

OUR FRANCISCAN IDENTITY

A Reflection by the General Definitory

ROME 2012

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PRESENTATION

Dear Brothers,

May the Lord give you peace!

The last General Chapter asked that the General Definitory “study in-depth the theme of Franciscan identity as well as participation of both priests and lay brothers in the evangelizing mission” (Mandate 2).

At a time of struggles and difficulties for the Order, to embark on a renewed reflection on ‘who we are and who we want to be’ will help us to transform the ‘crisis’ into an occasion of discernment of the essentials we have promised to live. At the same time, it will spur us onward to be ‘evangelical rebels’ in the world today in order to be more significant and prophetic.

With these guidelines, the General Definitory had already begun to reflect on our identity as Friars Minor with the help of some Friars experts by going back to the Rule and Constitutions, and listening to today’s world with ‘kindness and empathy’ (BGG 13.15) This in-depth reflection has been shared during the annual meetings with the new Provincials, the Presidents of the Conference, and the Visitators General. After having collected the various indications that have emerged from these meetings, with this simple booklet, the General Definitory intends to offer to the Provinces and Entities a practical tool to learn more about this vital issue.

The first section of this reflection proposes some concrete reflection to be used in preparation for the Provincial Chapter and draw up the plan/project of life and mission of the Province; it can also be used in ongoing formation or even as a guideline for doing retreats and spiritual exercises.

The second section proposes an engaging and meaningful celebration of our charismatic identity to be used in individual fraternities or in the assemblies of the Province or Entities, so that each Brother may once again internalize it and feel inspired enough to renew his own life and strengthen his faithfulness.

I commend this “tool” of animation/facilitation to each Provincial Minister, Custode, and Guardian, hoping it will be fruitful and widely used in view of a profound journey of renewal of our identity.

October 4, 2012
Feast of Saint Francis

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Minister General

FRANCISAN IDENTITY

The Provincial Ministers, Custodes, and Guardians are encouraged to promote a reflection on our identity today in the fraternities, in preparation for and during the celebration of the Provincial or Custodial Chapter; at meetings of ongoing formation; for retreats and spiritual exercises; and as fraternities are drawing up their fraternal plan/project of life and mission.

STATEMENT OF THE THEME

Based on the founding texts of both the Rule and Constitutions, we wish to reflect on “who we are and who we want to be” as Friars Minor and as a Province in dialogue with the Church and the world today.

REASONS AND GOALS

To encourage the Friars to take the General Constitutions as a “fundamental law” that renders the Rule timeless and guides our Franciscan vocation.

To renew the awareness that our charism, like any other charism, is a gift of the Spirit, especially for the Church and the good of the world.

To strengthen, as Consecrated Persons, our sense of belonging to God and to both the universal and provincial fraternity. This should be done so as to avoid being conformed to Diocesan Priests and being confused with other ecclesial charisms, so that all brother priests and lay brothers preserve the same and unique fundamental Franciscan identity.

To bring back and develop the Franciscan inspiration, in order to promote the values of justice, peace, and integrity of creation.

To Dialogue, from a critical and listening stance, with other religions and with the contemporary dominant culture, so as not to let oneself be conditioned by them. Rather, it should lead us to renew our Franciscan way of doing evangelization.

METHODOLOGY

- * The vital elements of our charism should be taken from the General Constitutions (= GGCC) present throughout the Chapters and which constitute the way of life handed down to us by St. Francis.
- * The various elements of the charism are based on the *Later Rule* (cf. *Rb* 6, 1-6; 10, 7-17) and are grouped in three basic dimensions: (1) the theological-spiritual dimension; (2) life in fraternity and minority; and (3) mission in both the Church and the world.
- * For each major topic, we propose a comparison to the situation of the Church and contemporary culture.
- * When reflecting on identity, it is important to keep in mind and articulate all the dimensions that constitute it, so as to avoid a partial and fragmentary vision.
- * This in-depth proposal is closely tied with the handbook, *Starting Afresh from the Gospel* and complements the process of reflection indicated in the *Moratorium*. It should also inspire a suitable and coherent “plan/project of life and mission”.

BASIC TEXTS

The fundamental reference that sums up our identity is taken from the *Later Rule* 1 and the *GGCC*, art. 1 §1-2:

RB 1 *The Rule and life of the Minor Brothers is this, namely, to observe the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, by living in obedience, without property and in chastity. Brother Francis promises obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope Honorius and to his successors canonically elected and to the Roman Church. And let the other brothers be bound to obey Brother Francis and his successors.*

GGCC Art.1 1

§1. *The Order of Friars Minor, founded by St. Francis of Assisi, is a fraternity¹. In this fraternity the friars follow Jesus Christ more closely under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; through profession they dedicate themselves totally to God whom they love above all, living the Gospel in the Church according to the form observed and proposed by St. Francis.²*

§2. *The friars, as followers of St. Francis, are bound to lead a radically evangelical life, namely: to live in a spirit of prayer and devotion and in fraternal fellowship; they are to offer a witness of penance and minority; and, in charity towards all mankind, they are to announce the Gospel throughout the whole world and to preach reconciliation, peace and justice by their deeds³; and to show respect for creation.*

SPIRITUAL-THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF OUR IDENTITY

These principals are vital in order to understand, in the light of faith, the spiritual horizon of Francis of Assisi. Among these principles, moreover, some cannot be overlooked, such as a deep faith in the fatherhood of God;

the radical discipleship of Christ; the possession of the Spirit of God as the absolute primacy of life; the vital need to keep alive the spirit of prayer and devotion; expropriation as a path of liberation and freedom; purity of heart as a privileged form of expropriation; mission (sent out like Jesus) as an essential component of vocation; and the relentless pursuit of peace.

PRAYERFUL READING OF THE RULE

We propose the prayerful reading of two central verses of the Later Rule regarding our identity, in order to compare them with the theological and spiritual elements of our charism:

1 RB 8, 1; 12, 3; RnB 5, 4; 18, 2; 19, 2; Test 27; 33.

2 Test 14; 15; CIC 573; 662.

3 RnB 17, 3.

“The brothers shall appropriate nothing to themselves, neither a house nor place nor anything. And as pilgrims and strangers in this world, serving the Lord in poverty and humility, let them go confidently in quest of alms, nor ought they to be ashamed, because the Lord made Himself poor for us in this world. This, my dearest brothers, is the height of the most sublime poverty which has made you heirs and kings of the kingdom of heaven: poor in goods, but exalted in virtue. Let that be your portion, for it leads to the land of the living; cleaving to it unreservedly, my best beloved brothers, for the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, never desire to possess anything else under heaven.” (Rb 6, 1-6).

“I also warn and exhort the brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ that they beware of all pride, vainglory, envy, covetousness, \perp the cares and solitudes of this world, of detraction and murmuring. Let not those who are ignorant of letters care to learn letters, but let them consider that, beyond all, they should desire to possess the spirit of the Lord and His holy operation, to pray always to Him with a pure heart and to have humility, patience in persecution and in infirmity and to love those who persecute, reprove, and accuse us, because the Lord has said: “Love your enemies . . . and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you.” “Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” “But he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved.” (Rb 10, 7-12).

Let all of the brothers who by divine inspiration desire to go amongst the Saracens or other infidels, ask leave therefore from their provincial ministers. But the ministers must give permission to go to none except to those whom they see are fitted to be sent. (Rb 12,1-2).

I also warn and exhort the same brothers that in the preaching they do their words be fire-tried and pure \perp for the utility and edification of the people, announcing to them vices and virtues, punishment and glory, with brevity of speech because the Lord made His word short upon earth (Rb 9, 3).

We suggest following the outline already proposed by the Order on *The Prayerful Reading of the Word of God in the Franciscan life*, namely:

1. Preparation with a moment of invocation to the Spirit.
2. Reading and listening to the text.
3. Internalizing, assimilating, and discovering the richness of the text and memorizing a key text.
4. Giving back through a prayer of praise, thanksgiving, and supplication or invocation.
5. Making a concrete choice that springs from listening and receiving the word of Francis.

We indicate some important elements that are contained in these texts of the Rule:

- Faith in the Lord, God the Father, whom we must serve, in the Spirit whom we must receive, and in Jesus Christ whom we must follow (Rb 6.1, 10.7 to 8).
- General principle of non-appropriation (Rb 6.1).
- Criteria for itinerancy (Rb 6.2 to 3).
- The highest poverty, the way to the kingdom of heaven (Rb 6.4 to 6).
- That which can take us away from the Spirit of the Lord (Rb 10.7 b).
- The primary objectives of the human heart (10 Rb, 8-10th), i.e., “to have the Spirit of the Lord and his holy manner of working; to pray to him always with a pure heart,” “to have humility, patience in persecution and infirmity, and love those who persecute us.”
- The evangelical basis of perseverance (Rb 10, 10b-12).
- Missionary vocation as the result of divine inspiration.
- The missionary Friar sent by our Lord and the Fraternity (Rb 12, 1-2).
- Preaching at the service of building up the people of God and holding the preaching of Jesus as a permanent paradigm for evangelization (Rb 9, 3).

CENTRAL ELEMENTS OF OUR *FORMA VITAE*

The basic elements of the spiritual horizon Francis were translated creatively into a concrete form of life which we can concentrate on three key dimensions.

Recommended Methodology:

Each dimension is a section for individual reflection and community.

Before starting the meeting, both a reading and an individual reflection are recommended.

The Guardian or facilitator should carefully prepare the progress of community reflection.

One begins with a song or a prayer and the reading of the primary texts.

Here is a brief silence and sharing.

You read the section that “compares” to the positive and negative aspects of the culture, even the local culture.

It responds to emerging issues and “for us”.

It concludes with some songs chosen by the handbooks indicated at the end for an in-depth study with a song or a prayer.

I DIMENSION

A Radically Evangelical Life

- **Let us observe the Holy Gospel:** *GGCC* 1; 5 §2; 22 §1.
Cf. also 83 §1; 117 §2; 127 §4.
- **Let us follow Jesus Christ more closely:** *GGCC* 1 §1; 5 §2.
Cf. also 7 §1; 8 §1; 38.
- **Let us be totally given to God:** *GGCC* 1 §1; 5 §1.
Cf. also 7 §3; 9 §1; 19 §2; 20 §1; 33 §1-2; 45 §1; 65; 67.
- **Let us live in a spirit of prayer and devotion:** *GGCC* 1 §2; 19.
Cf. also 20; 21-24; 26; 28; 29
- **Let us live in ongoing conversion (penance):** *GGCC* 1 §2; 32.
Cf. also 33 §3; 34 §2; 84; 86; 99.

Comparison:

Our form of evangelical life is compared to the widespread search for meaning and spiritual experiences; to a plural spirituality which often pushes people to create a personal religion; to a renewed awareness of religious freedom and interreligious dialogue; to a greater sense of responsibility on part of those who believe; and to a newfound sympathy for the person of Jesus of Nazareth. There is also, however, a dominant culture of the external image, the ephemeral, and of religious indifference alongside emotional and fragile forms of religiosity.

Other challenges come from particular cultures.
Try to single them out.

For us to discuss:

- What are the negative effects of these cultures in our lives and what can we learn from these cultures?
- What does the first dimension of our charism tell us and how can we contribute today?
- Decide on at least one concrete personal and/or fraternal choice that aims at renewal of evangelical life.

To go more in-depth and for further reflection:

Our Franciscan identity, Rome 1991.

The Spirit of Prayer and Devotion. Themes to Explore and Reflect On
Rome 1996.

II DIMENSION

A Life in Fraternity and Minority

- **Let us be a fraternity:** *GGCC* 1 §1; 38.
Cf. also 40; 41; 45 §1; 79; 140 §1; 232.
- **Let us live in fraternal communion** *GGCC* 39; 42.
Cf. also 9 §3; 46; 50-52; 87 §1-2; 137 § 2; 139 §1.
- **“Without anything as their own”:** *GGCC* 72 §1; 73-75.
- **Evangelical Poverty:** *GGCC* 8; 72 §2.
Cf. also 64; 65; 67; 70; 75 §1; 91; 97.
- **“The Grace of Work”:** *GGCC* 76-82.
- **“Minor among the minors” (solidarity):** *GGCC* 66; 72 §3.
Cf. also 32 §3; 78 §1; 82 §1 y3.
- **Instruments of reconciliation, peace, justice, and respect for creation:** *GGCC* 1 §2; 68; 69; 71.
Cf. also 85; 98 §2; 96 §2-3; *BGG* 30.

Comparison:

Our life as Friars Minor is compared to large solidarity movements and voluntary work; to the search for new ways of life; to sensitivity towards human rights and the environment and toward the emergence and becoming visible of minorities of all kinds that make our society pluricultural. Our culture is also dominated by individualism and the pursuit of wealth and power; it is often characterized by divisions and injustices, the phenomenon of migration, and the different forms of social exclusion.

Other challenges come from particular cultures.
Try to single them out.

For us to discuss:

- What are the negative effects of these cultures in our lives and what can we learn from these cultures?
- What does the second dimension have to say about our charism and what can be our contribution today to evangelize culture?
- Decide on at least one concrete personal and/or communal choice that aims at the renewal of life in fraternity and minority.

To go more in-depth and for further reflection, we recommended the following:

You Are All Brothers. Handbook for Ongoing Formation on Chapter 3 of the General Constitutions, Rome 2002.

Pilgrims and Strangers in This World. Handbook for Ongoing Formation on Chapter IV of the OFM General Constitutions, Rome 2008.

III DIMENSION

Mission in the Church and the World

Basic Reference: GGCC 112 §1: *It is the duty of the General and Provincial Chapters to examine whether or not the Order's activity regarding the choice, the specific forms of action and the force of witness responds to the demands of the present time and Franciscan evangelization; it is also their duty to establish suitable plans and ways to further the apostolate.*

- **All the brothers should participate in the mission of the Church:** *GGCC* 83; 84.
Cf. also 4 §1; 5 §2; 89 §1; 116 §1.
- **Let us Evangelize through the witness of life:** *GGCC* 86; 89 §1.
Cf. also 87; 90-99; 115 §2.
- **Let us Evangelize in word:** *GGCC* 89 §2; 100-110.
- **Let us Evangelize in fraternity and minority:** *GGCC* 87 §1-2; 91; 111.
Cf. also 88; 97; 98; 104; *BGG* 27.
- **Let us evangelize “inter gentes” and “ad gentes”:** *BGG* 13-21.
Cf. also *GGCC* 116; 117; 118 §2; 121.
- **With new forms of fraternity for a new evangelization:** *GGCC* 87 §3; 115 §1; *BGG* Mandate 20.
- **We are “pilgrims and strangers” (itinerancy):** *GGCC* 64; 72 §1; *BGG* 22-24; Mandate 13.

Comparison:

Our Franciscan mission is compared to the culture that values women, equality, participation, and democracy; to a dominant culture which has created a distance between the new generations and the Church; to a culture that spreads a hyper-critical and sometimes aggressive spirit towards the Church and encourages indifference and religious relativism; and to a culture that is fed rapidly by changing values and reference points.

There are other values that issue from within the Church, such as the centrality of the Word; the involvement of the laity; the different forms of collaboration; the challenges of exaggerated clericalism; sexual and financial abuse; the non-evangelical way of life; the absence of the Church among the poor; and others more, which may undermine the confidence of both believers and the Friars toward the persons responsible.

We are also faced with the decline of missionary zeal in both the Church and the Order. Other challenges come from particular cultures. Try to single them out.

For us to discuss:

- What are the negative effects of these cultures in our lives and what can we learn from these cultures?
- What does the third dimension have to say about our charism and how can we contribute today?
- Decide on at least one concrete personal and/or fraternal choice that aims at renewal of evangelical life.

To go more in-depth and for further reflection, we recommended the following::

Our Franciscan Identity, Rome 1991.

H. Schalück, “*Riempire la terra del Vangelo di Cristo*” [Filling The Earth with the Gospel of Christ], Rome 1996.

Inviati per evangelizzare in fraternità e minorità nella Parrocchia. Sussidio per la pastorale parrocchiale, [Sent out to Evangelize in Fraternity and Minority in the Parish. Handbook for Parish Ministry] Rome 2009.

OUR EVANGELICAL FRANCISCAN VOCATION

Let us celebrate our identity

Introduction

This proposal can be done in one or more celebrations and adapted according to the fraternity and the local situations. The signs and gestures may be different or added, according to culture and sensitivity of others.

Preparation

Prepare the space by placing the Blessed Sacrament exposed at the center of the Fraternity with a picture of St. Francis, the cross of St. Damian, the Gospel, the Rule, the General Constitutions, sandals, and a globe or a map of the world.

1. INITIAL MOTIVES

Dear Brothers!

Our vocation is a precious gift given by the Holy Trinity. Our Franciscan fraternity is born of our listening to the Gospel of Christ through a new bond in the Spirit. (BGG 6) It is a charism given by the Spirit to our Holy Father Francis and his followers for the good of the Church and the world. This charism has a specific identity that asks to be kept within the personal and fraternal sphere for the sake of mission in the Church and the world. This is a dynamic identity, a gospel identity “in motion” that is built by walking. The starting point, the center, and the anchor of stability is the Gospel. We have as landmarks the experience of our father St. Francis and the first fraternity, the Franciscan sources, the spiritual, cultural, intellectual, and missionary heritage of the Order throughout the centuries, our General Constitutions (GGCC), the creative faithfulness of each brother and every fraternity, and the response to the signs of the times and places of each historical period. The GGCC are a particularly valuable tool and the fruit of the commitment of the Order with the approval of the Church to preserve and maintain our identity. We want to renew our personal commitment and brotherly love to know them, live them in our hearts, and welcome them in our lives and our evangelizing mission.

Song

After the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and the initial rite with the sign of the cross and greeting, the President invites everyone to say together the prayer to the Trinity:

“Almighty, eternal, just, and merciful God, grant us, miserable ones, to do out of love for you what we know is pleasing to you; to always desire what pleases you, so that, inwardly cleansed, interiorly enlightened, and inflamed by the fire of Holy spirit, we may follow the footsteps of your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the help of your grace alone come to thee, O Most High, who in perfect Trinity and simple Unity live and reign and is glorified, Almighty God, for ever and ever. Amen.”

2. OBSERVE THE HOLY GOSPEL

Comment:

The gift of the Gospel is the source of our Fraternity. St. Francis says in his Testament that the Most High Himself revealed to him that he should live according to the form of the Holy Gospel. The starting point and the central part of our charismatic identity is to observe and live the gospel following the example of our father St. Francis. “The Rule and life of the Friars Minor is this, that is, to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, living in obedience without anything of their own and in chastity.”

Singing and entrance of the book of the Gospel
Reading Art. 1 § 1 and 2 of the GGCC.

Article 1

- §1.** *The Order of Friars Minor, founded by St. Francis of Assisi, is a fraternity. In this fraternity the friars follow Jesus Christ more closely under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; through profession they dedicate themselves totally to God whom they love above all, living the Gospel in the Church according to the form observed and proposed by St. Francis.*
- §2.** *The friars, as followers of St. Francis, are bound to lead a radically evangelical life, namely: to live in a spirit of prayer and devotion and in fraternal fellowship; they are to offer a witness of penance and minority; and, in charity towards all mankind, they are to announce the Gospel throughout the whole world and to preach reconciliation, peace and justice by their deeds; and to show respect for creation.*

Silent Meditation

3. LIVING ACCORDING TO THE RULE OF ST. FRANCIS

Comment:

The form of evangelical life, which Francis sensed with the grace of God and prompted by the Holy Spirit, is expressed especially in the Rule. It is the foundation of the life and law of the Order; it is above all “the marrow of the Gospel” (2C 208). We must always keep in our hearts the rule given to us by our Father St. Francis and approved by the Church, in order to live in fidelity to our charism.

Singing and entrance of the Rule

Reading Art. 2 § 1 and 2 of the GGCC.

Article 2

- §1 *The Rule of the Friars Minor, confirmed by Pope Honorius III is the foundation of the life and legislation of the Order. Everything contained in it is to be understood and observed in a living context according to the mind of St. Francis especially as expressed in his writings, and in keeping with the understanding of the Church and the sound traditions of the Order.*
- §2 *For an ever-deeper knowledge and faithful observance of “the spirit of the Founder and his aims”, the friars are to endeavor to study, understand and venerate not only the Rule, but also the writings of St. Francis and his followers.*

Silent Meditation

4. FOLLOWING ST. FRANCIS TODAY ACCORDING TO THE GG.CC.

Comment:

We, Friars Minor, want to live in every time the form of life that our Father St. Francis lived and proposed to his sons, approved by the Church, and which consists in living the Gospel. To achieve this end, we are given a great help: the General Constitutions renewed. They continually render the Rule timeless for our times. They are essential to preserve and render timeless our identity as Friars Minor.

Singing and entrance of the GGCC; Reading Art. 10; 12 §1 and 2; 4.

Article 10

The authentic interpretation of the Rule of Saint Francis is reserved to the Holy See. The General Chapter, however, has the right to adapt the Rule itself to the changing times; it also has the right to make interpretations of the Rule, but these need the approval of the Holy See.

Article 12

§1 The General Constitutions provide the basic norms to regulate the life of all friars everywhere in accordance with the Rule.

§2 All the friars are to strive to observe with the greatest care, the laws contained in these General Constitutions. Unless these are faithfully observed, fraternal fellowship and evangelical perfection can hardly be achieved in a manner proper to the Order.

Article 4

§1 The Friars Minor, embodied in the People of God, paying attention to the new signs of the times and responding to the conditions of a developing world, are always to be of one mind with the Church; they are to adopt as their own and foster as much as they can the Church's undertakings and aims.

§2 All the friars are to show obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope, to whom they are bound in a special way by their Rule and by their vow of obedience. In pastoral matters, however, they are to be subject to the authority of the Bishop. Moreover, they are always to follow bishops and priests with due honour and reverence, according to the desire and example of St. Francis.

Silent Meditation

5. RENEWING OUR PROFESSION EACH DAY

Comment:

Our vocation is a personal and daily commitment. For this reason, we are called to keep in mind our profession and give to God that new answer He waits at each new season of our lives. By renewing daily the formula of our profession, we render our response suitable to the times. Let us, then, allow the words of our profession ring out until they become our life.

Entrance with the Easter candle alit

Reading of Art. 5 §1

Article 5

§1 *In a more complete fulfillment of their baptismal consecration and in answer to the divine call, the friars give themselves totally to God, their supreme love⁴; through profession of obedience, poverty and chastity which they are to live in the spirit of Saint Francis, they contract a covenant with God and life becomes, as it were, for their whole existence, a sacrifice offered to God in charity.*

§2 *In our Order, profession is made in the hands of one's legitimate minister in these words:*

Brief silence

Each lights his candle in the candle and together renew their profession, according to the following prayer:

**Almighty, Most Holy, Most High and Supreme God,
Holy and Righteous Father,
Lord King of heaven and earth,
I bless and thank you because
with the power of your love
you have called me to follow
in the footsteps of your beloved Son,
Our Lord Jesus Christ,
in the way of life which you inspired your servant Francis.**

4 LG 44.

**With the power of the Holy Spirit,
Today I renew before you,
with all the enthusiasm of the heart,
the vow to live in obedience,
without nothing of one's own, and in chastity.
I also confirm the commitment
to profess the life and the Rule of the Friars Minor
confirmed by Pope Honorius,
according to the Constitutions of our Order.**

**Father, grant that,
strengthened by Mary Immaculate,
Virgin made Church and
model of consecrated life,
through the intercession of
our Father Francis, all the saints,
the brothers, I may persevere
to the end in this holy purpose
and, by your grace alone,
come to you, Most High,
who in perfect Trinity
and simple Unity live and reign
in glory forever and ever. Amen.**

Reading of Art 19 of the GGCC:

Article 19

- §1 Faithful to their profession, the friars, when they pray, follow Christ who gives thanks most profoundly to the Father and “is living to intercede for us”⁵.*
- §2 Following in the steps of Saint Francis, who “did not just pray but became totally a prayer”⁶, removing every impediment and setting aside every care and anxiety, the friars are to serve, love, honour and adore the Lord God with a clean heart and a pure mind”, since they must pray continually and never lose heart”, for “that is the kind of worshipper the Father wants”.*

5 Heb 7, 25.

6 2 Cel 95.

6. LIVING AS FRIARS MINOR

Comment:

Francis is the first in the history of the Church to give his own group the name of fraternity. Moreover, he wanted this Fraternity to be called Order of Friars Minor (1 Cel 38). The first statement that the GGCC does is to affirm that the Order is a fraternity. This means that the main reference is not the institution but the person of the “brother”. After the centrality of God and the Gospel, the fraternity is the most fundamental element of the identity of our Franciscan vocation. St. Francis recognizes that both the brothers and the revelation to live according to the Holy Gospel are gifts from the Lord.

Song

Reading from the GGCC with a brief silence after each article:

Article 38

As sons of the heavenly Father and brothers of Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, the friars, following the Gospel way of life revealed by the Lord to St. Francis, lead a brotherly life in common, and love and support one another more than a mother loves and supports her child according to the flesh.

Article 39

Since the love of God that has been poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit, all the friars are to have among themselves, to the highest degree, a family spirit and mutual friendship. They are to practise courtesy, cheerfulness and all other virtues in such a way that, united in real fraternity and encouraging one another unceasingly to hope, peace and joy, they may achieve full human, Christian and religious maturity.

Article 40

Every friar is a gift of God to the fraternity. Therefore, even though they possess different characters, cultures, customs, talents, abilities and qualities, the friars are to accept one another just as they are and as equals, so that the whole fraternity may become a privileged place of meeting with God.

Article 41

All the members of the Order are brothers and minors in name and in fact, although they may exercise different offices, duties and ministries in the Order.

Article 55

§1 *The friars are to bear in mind at all times that the charism granted by God to St. Francis reveals and manifests its manifold fruits not only among the Friars Minor but also among the other members of the Franciscan family.*

§2 *The friars are to endeavour with all their might to nourish and promote the full development of this Franciscan charism among all those who are imbued with the spirit of St. Francis; they are to seize any opportunity to come together to offer assistance in common undertakings.*

§3 *Spiritual assistants of every unit and level of the Franciscan family are to be chosen with care, in accordance with universal and proper law.*

Brief silence for meditation

Comment:

The Franciscan Fraternity has a unique task to be instruments of peace, goodness, justice, and reconciliation. Before proclaiming and promoting peace and reconciliation, the fraternity should live them out. Each brother must have peace in his heart and the fraternity must work every day to be a reconciled fraternity that bears witness to the reconciliation that the Father wants to accomplish in the world through his Son.

Reading of Articles:

Article 67

Constantly denying themselves and in an uninterrupted conversion to God, the friars are to display a prophetic image by the example of their lives, in order to refute “the false values” of our age.

Article 68

§1 *The friars are to live in this world as promoters of justice and as messengers and agents of peace, overcoming evil and doing good.*

§2 *The friars shall proclaim peace by word, and cherish it so deep in their hearts that no one is stirred to anger or scandal, but rather that through them everyone is called back to peace, meekness and kindness.*

Let's take a moment to examine our conscience to recognize the divisions, the open wounds, the lack of dialogue, and all the attitudes of indifference among us in our everyday community life.

After a brief silence ... you can pray or sing a penitential psalm.

We will now put a sign that expresses the acceptance of each brother as a gift of the Lord and the willingness to forgive and reconcile with each one of them by giving each other a fraternal embrace.

7. EVANGELIZING IN FRATERNITY AND MINORITY IN THE WORLD

Comment:

Franciscan spirituality, in its origins, is a missionary spirituality, a spirituality of encountering, which tends to be on the journey. Following the example of Francis and many confreres, we, too, want to receive the gift of the Gospel and restore it creatively with our life as “center focus” through concrete gestures, evangelizing mission, and its expression of “inter gentes” and “ad gentes”. In Chapters IV and V, the GGCC remind us that we are pilgrims and strangers in this world; that we are all called to evangelize; and that our first form of evangelization is with our life of fraternity and minority as well as by word and effective preaching.

*Singing and entrance of the Map of the World and a pair of sandals
Reading of Article 66 of the GGCC*

Article 66

§1 In order that they may follow more closely and express more clearly the self-emptying out of the Saviour, the friars are to have the life and condition of the little ones in society, always living among them as minors. In this social environment they are to work for the coming of the Kingdom.

§2 By their way of life, as a fraternity and as individuals, the friars are to behave in such a way that no one is kept from them, particularly those who usually are socially and spiritually neglected.

Brief testimony of a brother who lives and serves the poor and shares his experience as a Friar Minor within this context.

Reading from the GGCC

Article 83

§1 As the Son was sent by the Father, so all the friars, guided by the Holy Spirit, are sent to proclaim the gospel in the whole world, to every creature and to make everyone know by the witness they give to his voice, that no one is all-powerful except God.

§2 *All the friars are to share in the task of evangelisation that belongs to the whole Church. After the example of Saint Francis, who “made a tongue out of his whole body”, they are to be ready to receive the inspiration of the Lord, and, wherever they have been called and sent, they are to build up all the nations in word and deed, by the purity of their entire life.*

Article 84

Wherever they are and whatever they do, the friars are to dedicate themselves to the task of evangelisation: in fraternal fellowship through their contemplative and penitential life and the various tasks they perform for the fraternity; in human society through their intellectual and material activities, through the exercise of a pastoral office in parishes and other ecclesiastical institutions; and finally by announcing the coming of God’s kingdom through their witness of a simple Franciscan presence.

Article 89

§1 *The witness of one’s life, or the silent proclamation of the kingdom of God, is a kind of initial step and the first method of evangelisation. It can and must be given by all the friars, clerics and lay, by those who preach, pray or “work”, by the young and the old, by the healthy and the sick, in such a way that, as they live their life as minors in fraternity, they make known the fact that they are Christians.*

§2 *The witness of the Word, or explicit proclamation, is another way of evangelisation and it is carried out by those who, by their word or their office, announce the name and the doctrine, the life and the promise, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God.*

Recalling the various presences of evangelization inter gentes of the provincial fraternity.

Reading of Article 117

Article 117

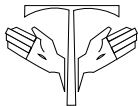
§1 *In our Order those friars are called missionaries who, in accordance with the Rule, by divine inspiration, wish to dedicate themselves to carrying out the missionary activity of evangelising and are sent by the competent Minister.*

- §2 *The purpose of missionary activity is to bring the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ among peoples or groups where that joyful News has never been heard, and to assist those who have accepted the Gospel in building up the particular Church.*
- §3 *Missionary activity remains necessary in all the particular Churches until, using all the resources and means necessary, they have been fully established or re-established in their former vigour.*

Brief Testimony of a Friar with a typically ad gentes missionary experience.

CONCLUSION:

Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and final song.



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