses of the friars reveal deep concerns, but also a strong sense of hope and a desire for renewal.

From the consultation, two major axes emerge: fraternity and evangelization.

1. Fraternity as the First Place of Truth

Fraternity appears as the heart of Franciscan identity and, at the same time, one of its principal challenges. Many friars describe the transition from initial formation to ordinary life as a clash between ideal and reality. There is a need to rediscover the Franciscan charism in the present context, marked by artificial intelligence, social media, and rapid cultural change.

The friars also express strong concern regarding the exercise of authority. They do not reject authority as such, but desire it to be lived as service, listening, and co-responsibility. They wish to feel like protagonists of the Order's charism and not merely executors of decisions made elsewhere.

Another recurring aspect is the need to strengthen dialogue between generations. Younger friars wish to contribute their vision, creativity, and dreams, while also recognizing the richness of the experience of older friars. Intergenerational life is presented as a richness that must be actively cultivated.

With particular force, the theme of mental and emotional health also emerges. The survey results point to loneliness, psychological fragility, dependencies, and affective crises as realities present in the lives of many friars. There is an insistence on the need to build fraternities capable of accompanying, listening, and sustaining those who are going through moments of difficulty.

2. Evangelization in the Peripheries of the 21st Century

The second major axis is the evangelizing mission. The Under Ten friars are described as the first generation of Franciscan digital natives. For them, the digital world constitutes a true mission territory where the Gospel can be proclaimed through new languages and new forms of communication.

Alongside this, a strong sensitivity emerges toward contemporary peripheries: the poor, migrants, victims of armed conflicts, and the care of creation. The friars express the desire for formation that enables them to respond prophetically to these challenges through a pastoral theology capable of dialogue with science, ethics, and contemporary culture.

At the same time, they also recognize the risk of activism, namely, pastoral activity so intense that it ends up weakening interior life and Franciscan identity. For this reason, there is an emphasis on the need for mission to always flow from fraternity and from spiritual experience.

Specific Contributions of Each Continent

Br. Massimo's reflections in each of the continental Pre-Chapters further enriched these common themes with particular emphases.

- Latin America (UCLAF). The young friars express a strong desire to live a participatory fraternity that is close to the people. In terms of mission, they show a particular sensitivity toward the poor, migrants, victims of violence, and the care of creation. Their contribution is characterized by hope, commitment to the peripheries, and a desire to be protagonists in the renewal of the Order.

Asia (FCAO). The richness of interreligious dialogue is highlighted, along with the growth of new entities of the Order and the responsibility to contribute a distinct vision to the Franciscan future, especially in view of the 2027 General Chapter in Vietnam, which will be the first in the history of the Order to be held in Asia.

Africa. The survey results highlight an Under Ten generation that desires to live its vocation amid realities marked by great hopes, concrete struggles, and strong missionary vitality. Africa contributes to the journey of the Order a young, hopeful, creative, and missionary voice.

Europe and North America (COTAF-ESC). Reflection is made on the decline in vocations and the aging of many entities. Young friars are invited not to limit themselves to managing decline, but to discover in fragility an opportunity to return to the essentials of the charism and to build new forms of Franciscan presence.

Mediterranean Europe and the Slavic Conferences. The richness of a Franciscan tradition deeply rooted in the history of peoples is highlighted, as well as the challenge of transmitting the faith in secularized societies, in contexts of conflict, or in situations of Christian minority. Particular emphasis is placed on dialogue between generations, the care of vocational crises, and the building of bridges between diverse cultures.

Conclusion

In its entirety, Br. Massimo's interventions present the Under Ten generation as one called to renew Franciscan life from authenticity, fraternity, and mission. Far from constituting a list of complaints, the survey reveals a desire to live a more Gospel-centered, participatory, and meaningful vocation. In the context of the Eighth Centenary of Saint Francis, the young friars are invited to assume a leading role in shaping the future of the Order, bringing to the Sixth Chapter of the Mats their questions, hopes, and concrete proposals for the 2027 General Chapter.

Continental Pre-Chapters

- Pre-Chapter UCLAF

The first Chapter held was that of Latin America on 15 April 2026, with the three Conferences that compose it, namely Santa María de Guadalupe, Bolivarian, and Brazil–Southern Cone. More than one hundred friars participated as a sign of fraternity.

“The question of identity appears with strength. And it is not a crisis: it is maturity. Francis himself did not begin by knowing who he was. He discovered his identity in concrete life: in the encounter with the leper, in simple prayer, in real fraternity” (Br. Cesar Kulkamp, General Definitor).

“Be encouraged to be ‘Friars Minor,’ close to the people, especially the young, with a style of service, radical inclusion, and hope, renewing enthusiasm in the mission” (Br. Joaquín Echeverry, General Definitor).

Synthesis of group work. Fundamental cores

1. Fraternity: A Central Value and a Real Challenge

Fraternity is highly valued as a positive and meaningful experience. However, in practice, it is often not fully lived as it is presented during formation. It can be affected by loneliness, superficial relationships, and a lack of inclusion. There is a tension between the communal ideal and lived reality, which can give rise to existential crises.

2. Deficient Communication

One of the most recurring issues is the lack of authentic communication, which leads to: superficial relationships, frustration and distance, and an urgent need for real spaces of listening, dialogue, and encounter (not merely functional ones).

3. Authority and relationships of authority

Difficulties are perceived in the exercise of authority: a tendency toward authoritarianism or imposition, a lack of understanding of authority as service, and the influence of factors such as “favoritism” in the assignment of responsibilities.

4. Overload and Activism

A strong overload of work is highlighted: it generates emotional exhaustion and burnout. It leads to a form of meaningless activism, where the friar feels more like a “functionary” than a brother, and it causes a loss of balance between mission, community life, and spirituality.

5. Identity and Sense of Belonging

A crisis of identity is evident: there is a risk of losing the sense of what it means to be a friar, tension between personal projects and community life, and a weakening of the sense of belonging to the Order.

6. Spiritual Life at risk

The importance of prayer is emphasized: its neglect deeply affects fraternal life. Without spiritual life, mission is reduced to mere work. It is necessary to recover essential spaces such as prayer and communal life.

2.2. Pre-Chapter Africa

The second Pre-Chapter took place on Monday, 4 May 2026, with the two Franciscan Conferences of Africa, namely the African Francophone Conference and the African Anglophone Conference, with simultaneous translation provided into French, Portuguese, and English.

“Let us remember that these first ten years constitute a fundamental bridge between initial formation and the rest of our lives as friars. The habits and way of life we consolidate today will define our future in the Order” (Br. Sipehelele Gwanisheni, General Definitor).

Although connectivity difficulties in various regions of the continent did not allow for group work to be carried out, the presence of more than one hundred brothers was a hopeful sign of the wide reception the meeting received.

2.3. Pre-Chapter Asia

The third Pre-Chapter was held on Wednesday, 6 May 2026, with the participation of nearly 200 friars from the two Franciscan Conferences, namely the Franciscan Conference of Asia and Oceania and the Franciscan Conference of East Asia, with simultaneous translation into Indonesian, Korean, and Vietnamese.

“Our friars under ten years of Solemn Profession are part of a generation that deeply desires to belong to their fraternities, their Entities, and the Order. The challenge for our younger brothers is to discover how they can live their Franciscan vocation and their vision of mission in an honest, prophetic, and meaningful way. The challenge for the leaders of the Order, and for the upcoming Chapters, is to take that desire seriously and respond with concrete proposals, not only with words of encouragement” (Br. John Wong, General Definitor).

Synthesis of group work in four points.

The gap between ideal and reality

There is a significant tension between the ideals taught during formation and the practical reality of active ministry. In particular, heavy responsibilities—such as those in educational ministry—often reduce the time dedicated to prayer, creating a disconnection between a friar’s duties and his spiritual life.

Challenges to authentic fraternity

Although fraternity is recognized as the foundation of community life, it is currently hindered by several factors.

The need for sincere communication

Superficiality: Encounters often focus on “work-related matters” rather than the depth of life.

Digital isolation: The use of devices and mobile phones creates a sense of isolation even when friars are physically present.

Divisions: Intergenerational and cultural differences can prevent genuine connection.

The discussion highlights a paradox between “preaching and practicing.” While friars are effective in preaching publicly, internal communication often lacks sincerity and depth. There is a call to “preach by example” by fostering environments where brothers truly listen to one another and engage in honest and vulnerable dialogue.

A call to practical renewal

The community seeks a renewal of fraternity that goes beyond discussion and moves toward concrete action. This includes balancing “fraternity” (personal bonds) and “mission” (external work), and returning to a shared Franciscan identity rooted in belonging, mutual respect, and intercultural dialogue.

2.4. Pre-Chapter Europe and North America

The Pre-Chapter held on 8 May brought together two Conferences, namely the English-speaking Conference and the Transalpine Franciscan Conference, with the participation of approximately 27 Under Ten friars.

“Perhaps spirituality is so important for friars because it enables them to live authentically relationships that constitute an alternative to the typical dynamics of our societies: universal fraternity and solidarity, instead of individualism, superficial relationships mediated by social networks, and polarization” (Br. Albert Smucki).

“Beyond the statistics, the future of Franciscan fraternity is built when Under Ten brothers cease to be mere participants and become protagonists who support one another, from ongoing formation to shared mission within an ever broader and more global community” (Br. Jimmy Zammit, General Definitor).

A synthesis of the contributions of the participants in the work of the three groups is presented below.

Key points

In general, the synthesis reveals a deep sense of community, solidarity, and shared commitment to living the values of the Franciscan Order.

The tension between ideal and reality is a recurring theme across all generations, regions, and cultures.

There is a need to balance work, apostolate, fraternity, and prayer in the life of a friar.

Universal fraternity is the greatest gift that can be offered, but it requires navigating tensions and challenges in intergenerational contexts.

Fraternity as identity: Fraternity and mission are intertwined, and our universal brotherhood is what distinguishes us. It is our identity and the way we evangelize the world.

Shared strengths and difficulties: It is encouraging to recognize that each entity faces similar challenges and shares similar strengths, which facilitates mutual connection.

Support for smaller provinces: Acknowledging the difficulties of smaller provinces, particularly those with aging populations and caregiving needs, highlights the importance of solidarity and support within the Order.

Connecting young friars: The value of regular meetings (e.g., once or twice a year) was emphasized in order to connect friars under ten years of Solemn Profession as a way of maintaining unity and fostering relationships among younger members.

Questions raised

How can we prioritize our life in such a way that it shines prophetically, reflecting our identity as Franciscan friars?

What does it mean to live our call to universal fraternity, prayer, and devotion in today’s world?

2.5. Pre-Chapter Europe B

The final Pre-Chapter in preparation for the Sixth Chapter of the Mats of the Under Ten OFM was held on Saturday, 23 May, gathering online more than 80 Under Ten friars belonging to four Conferences of the Order: the Southern Europe Conference, the Northern Slavic Conference, the Saint Jerome Conference, and the newly established Conference of North Africa and the Middle East.

In addition to Br. Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General, the meeting was attended by Br. Ignacio Ceja, Vicar General, as well as the General Definitors Br. Cesare Vaiani and Br. Konrad Cholewa, who offered important interpretations of the survey results based on the responses provided by the aforementioned Conferences.

“In a world marked by so many fears, divisions, and difficulties, it remains necessary to have friars capable of living the Gospel with simplicity, authenticity, and hope” (Br. Francesco Ielpo).

“These data are particularly relevant today as well, since they confirm that fraternal communication remains an unresolved issue in our Order, a challenge that continues to call us and for which we are invited to seek together concrete paths of growth and renewal” (Br. Ignacio Ceja).

“Perhaps a proposal for discussion could be precisely to deepen this topic further: how can we better accompany young friars in the first years after Solemn Profession? Or else, to examine the issue more deeply, trying to clearly identify what is lacking” (Br. Konrad Cholewa).

“Europe gives priority to fraternity, followed by the spirit of prayer, and places mission at some distance, whereas the rest of the world, while also prioritizing fraternity, places the spirit of prayer and mission almost at the same level. I wonder how to interpret this data: in a positive sense, it could mean that we are attentive to the relationship with God and with our brothers, from which mission flows; in a negative sense, it could suggest that we are very focused on our life among ourselves and less on the mission that sends us outward” (Br. Cesare Vaiani).

The following synthesis gathers the main contributions that emerged from the group work during the Pre-Chapter:

Fraternity remains the heart of the Franciscan vocation, but also one of its most fragile dimensions. Young friars point to difficulties related to mutual trust, communication, generational differences, and the quality of relationships, recognizing that fraternity cannot be taken for granted but must be built each day through personal and communal responsibility.

A second central theme is the relationship between the spirit of prayer and devotion, fraternal life, and mission. Many perceive the risk of pastoral activism that weakens spiritual life and generates dispersion and fatigue. At the same time, they affirm that prayer must not become an escape from reality. The challenge lies in integrating contemplation, fraternity, and evangelization in a harmonious way.

The need for better accompaniment of young friars, especially after Solemn Profession, also emerges strongly. Several groups highlight the difficulty of moving from the ideals of initial formation to the concrete demands of fraternal and missionary life, and call for accompaniment processes that help navigate this transition.

Finally, participants express the desire to offer the Church a credible witness of universal fraternity, interculturality, closeness to the poor, and authentic Gospel life. Pastoral mission, including parish ministry, is valued when lived as an expression of concrete fraternity and not simply as an individual task.

Overall, the group contributions reflect an invitation to return to the essential core of the Franciscan charism: a life in which prayer, fraternity, mission, and care for relationships form a single Gospel experience, visible and credible in daily life.

Methodology and Program of the Sixth Under Ten OFM Chapter of Mats

This Chapter seeks to be a space where the diversity of cultures, languages, and experiences becomes an opportunity to renew the gift of the Franciscan vocation, strengthen communion among the brothers, and reflect together on the challenges and hopes of mission in today's world. The following sections present the objectives that guide this process, the proposed methodology for its implementation, the perspectives emerging from this journey of encounter and renewal, and the program that will shape each moment of the gathering.

1. Objectives

In order to renew the gift of fraternity, one of the objectives of this Chapter is to offer participants an experience of internationality and interculturality. The Order of Friars Minor is present in numerous countries and cultures, which constitutes a spiritual and human richness that reflects the universality of the Franciscan charism. Gathering friars from different regions allows not only the sharing of experiences, but also the discovery of the beauty of a fraternity that transcends borders, languages, and cultural contexts, without overlooking the challenges this entails. In this encounter, diversity is not perceived as an obstacle, but as a living sign of the communion that characterizes the Franciscan vocation.

Likewise, the Mats Chapter seeks to open a space for reflection on the realities experienced by young friars within the Order. In a world marked by social, cultural, and religious transformations, young friars face multiple challenges that question their identity and mission. The hopes, difficulties, and concerns arising in fraternal and missionary life require listening and fraternal discernment. For this reason, this Chapter is conceived as a process of dialogue and participation inspired by the synodal dynamic of the Church, in which each brother can contribute his voice and experience in order to build together paths of renewal. From this shared discernment, proposals may emerge that contribute to the development of the Entities and Conferences of the Order and to the 2027 General Chapter.

Finally, this gathering also seeks to be a celebration of the gift of the Franciscan missionary vocation. Vocation, understood as a generous response to God's call, is a permanent source of joy and commitment. In the spirit of the Poverello, friars are called to continually renew their mission in the world, remembering that the horizon of Franciscan life opens toward universal fraternity, the promotion of peace, the care of our common home, and a solidary presence in today's peripheries—places where human suffering, exclusion, and deep existential searching are manifested.

Conclusion

Celebrating the Mats Chapter in this Jubilee context thus means reaffirming the hope and vitality of the Franciscan vocation. Fraternity and the spirit of the Gospel continue to offer a path of meaning and renewal, even where the difficulties, tensions, or frustrations of daily life arise. In this way, the Sixth Under Ten OFM Mats Chapter 2026 becomes a space where memory, discernment, and celebration intertwine, strengthening Franciscan identity and projecting its mission toward the future with renewed confidence.

2. Methodology

To achieve the objectives of the Sixth Under Ten OFM Mats Chapter 2026, a participatory, synodal, and intercultural methodology is proposed, combining celebratory and fraternal experience, contributions from invited experts and participants, as well as spiritual discernment. This approach allows not only for the exchange of ideas, but also for deep listening, the sharing of meaningful experiences, and visits to significant Franciscan places. The proposed methodology is structured in four moments.

■ Experience of Intercultural Fraternity

The first step consists in creating an environment in which participants can concretely experience the internationality of the Order through:

Moments of sharing life experiences, in which the friars share their vocational journey, reflecting both their cultures and their Entities through spiritual conversation.

Spaces of fraternal living together, such as meals, recreational and social activities, mutual hospitality, and informal settings.

The aim is that participants do not merely receive information, but rather experience diversity as a richness, in the spirit of the fraternity lived by Saint Francis of Assisi.

■ Listening and Analysis of Reality

In a second phase, it is proposed to offer spaces of active listening and dialogue in an atmosphere of openness and welcome, with the help of experts, inspired by the synodal methodology of the Church: See – Illuminate – Discern

See: to identify the realities of the Under Ten friars of the Order in their hopes, difficulties, and challenges (drawing on the results of the January 2026 survey and the synthesis of the continental Pre-Chapters).

Illuminate: to confront these realities with the Gospel, Franciscan charism/spirituality, and the documents of the Order, through testimonies, lectio divina, conferences, and visits to significant Franciscan places.

Discern: to recognize, through “dialogue in the Spirit” and plenary synthesis sessions, which paths or priorities may emerge for the future.

■ **Fraternal Discernment and Elaboration of Proposals**

After the reflection phase, the process moves into a time of fraternal discernment aimed at generating proposals, using the synodal method of spiritual conversation, in which listening, silence, and resonances are interwoven, through the following activities:

Synodal group work, guided by facilitators and secretaries.

Progressive synthesis: the group secretary formulates key ideas, which are then integrated by the Chapter Secretariat into a common document.

Plenary sessions at the end of the meeting for the presentation of the syntheses and suggestions, and for the vote on the approval of the Final Message and the proposals addressed to the Entities, Conferences, and the 2027 General Chapter.

The aim is that the conversations and suggestions do not remain isolated opinions, but become the fruit of fraternal consensus, capable of being reflected in the Final Message and in the proposals addressed to the Conferences, the Entities, and the 2027 General Chapter.

■ **Celebration, Prayer, and Vocational Renewal**

The final moment integrates the entire process through celebration and spirituality:

Eucharistic celebrations and intercultural liturgies

Moments of prayer and lectio divina

Symbolic gestures of commitment to the mission

In this way, the Mats Chapter becomes an integral process in which the Under Ten friars:

experience international fraternity

reflect on their reality

discern the future together

renew their vocation and mission

in fidelity to the spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi.

PROGRAM

Saturday, July 4

Objective: To offer a fraternal and welcoming environment in which all the brothers feel welcomed from their arrival at the Chapter.

Time	Activity
	Arrival of participants at the Domus Pacis Hotel, Assisi.

Activities:

Time	Activity
	a) Reception of participants by the welcome team in the three official languages of the Order, including verification of personal data, provision of information, room key distribution, and delivery of Chapter materials (name badge, participation kit, etc.), as well as all necessary information for the stay, including internet access and other logistical aspects. b) Preparation and service of mid-morning and mid-afternoon refreshments for the brothers as they arrive.
13:30	Lunch (by prior reservation)
19:00	Dinner

Completed outcome: A fraternal atmosphere of welcome was fostered, allowing participants to feel welcomed and integrated from the very beginning of the Chapter.

Sunday, July 5

[Moderators: Br. Evaristo Jebada/ Br. John Wong]

Objective: To foster an atmosphere of welcome, trust, and interculturality, strengthening the sense of belonging to the Franciscan fraternity and renewing gratitude for the gift of the shared vocation.

Time	Activity
07:00	Breakfast (individual, until 08:30) 09:00 Introduction Welcome by Br. Marco Vianelli, OFM, Provincial Minister of the Seraphic Province of Saint Francis of Assisi.
09:15	Integration activity ("ice-breaker")
09:45	Welcome by Br. Massimo Fusarelli, OFM
10:00	Franciscan prayer
10:20	Instructions for the Opening Eucharist 10:30 Preparation for Holy Mass The procession will depart from the Auditorium in the following order: a. Crucifix and candles b. Brothers in habit c. Brothers in alb and stole d. Presider and accompanying ministers Participants are kindly requested to bring the flags of their countries of origin.
10:50	Procession from Domus Pacis to the Basilica of Saint Mary of the Angels 11:30 Eucharist at the Basilica of Saint Mary of the Angels Presided by: Br. Ignacio Ceja, OFM, Vicar General.
13:00	Lunch
15:00	Introduction to the Sixth Under Ten OFM Chapter of Mats 2026 and its significance in the context of the 800th anniversary of the death of Saint Francis (Br. Massimo Fusarelli). 15:40 General guidelines and introduction to group work and the intercultural evening (Preparatory Commission)
16:30	Coffee break
	17:00 Personal sharing in groups: "My vocational story" Objective: To share one's vocational story as a testimony of God's action in each brother's life, fostering mutual knowledge and appreciation of the cultural diversity present in the Order's Entities. Each group concludes with prayer.

Guideline: The group secretary will collect the most significant ideas and expressions shared during the dialogue and prepare a synthesis in a single paragraph, which will serve as input for the drafting of the Chapter's Final Message.

Time	Activity
19:00	Dinner
	20:30 Recreation: Intercultural Night I Objective: To strengthen intercultural fraternity through knowledge and appreciation of the diversity of Franciscan Conferences, recognizing the richness of the different contexts in which the Order lives and proclaims the Gospel. Video presentation of the five Franciscan Conferences: ESC (Europe, United States, and Canada) (3') SAAOC (Asia) (3') EAC (East Asia Conference) (3') CEM (Europe) (3') Northern Slavic Conference (Europe) (3')

End-of-day outcome achieved:

The brothers consolidated an atmosphere of welcome, trust, and interculturality from the beginning of the Chapter.

They appreciated cultural diversity as an expression of the Order's internationality.

They strengthened their sense of belonging to the Franciscan fraternity and renewed gratitude for the gift of their shared vocation.

Monday, July 6

[Moderators: Br. Daniel Cavalieri / Br. Jimmy Zammit]

Objective: To create a space of listening, prayer, and fraternal discernment which, in light of Franciscan identity and the shared realities of the Under Ten friars, allows for the recognition of common challenges and hopes regarding fraternity and mission.

Time	Activity
07:00	Breakfast 08:30 Lauds and lectio divina: "All of you are brothers" – Franciscan identity Guest speaker: Br. Giuseppe Buffon, OFM
09:30	Personal meditation
09:50	Presentation of the difficulties, hopes, and challenges of Under Ten OFM friars according to the 2026 survey and the Pre-Chapter syntheses (Preparatory Commission)
10:20	Introduction to spiritual conversation
10:30	Coffee break
11:00	Spiritual conversation

Guideline: The secretary of each group will prepare a synthesis of the discernment carried out, highlighting the main intuitions, consensuses, and calls recognized by the group as the fruit of mutual listening and the action of the Spirit. This synthesis will serve as the basis for the drafting of the Final Message and the Chapter proposals.

Time	Activity
12:30	Lunch
15:00	Visit to Franciscan Places

Objective: To experience a pilgrimage to places significant in the life of Saint Francis, fostering reflection, prayer, and celebration, in order to renew one's vocation and commitment to follow Christ in the manner of Saint Francis.

Time	Activity
	1. The Porziuncola (English) – "The Passover of Saint Francis of Assisi"
	a. Reflection: Br. Massimo Fusarelli, OFM (20') b. Dialogue with the General Definitory (40') (Moderator: Br. John Wong) c. Refreshment (30') d. Guided visit and personal prayer (60') e. Eucharist and Vespers: Br. Jimmy Zammit (60')
	2. San Damiano (Spanish) – "Go and repair my house / Praised be You, my Lord" a. Reflection: Br. Martín Carbajo, OFM (30') b. Refreshment (30') c. Guided visit and personal prayer: Br. Mauro Botti (60') d. Eucharist and Vespers: Br. Francisco Gómez, OFM (60')
	3. The Carceri (Italian) – "The Franciscan alternation: from the mountain to the valley" a. Reflection: Br. Carlos Salto, OFM (30') b. Refreshment (30') c. Eucharist and Vespers: Br. Salvatore Tanca (60') d. Guided visit and personal prayer: Br. Matteo Curina (60')
20:00	Dinner with the fraternity of Saint Mary of the Angels at the Porziuncola
21:00	Recreation: FIFA World Cup 2026 – Match of the day

End-of-day outcomes achieved:

The brothers deepened their Franciscan identity through listening to the Word, prayer, and shared discernment on the challenges and hopes of fraternity and mission.

They recognized shared intuitions, consensuses, and calls as the fruit of spiritual conversation, offering meaningful contributions to the Final Message and Chapter proposals.

They renewed their Franciscan vocation through pilgrimage to significant places in the life of Saint Francis, integrating reflection, prayer, and celebration as sources of personal and communal renewal.

Tuesday, July 7

[Moderators: Br. Richard Kakule/ Br. Siphelele Gwanisheni]

Objective: To deepen, through prayer, reflection, fraternal discernment, and the experience of Franciscan places, the understanding of the service of authority and the challenges of evangelization today, renewing the commitment to mission and fraternal communion.

Time	Activity
07:00	Breakfast 08:30 Lauds and lectio divina: "The service of authority in Franciscan life" Guest speaker: Br. Jakub František Sadilek, OFM
09:30	Personal meditation
09:50	"The areopagi of evangelization today" (Br. Sergio Massironi)
10:30	Dialogue
10:45	Coffee break
11:00	Spiritual conversation

Guideline: The secretary of each group will prepare a synthesis of the discernment carried out, highlighting the main intuitions, consensuses, and calls emerging around the evangelizing mission and the service of authority in Franciscan life. This synthesis will serve as the basis for the drafting of the Final Message and the Chapter proposals.

Time	Activity
12:30	Lunch
15:00	Visit to Franciscan Places

Objective: To experience a pilgrimage to places significant in the life of Saint Francis, fostering reflection, prayer, and celebration, in order to renew one's vocation and commitment to follow Christ in the manner of Saint Francis.

Time	Activity
	1. The Porziuncola (Spanish) "The Passover of Saint Francis of Assisi" a. Reflection: Br. Massimo Fusarelli, OFM (20') b. Dialogue with the General Definitory (40') (Moderator: Br. Joaquín Echeverry) c. Refreshment (30') d. Guided visit and personal prayer: Br. Danilo Bellorin (60') e. Eucharist and Vespers: Br. Cesar Kulkamp (60')
	2. San Damiano (Italian) "Go and repair my house / Praised be You, my Lord" a. Reflection: Br. Martín Carbajo, OFM (30') b. Refreshment (30') c. Guided visit and personal prayer: Br. Dante Serra (60') d. Eucharist and Vespers: Br. Simone Ceccabao, OFM (60')
	3. The Carceri (English) "The Franciscan alternation: from the mountain to the valley" a. Reflection: Br. Carlos Salto, OFM (30') b. Refreshment (30') c. Eucharist and Vespers: Br. Darko Tepert (60') d. Guided visit and personal prayer: Br. Matteo Curina (60')
19:00	Dinner
20:30	Recreation: Intercultural Night II Video presentation of four Franciscan Conferences (20') Cultural sharing (Br. Richard Kakule / Br. Siphelele Gwanisheni) 1. CAF (Francophone African Conference) 2. COTAF (Transalpine Franciscan Conference) 3. ESAC (Anglophone African Conference) 4. CONAMO (Conference of North Africa and the Middle East)

End-of-day outcomes achieved:

- The brothers deepened their understanding of the service of authority and evangelizing mission as essential dimensions of Franciscan identity.
- They recognized key challenges and opportunities for proclaiming the Gospel in the contemporary “areopagi,” identifying common calls for the life and mission of the Order.
- They renewed their missionary commitment through pilgrimage to Franciscan places, integrating reflection, prayer, and celebration as sources of inspiration for evangelization.

Wednesday, July 8

[Moderators: Br. Josip Jazvić / Br. Konrad Cholewa]

Objective: To deepen, through prayer, reflection, fraternal discernment, and the experience of Franciscan places, the understanding of the service of authority and the challenges of evangelization today, renewing the commitment to mission and fraternal communion.

Time	Activity
07:00	Breakfast
08:00	Lauds 08:30 Lectio divina. "The spirit of prayer and devotion". Invited guest: Sr. Therèse Myriam, Abbess of the Poor Clares of Assisi-Coletine tradition.
09:00	Mental and emotional health (Prof. Giuseppe Crea)
10:00	Coffee break 10:30 Round table Moderator: Br. Albert Smucki Participants: Sr. Therèse Myriam, Giuseppe Crea and Eduard Iurii Semko
11:30	Spiritual conversation

Guideline: The secretary of each group will prepare a synthesis of the discernment carried out, highlighting the main intuitions, consensuses, and calls arising around the life of faith, the integral care of the person, and the means to strengthen fidelity to the Franciscan vocation. This synthesis will serve as the basis for the drafting of the Final Message and the Chapter proposals.

Time	Activity
12:30	Lunch
15:00	Visit to Franciscan Places

Objective: To experience a pilgrimage to places significant in the life of Saint Francis, fostering reflection, prayer, and celebration, in order to renew one's vocation and commitment to follow Christ in the manner of Saint Francis.

Time	Activity
	The Porziuncola (Italian) "The Passover of Saint Francis of Assisi" a. Reflection: Br. Massimo Fusarelli, OFM (20') b. Dialogue with the General Definitory (40') (Moderator: Br. Cesare Vaiani) c. Refreshment (30') d. Guided visit and personal prayer: Br. Daniele Rossi (60') e. Eucharist and Vespers: Br. Konrad Cholewa (60')
	San Damiano (English) "Go and repair my house / Praise be You, my Lord" a. Reflection: Br. Martín Carbajo, OFM (30') b. Refreshment (30') c. Guided visit and personal prayer: Br. Eunan McMullan (60') d. Eucharist and Vespers: Br. Josip Jazvić, OFM (60')
	The Carceri (English) "The Franciscan alternation: from the mountain to the valley" a. Reflection: Br. Carlos Salto, OFM (30') b. Refreshment (30') c. Eucharist and Vespers: Br. Gonzalo Collipal (60') d. Guided visit and personal prayer: Br. Danilo Bellorin (60')
19:00	Dinner
21:00	Eucharistic Adoration (Basilica of Our Lady of the Angels)

End-of-day outcomes achieved:

- The brothers deepened the spirit of prayer and devotion as the foundation of Franciscan life and vocation.
- They recognized the importance of the integral care of the person, strengthening awareness of mental and emotional health as essential dimensions.
- They identified concrete paths for integrating faith, human maturity, and vocational commitment.
- They renewed their Franciscan vocation through pilgrimage and Eucharistic adoration.

Thursday, July 9

[Moderators: Br. Daniel Cavalieri / Br. Josip Jazvić]

Objective: To discern, in the light of the Gospel and the Franciscan charism, the challenges and opportunities that the contemporary world presents for the mission of the Order, contributing with a shared reflection to the journey toward the OFM General Chapter 2027.

Time	Activity
	07:00 Eucharist in linguistic groups Spanish–French (Fredy Rubén Vega González) English–Portuguese (Daicolás Nsabimana) Italian–English (Filippo Jacolino)
09:00	The OFM General Chapter 2027 (Br. Juan Isidro Aldana) 09:30 Round table. Moderator: Br. Francisco Regordán Participants: Veronica Brunkow (Digital world), Don Federico Cinocca (Artificial Intelligence), Tomás Insua (Care for our common home)
10:30	Coffee break
11:00	Spiritual conversation by Conferences

Guideline: The brothers choose a moderator and secretary for each Conference. The secretary will prepare a synthesis of the discernment carried out, highlighting the main intuitions, challenges, opportunities, and proposals emerging around the themes addressed during the day. This synthesis will serve as the basis for the drafting of the Final Message and the Chapter proposals.

Time	Activity
12:30	Lunch Afternoon Free time
19:00	Dinner (with reservation)

End-of-day outcomes achieved:

- The brothers reflected on the horizon of the OFM General Chapter 2027, strengthening awareness of shared responsibility in the life and mission of the Order.
- They discerned the main challenges and opportunities posed by the digital world, artificial intelligence, and the care for our common home for evangelization and Franciscan witness.
- They shared, from the various Conferences, intuitions and proposals that enrich the common reflection on the present and future of the Order.
- They gathered significant contributions for the drafting of the Final Message and the proposals to be presented to the General Government.

Friday, July 10

[Moderators: Br. Gonzalo Collipal/ Br. Cesar Kulkamp]

Objective: To consolidate the discernment carried out during the Chapter through the drafting, dialogue, and validation of proposals addressed to the Entities, the Conferences, and the OFM General Chapter 2027, strengthening co-responsibility and communion in the mission of the Order.

Time	Activity
	07:00 Eucharist in linguistic groups Spanish–French (Richard Kakule) English–Portuguese (Didier Kingeleshi Maso) Italian–English (David Au)
08:00	Breakfast
09:00	Guidelines for work by Conferences
09:30	Work by Conferences

Guidelines:

Each Conference will prepare a concrete, viable, and action-oriented proposal addressed to the Entities, to the Conferences, and to the OFM General Chapter 2027. The proposals must integrate the discernment carried out during the Chapter and express the consensus reached by each group.

The Secretariat of the VI Chapter presents a synthesis of the discernment carried out during the four previous days, based on the contributions gathered in the spiritual conversations of the groups.

In the appendix, the main proposals, orientations, and lines of action arising from the International Meeting of Lay Brothers, the International Chapter of the Mats, and the Plenary Council of the Order, held in Assisi in 2025, are presented. These documents are offered as a resource to enrich the common reflection and to serve as a reference for the drafting of the proposals that the Under Ten brothers will present to their Entities, Conferences, and the OFM General Chapter 2027.

The secretary of each Conference sends the three proposals to the Secretariat of the VI Chapter.

(Coffee break available from 10:30 to 11:00 for each group.)

Time	Activity
12:30	Lunch
15:30	Plenary session Presentation of the Final Message Presentation of the proposals: To the Entities (Provinces and Custodies) To the Conferences To the OFM General Chapter 2027 Listening round for comments and suggestions
17:00	Free time
19:00	Dinner
20:30	Intercultural Night III Video presentation of four Franciscan Conferences (20') Cultural sharing (Br. Gonzalo Collipal / Br. Cesar Kulkamp) Santa Maria de Guadalupe Conference (3') Bolivarian Conference (3') Saint Jerome Conference (3') Brazil–Southern Cone Conference (3')

End-of-day outcomes achieved:

- The Conferences translated the discernment of the VI Chapter into concrete proposals aimed at strengthening the life and mission of the Order.
- The brothers shared and enriched, through fraternal listening and dialogue, the Final Message and the proposals addressed to the Entities, Conferences, and the OFM General Chapter 2027.
- Co-responsibility among the Conferences was strengthened, reaffirming the shared commitment to continue building a more fraternal, missionary, and intercultural Order.

Saturday, July 11

[Moderators: Br. Daniel Rodríguez Blanco/ Br. Joaquín Echeverry].

Objective: To bring the VI Chapter of the Mats to its conclusion through the approval of the Final Message and proposals, the evaluation of the process experienced, and the celebration of the missionary sending, renewing the commitment to live and proclaim the Gospel in the manner of Saint Francis.

Time	Activity
06:30	Breakfast
07:15	Departure to Assisi
08:00	Eucharist at the Basilica of Saint Francis (Br. Massimo Fusarelli)
09:15	Guided visit (Basilica of Saint Francis)
10:30	Return to the Domus Pacis
11:00	Coffee break 11:30 Approval of the Final Message (Auditorium) Approval of the proposals (Auditorium)
13:00	Lunch
15:00	Evaluation session
16:30	Coffee break
17:00	Final greeting by Br. Massimo Fusarelli
17:30	Official group photo
18:00	Vespers and sending rite
18:45	Words of thanks
19:30	Dinner and recreation in the garden

End-of-day outcomes achieved:

- The brothers approved the Final Message and the proposals of the VI Chapter of the Mats addressed to the Entities, the Conferences, and the OFM General Chapter 2027 as an expression of the discernment carried out during the week.
- They evaluated the journey undertaken, recognizing the fruits, learnings, and challenges that emerged from the capitular experience.
- They renewed their commitment to live and proclaim the Gospel in the manner of Saint Francis, being sent back to their Entities as witnesses of fraternity, hope, and mission.

The Spiritual Conversation in the VI Chapter of the Mats Under Ten OFM

What is the spiritual conversation?

Spiritual conversation is a methodology of communal discernment widely developed and promoted during the Synod on Synodality of the Catholic Church. The VI Chapter of the Mats Under Ten OFM has adopted and adapted it to its own itinerary, recognizing it as a privileged means of fostering mutual listening, fraternal discernment, and the common search for the will of God in the light of the Gospel and the Franciscan charism of Saint Francis of Assisi.

The methodology of spiritual conversation does not seek debate or an exchange of opinions aimed at convincing others, but rather an experience of mutual listening, prayer, and communal discernment through which we seek together to recognize what the Holy Spirit is inspiring within the fraternity.

As Friars Minor gathered under the motto “You are all brothers” (Mt 23:8), we seek to listen to one another with respect, to speak from personal experience, and to welcome the richness of the cultural diversity present in the Order, convinced that the Lord also speaks to us through our brothers.

The purpose of this method is to foster an atmosphere of trust, fraternity, and interior freedom that allows us to recognize the challenges, hopes, and calls that the Lord is addressing today to the Under Ten Friars Minor, so that the fruit of discernment may be expressed in the Final Message of the Chapter and in the proposals addressed to the Entities, the Conferences, and the OFM General Chapter 2027.

Fundamental attitudes

To live spiritual conversation authentically, each participating brother is invited to cultivate the following attitudes:

- To listen with attention and respect, seeking to understand the experience of the brother before formulating a response.
- To speak from one's own experience, sharing what the Lord has stirred in the heart through personal prayer and reflection.
- To welcome with gratitude the diversity of cultures, sensitivities, and experiences present in the fraternity.
- To avoid debate, the confrontation of ideas, or the search for premature consensus.
- To remain open to the action of the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to guide the discernment of the group.

Functions of the moderator and the group secretary

■ The moderator

The moderator has the mission of facilitating the development of the spiritual conversation, creating an atmosphere of trust, respect, and freedom that fosters mutual listening and common discernment. His task consists of presenting the theme, ensuring the observance of the different stages of the method, managing the time, and promoting balanced participation of all the brothers.

The moderator does not direct the group's conclusions nor express judgments on the contributions. Rather, he helps each participant to freely share his experience and assists the group in remaining attentive to the action of the Holy Spirit, fostering silence, prayer, and fraternal discernment.

At the end of the meeting, he will verify together with the secretary that the synthesis prepared faithfully reflects the main intuitions, consensuses, calls, and proposals that emerged from the group's discernment.

■ The secretary

The secretary participates fully in the spiritual conversation, sharing his own reflection and attentively listening to the contributions of the other brothers. At the same time, he carries out the specific service of safeguarding and gathering the fruit of the communal discernment.

His task does not consist in preparing minutes nor in transcribing the participants' interventions. Nor should he attribute opinions to specific persons or record the chronological development of the conversation. His mission is to identify, in the light of the process experienced by the group, the main intuitions, convergences, calls, challenges, and proposals that have emerged as the fruit of mutual listening and the action of the Holy Spirit.

During the dialogue, the secretary seeks to distinguish what corresponds to individual opinions from what the group has progressively recognized as a consensus or a shared inspiration. For this reason, the synthesis must express the common discernment and not the sum of individual interventions.

At the end of the spiritual conversation, the secretary prepares a clear, brief, and faithful synthesis of the journey experienced by the group. Before presenting it, he reviews it together with the moderator to verify that it adequately reflects the discernment carried out and faithfully represents the common sense of the participants.

Once validated, the synthesis is sent to the Secretariat of the VI Chapter of the Mats, where it is integrated with the contributions of the other groups for the preparation of the overall synthesis. This material will form the basis for the drafting of the Final Message and the proposals addressed to the Entities, the Conferences, and the OFM General Chapter 2027.

This service requires an attitude of listening, objectivity, capacity for synthesis, and a profound openness to allow the discernment of the group to prevail over any personal interpretation.

Development of the spiritual conversation

4.1. Personal preparation

Each participant dedicates a time of prayer and reflection on the proposed themes, asking for the light of the Holy Spirit and disposing himself to listen with an open heart.

4.2. First round: sharing from experience

Each brother is given the same amount of time to share what he considers most significant. The others listen in silence, without interrupting, commenting, or responding.

4.3. Time of silence

Once the first round is completed, the group keeps a few minutes of silence in order to interiorly receive what has been heard and to recognize the movements of the Spirit.

4.4. Second round: resonances

Each participant briefly shares what most struck him from what he heard from the others, indicating which aspects awakened hope, consolation, questions, or new horizons.

4.5. Renewed silence

The group once again keeps silence, allowing the shared experience to mature in prayer.

4.6. Third round: communal discernment

The participants seek to recognize together the intuitions, consensuses, and calls that have emerged during the conversation. It is not a matter of deciding by majority or imposing opinions, but of discovering what the Spirit seems to be indicating to the group.

Franciscan approach

Saint Francis wanted the brothers to always recognize one another as gifts received from the Lord. For this reason, spiritual conversation is also an exercise in minority: listening before responding, welcoming before judging, and discerning together before defending one's own ideas. Only from this attitude will we be able to recognize what the Spirit continues to say today to our fraternity and respond with fidelity to the Gospel.

Groups for the Spiritual Conversation

Spanish-speaking groups

Nº 1 (Sala Perfetta Letizia)

Br. Tiago Gomes Elias (Brasil) (Facilitator)
Br. Artur Medeiros (Brasil)
Br. Jorge Fernandez (Bolivia)
Br. Adan Israel Salgado Luna (México)
Br. Fredy Rubén Vega González (Paraguay)
Br. Jorge Lisot (Brasil)**
Br. Ronair Simão de Barros (Brasil)*
Br. Franklin Iban Peña Campos (Perú)
Br. Fabricio Antonio Molina Garcia (México)
Br. Luis Guillermo Laverde Torres (Colombia) (Secretary)
Br. Boner João Cá (Guinea-Bissau)
Br. Joaquín Echeverry (Colombia)

Nº 2 (Sala Semplicità)

Br. José Edilson Maurício dos Santos (Brasil)
Br. Rodrigo Fernández (Argentina) (Facilitator)
Br. Evaristo Cleodomiro Zambrano Parraga (Ecuador) (Secretary)
Br. Roberto Aparecido Pereira (Brasil)
Br. Rudy Antonio Pérez Samayoa (Guatemala)
Br. Antonio de Jesús Gutiérrez Sierra (México)
Br. José Iván Torres Mundaca (Perú)
Br. Robinson Stiven Pava Poloche (Colombia)

Br. Edgar Guerrero Alvarado (México)

Br. Alexander de León Morales (México)

Br. Ignacio Ceja (México)

Nº 3 (Sala S.M. A. Grande)

Br. Luiz Eduardo Dias Lima (Brasil)

Br. Huber Machado (Colombia)

Br. Ronald Villalobos (Chile)

Br. José Antonio Torres (El Salvador) (Facilitator)

Br. Janilson Luis Coelho (Brasil)

Br. Agustí Llopis Bautista (España)

Br. José Luis Mendoza Zarate (México)

Br. Eduardo Sandoval Robles (México)

Br. Juan David Rodríguez (Colombia/Tierra Santa) (Secretary)

Br. Wilder Medardo Porras Ibañez (Perú)

Br. Cesar Kulkamp (Brasil)

Juan Francisco Moreno García (ES)

Nº 4 (Sala S. M. A. Piccola)

Br. Gastón Hernán López Marín (Argentina)

Br. Lenin Rodrigo Jimenez Guayanay (Ecuador)

Br. Héricles Lima Gomes (Brasil)

Br. Manuel Paz Ortega (México)

Br. Darbouze Jean Charles (Haití)

Br. Mikel Santiago Arizaga (España) (Facilitator)

Br. Lucas Espedito Izaqueu (Brasil)

Br. Carlos Salvador Paniagua Pérez (México)

Br. Lucas de Oliveira Santos (Brasil)

Br. Marco Antonio Gómez García (Honduras/USA) (Secretary)

Sumba Mário Quibolo (Guinea-Bissau)

Br. Jardiel Sousa da Silva OFM (Brasil)

English-speaking groups

Nº 5 (Sala Zavarella)

Br. Gabriel Mathieu Lacerte (Canada)

Br. Patrick Zaranyika (Zimbabwe)

Br. Oliver Marcinkovic (Croatia) (Facilitator)

Br. Salvador Drago (India)

Br. Jan ter Maat (Netherlands)

Br. Martin Barmettler (Switzerland)

Br. Erlison Campos de Almeida Filho (Brazil)

Br. Nguyễn Duy Thăng (Vietnam)

Br. Ewaryst Buła (Poland)

Br. Dan Kevin Solayao (Philippines) (Secretary)

Br. Nathaniel Tirkey (India)

Br. Nidheesh Molekunnel John (India)

N° 6 (Sala Sapienza)

Br. RAOELIJAONA Maminaiaina Jean Ricardo (India)

Br. Eliáš František Baláž (Slovak Republic)

Br. John Neuffer (USA) (Secretary)

Br. San LOU (Taiwan – Hong Kong)

Br. Koamivi DETIGAME ATTANKOU "Gabriel" (Togo)

Br. Hong Phuc Nguyen (Australia)

Br. Dario Laštro (Bosnia and Herzegovina) (Facilitator)

Br. Aureliusz Witold Grabowski (Poland)

Br. Charles Hawng Khawng (Myanmar)

Br. Alexis Niyongabo (Burundi)

Br. Albert Schmucki (Switzerland)

Gács Paszkál (Hungary)

N° 7 (Sala Porziuncola)

Br. Jae In Kim (Stephen) (Korea) (Facilitator)

Br. Arslan Masih (Malta) (Secretary)

Br. Kodjo Messan ATAMEKLO (Togo)

Br. Đỗ Văn Quyết (Vietnam)

Br. Alojzije Slavko Anđelić (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Br. Olaf Jankowicz (Poland)

Br. Antonio Elgy Abanes (Philippines)

Br. Canga Manuel Mazoa (Angola)

Br. John Wong (Singapore)

Fr. Jesuraja Arul (India)

Gabriel Gog Deng (South Sudan)

N° 8 (Sala Fraternità)

Br. JONGHUN PARK (Korea)

Br. Roberto Serrano (USA) (Facilitator)

Br. Mario Zrakić (Croatia)

Br. Łukasz Gryzłó (Poland)

Br. Yohanes Baptista Pendamai Marut (Indonesia)

Br. ROMMEL TAYPIN (Philippines)

Br. Renieverton Telles de Oliveira (Brazil)

Br. Jan Dominik BOGATAJ (Slovenia) (Secretary)

Br. Domingos Cacanda (Angola)

Br. Raimundo José Mateus (Mozambique)

Br. Jimmy Zammit (Canada)

Walter Kalana (Papua New Guinea)

N° 9 (Sala Bonaventura)

Br. Phan Quốc Huy (Vietnam)

Br. RAZAFIMAHATRATRA John Lalarivony (Madagascar)

Br. Antonio Baketarić (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Br. Enoch Peter Stencel (Poland)

Br. Abril dos Santos (East Timor)

Br. Seth Jessyl Espina (Philippines)

Br. Johnny Jallouf (Holy Land)

Br. David Au (Singapore) (Secretary)

Br. Marko Plejić (Croatia) (Facilitator)

Br. Daicolás Nsabimana (Rwanda)

Br. Siphelele Gwanisheni (South Africa)

Sibusio Albert Thwayi (South Africa)

Viktor Orwa Akumu (Kenia)

Italian-speaking groups

N° 10 (Sala Mitezza)

Br. Marco Giammatteo (Italia)

Br. Francesco Velluto (Italia) (Facilitator)

Br. František Jarolík (Repubblica Ceca)

Br. ALPEN MUJIJAU (Indonesia)

Br. Jak Kolgjera (Albania)

Br. Gian Luca Aringoli (Italia) (Secretary)

Br. Savio Sitarczyk (Polonia)

Br. Giuliano Santoro (Italia)

Br. Marcos Ventura Mejia Carrillo (Messico)

Br. Sérgio Miguel Mota Pinheiro (Portugal)

Br. Cesare Vaiani (Italia)

Francesco Ma (Cina)

N° 11 (Sala Frate Sole)

Br. Daniele Zanardo (Italia)

Br. Gabrijel Bošnjak (Croazia)

Br. Didier Kingeshi Maso (Mozambico)

Br. Vianney Founi Opinde (Congo Kinshasa)

Br. Pierfrancesco Esposito (Italia) (Secretary)

Br. Maksym Sebastian Ferenc (Polonia) (Facilitator)

Br. Antonio Azzone (Italia)

Br. Daniel Lau (Indonesia)

Br. Saturnin Sadrac Langba-zounga Bagahou (Repubblica Centrafricana)

Br. Lorenzo Gemmi (Italia)

Br. Konrad Cholewa (Polonia)

N° 12 (Sala Speranze)

Br. Gabriele Di Gregorio (Italia)

Br. Luca (Fouad) Aid Fouad Eissa (Egitto)

Br. Damian Varhatiuk (Ucraina)

Br. Damian Camarnyk (Polonia)

Br. Scafuto Antonio (Italia)

Br. Samuele Pelizzari (Italia)

Br. Andrija Majić (Bosnia-Erzegovina) (Secretary)

Br. Luigi Razzano (Italia)

Br. Francesco Sentiero (Italia)

Br. Filippo Jacolino (Italia) (Facilitator)

Br. Antonio Iacona (Italia)

Pijus Stangvaltas (Lithuania)

Appendix

This section gathers the main proposals, orientations, and lines of action that emerged from the International Meeting of Lay Brothers, the International Chapter of the Mats, and the Plenary Council of the Order, held in Assisi during 2025. These contributions are offered as a resource for the work of the Conferences during the day of Friday, 11 July, in order to foster common reflection, discernment, and the drafting of proposals that the Under Ten brothers will present to their Entities, to the Conferences, and to the General Chapter 2027.

Proposals of the International Meeting of Lay Brothers (Assisi, 28 April – 02 May 2025)

A. Franciscan studies in common

As a general norm throughout the Order, all brothers in simple profession should undertake Franciscan studies together while they are being formed for ministry throughout the year, as well as in summer programs, weekly study programs, or online courses shared between entities. This will be carried out in ways and through means appropriate to the context of our entities throughout the world. This formation should include Franciscan identity, fraternal life, the vocation of lay and ordained brothers, and evangelization according to our new Ratio evangelizationis.

B. Personalized accompaniment of lay brothers in initial formation

It is encouraged that all Entities offer a program of accompaniment for lay brothers in initial formation. They are also encouraged to include plans for this in their Ratio formationis et studiorum.

C. Instrument for evaluating opportunities for lay brothers

This instrument would be used as a diagnostic tool in two ways. First, as a self-assessment by the Provincial Minister and his Definitorium, as well as by those responsible for initial and ongoing formation in their respective Entities. Second, as a module proposed for General Visitators to evaluate the opportunities for lay brothers in the Entities.

- 3.1. Describe the functions carried out by lay brothers in the mission and evangelization of your Entity. Identify specific functions, activities, tasks, skills, or professions.
- 3.2. Describe how the mission and evangelization plan of your Entity provides opportunities for lay brothers to participate.
- 3.3. Describe the types of opportunities your Entity offers to prepare lay brothers for mission and evangelization.
- 3.4. Identify specific types of training, education, and formation programs that prepare lay brothers to participate in mission and evangelization activities.
- 3.5. Describe how lay brothers and brothers preparing for the priesthood carry out Franciscan studies together. If lay brothers undertake Franciscan studies independently of priesthood candidates, explain the reasons for this.
- 3.6. Describe the accompaniment program for lay brothers in initial and ongoing formation in your Entity.
- 3.7. Are lay brothers appointed as Guardians, Formation Responsible Brothers, or Definitors? If not, please explain why.

International Chapter of the Mats (Assisi, 2–8 June 2025)

- The present and future of Franciscan religious life require a deepening of our communion and collaboration with the Franciscan family.. Collaboration could involve sharing spaces or partnerships in different activities, integrating the skills and experiences of the various members of the Franciscan family. How could we imagine the renewal of our charism by deepening our relationships and our mission as a Franciscan family? This could take the form of shared formation initiatives, collaboration in promoting the JUFRA, or working in JPIC in new ways. Could we undertake a joint effort to reach out to young people?
- Our Franciscan charism can be shared and deepened by developing common resources and undertaking initiatives of collaboration and co-responsibility in ongoing and initial formation. What resources could be developed for common Franciscan formation across our Family? How could these respond to some of the needs identified that led the brothers to discuss a new ratio formationis? Could the formation of guardians and formators be enriched in this way? Could this also foster our efforts to de-clericalize the Franciscan Family?
- The initial and ongoing formation of all Franciscans could be enriched by more deeply integrating the concerns, methodologies, and experiences of JPIC. Greater collaboration between the Order's JPIC office, the General Secretariat for Formation and Studies, and the other offices can strengthen this dimension of our charism.
- The Franciscan charism naturally lends itself to shared discernment in the spirit of synodality. In order for these new efforts within the Franciscan family to succeed, we will need to deepen our practice of synodal listening. How can we deepen and share the synodal experience of this Chapter within the Franciscan family? How can we make use of this synodal moment within our Church? How can we contribute to synodal initiatives throughout our Church? How can we help our members recognize synodal conversion as ongoing formation?

In order for this to succeed, it is necessary to rethink the current structures related to the promotion and organization of Franciscan mission and evangelization.. This could be a suggestion for the General Secretariat for Evangelization. Shared responsibility between religious and lay people may be a good way forward in this regard. However, serious reflection is needed on the current structures, as well as greater efforts to promote the positive experiences present in the Order. We suggest the creation of an entity that would coordinate the Franciscan movement in its various components.

Plenary Council of the Order (Assisi, 8–12 June 2025)

FOLLOWING THE PATH OF THE MANDATES AND GUIDELINES OF THE 2021 GENERAL CHAPTER

- That the next General Chapter take into account human and financial resources when proposing different types of meetings and initiatives, in order to better harmonize the work of the offices of the General Curia and the Conferences.
- That the General Secretariat for Formation and Studies prepare, for the next General Chapter, a proposal for the revision of the Ratio Formationis Franciscanae, so that the Chapter may give clear indications for a synodal process in this regard.
- That the General Definitorium continue implementing the orientations of the 2021 General Chapter regarding youth and vocation ministry (n. 13); the accompaniment of brothers with “human and/or vocational difficulties” (n. 14), through appropriate programs of ongoing and initial formation in relation to affective maturity; and missionary formation, including for those brothers sent to countries not traditionally considered “mission countries” (n. 18).
- That the Secretariats for Mission and Evangelization, Formation and Studies, and the JPIC office, at general, conference, and provincial levels, continue collaboration with a view to an ever more integrated and synergic work,

according to capitular orientations 22 and 28.

ACCOMPANIMENT, DECREASING AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE ENTITIES

- That the General Definitorium establish a theological-legal Commission to present to the General Chapter new models for entities in decline, define the criteria (number of brothers, average age, vitality of the charism, economy), and also indicate a clear role for the Conferences in accompanying these processes. The reorganization of the Entities must follow the criterion of simplification of structures and adopt a management of these processes increasingly inspired by the charism and mission of the Order.
- In addressing the issue of federations of houses and entities, the General Definitorium should study the applicability of these forms (cf. GG. 119 §1) in the context of the decrease of the respective Entities (cf. GG. 123).
- The figure of the General Visitor remains very valid. In his report to the General Definitorium at the time of evaluating a Province, the Visitor should give particular importance to the current state of the province and its future prospects (cf. GG. 126).
- The General Definitorium should continue clarifying and providing criteria to be followed in the process of resizing and transformation of the Entities. This should take into account geographical proximity and the number of brothers in their dynamics of growth or decline. Likewise, brothers should be helped to understand the process, being informed about the juridical identity of the new reality, its meaning, and practical implications; joint meetings between Entities in the process of unification should be organized. It is also advised to use the help of experts from inside and outside the Order to accompany this process. In cases of numerical decrease, younger brothers should be listened to so that they can express their vision for the future of the Entity.
- In the process of transformation of the Entities, the respective Conference should continue to be involved in collaboration with the General Definitorium (cf. GG. 147).

STRUCTURE OF THE CONFERENCES

- The General Definitorium should carry out a revision of the General Constitutions (GG.) in order to define common and specific criteria according to the identity of each Conference. Furthermore, it should develop a common model for all of them, on the basis of which each Conference may draw up its own Statutes.
- In order to further facilitate mediation between the General Government, Provinces, and Custodies, the General Definitorium should clarify the function, authority, objectives, and roles of the Conferences and of their Presidents.
- To maintain organizational continuity even when provincial ministers change, Conferences should evaluate the possibility of appointing a secretary with a fixed mandate of 3 or 4 years, according to what is established in the Statutes of the Conferences, in order to guarantee stability and the implementation of long-term projects.
- In order to further facilitate communication and a shared approach to initial and ongoing formation, evangelization, JPIC, and development, Conferences should organize a General Assembly with the participation, in addition to their members, of the secretariats, offices, and commissions. This can facilitate shared initiatives such as strengthening formation resources (ongoing, initial, and academic), formation for ministries of animation and authority, and the safeguarding of creation.
- Geographical structure of the Conferences: the Minister with the General Definitorium, together with the council of the offices of the General Curia and other persons or entities if deemed necessary, should develop clearer criteria for the geographical structure and apply them consistently; consideration should also be given to the capacity for collaboration among the provinces. These steps could contribute to improving the functionality of the Conferences.
- The General Definitorium should continue to consolidate the role of the Presidents of Conferences by convening them periodically and on a regular basis in meetings that broaden their capacity for orientation and even decision-making on specific topics.

NUMBER OF THE GENERAL DEFINITORS AND FUNCTIONING OF THE DEFINITORIUM

- The General Chapter should clarify the role of the General Definitors in relation to geographical areas and specific activities within the Order, evaluating the appropriateness of allowing the Minister General to appoint, in addition to those elected by the Chapter, other friars with specific responsibilities according to the concrete needs of the Order.
- That the General Chapter review the number of General Definitors assigned to each region in light of the needs of each Conference, considering the number of Entities that require closer accompaniment because they are involved in a process toward greater autonomy or are undergoing restructuring. The above consideration would have an impact on the number of General Definitors.
- That the General Chapter implement more structured and regular mechanisms of dialogue and coordination between the General Definitorium and the Presidents of the Conferences. With a view to this dialogue, the distinction of roles

between the Definitor for an area and the President of the Conference should be clarified at the level of the General Statutes, as well as the manner of mutual collaboration.