



ORDO FRATRUM
MINORUM

LETTER FROM THE MINISTER GENERAL

*to all Postulants, Novices and Temporary
Professed of the Order of Friars Minor*

on the occasion of the VIII Centenary
of the Transitus of St. Francis

1226 — 2026
Franciscus
Eight Hundredth Anniversary of the Death of St. Francis

La Verna, 17th September 2026
Feast of the Stigmata of St. Francis

Dear Brothers,

May the Lord give you peace!

I am writing to you on the day when, more than eight hundred years ago, here on La Verna, the Lord impressed on St Francis' body the signs of his Passion. From those wounds to the *Transitus*, which we will celebrate in a few weeks, there is only one journey: that of a man who has left Christ the last word on his life.

I wish to reach out to each one of you — postulants, novices, and temporary professed — thinking of your faces and the questions you carry in your hearts. You are the young face of the Order. Through you, the Lord continues to call men who desire to live the Gospel in the form that the Lord revealed to Francis.

Celebrating the *Transitus* does not only mean remembering the day of St Francis' death. It means contemplating a life entirely handed over. After having followed the path of the Gospel to the end, St Francis enters into the Father's embrace. For this reason, the *Transitus* does not belong only to the past: it indicates the goal towards which every Friar Minor walks. Not success, not prestige, but full communion with God.

The legacy that St Francis leaves to his brothers is not a program or an organisation, but the Gospel lived, his blessing and a fraternity. That is what you receive today.

Stay with Christ.

"To desire to have the Spirit of the Lord and his holy work above all things" (Rb X:8): in these words, St Francis sums up what comes first. The more you learn to abide in the Lord, the more you will know how to live as brothers. Your vocation is not born of a personal project, but of a gaze that has reached you and continues to ask you to leave everything: "*You lack only one thing: go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come! Follow me!*" (Mk 10:21).

If this gaze is weakened, fraternity loses its centre and the mission risks becoming only an activity.



We live in a time that continually demands our attention. For this reason, a friar must learn to stop. Cherish personal prayer, the Eucharist in which Christ gives Himself, the Liturgy of the Hours that unites you to the Church's invocation. Pause before the Word and seek the silence of adoration; and, like St Francis, who returned to the hermitages, set aside times of desert.

Silence is not empty: it is the place where God speaks to the heart.

Life in the Spirit does not distance us from our brothers; it makes us capable of loving them. St Francis would come out of the hermitages with new eyes, capable of recognising in every creature a brother. Contemplation nourished his mission. So, it will be for you too.

"The Lord gave me brothers."

"The Lord gave me brethren" (Test. 14). Thus, in the Testament, St Francis recalls the moment when it all began. And when he asked to be taken back to the Portiuncula, he wanted to return to the place where the Lord had gathered his first brothers around him.

He does not say, "I chose them." He recognises them as a gift received.

It will be the same for you. The friars will not always have your character or your ideas. Some will understand you at once; others will test you; and yet, each one is a gift entrusted to your life.

Do not enter the Order to build a tailor-made world, but to let yourselves be transformed by the encounter with brothers whom you may not have chosen. It is here that we learn to listen before speaking, to ask for forgiveness before justifying ourselves, to bear the weight of mutual fragility together.

Fraternities do not grow by avoiding every difficulty, but by going through it in the light of the Gospel. Have the courage to build homes where you can trust one another, where no one feels judged or left alone. The world will also recognise the credibility of our proclamation from this.

A mature and free heart.

Grace does not replace our humanity: it transfigures it. In St Francis, we see him to the very end: with those gathered around him, whilst he lay dying, Br Leo, Br Bernard, Br Angelo, Br Rufino, and "Br" Jacopa — indeed, we see a man who



continues to love with freedom and tenderness. You will not become good friars in spite of what you are, but through what you are.

For this reason, formation wants to help you become reconciled men within yourselves, capable of knowing your heart: the desires that dwell there, the fears, the wounds, what sets you in motion and what holds you back.

Do not be afraid of your history, including your family history, even its more difficult pages. Carry it in prayer and accompaniment. What is welcomed and integrated becomes fruitful; What remains hidden, over time, weighs heavily.

Ask yourselves often: what man is the Lord forming in me?

Affectivity is not an obstacle to consecration. Chastity does not require a cold heart, but a free heart: capable of loving many without possessing anyone. Build healthy friendships that are neither fusion nor isolation.

Accept that you need others. Allowing oneself to be known, accompanied, and even corrected is not weakness; it is maturity.

Those who recognise that they have received everything as a gift hardly lose the joy of their vocation.

Loneliness, fatigue, misunderstandings, and trials will come. It will be easy to seek refuge in activism or behind a spiritual mask. The access and use of social media seem to anaesthetise this void. We are asked to grow in responsible freedom to learn to live in this digital space. But a mature man is not one who feels nothing: he is one who knows how to bring what he lives before God and with his brothers.

Look again at St Francis. Sick, almost blind, wounded even by what had not gone as he had hoped in the Order, he did not close himself off or become embittered. He blesses. He sings. He even calls death “sister”. It is the fruit of a reconciled heart.

Be truly minor.

This inner freedom has a name that belongs to the heart of our vocation: to become minors.

In the last moments of his life, St Francis asked to be laid naked on the bare ground. It is not only a gesture of poverty: it is the last act of a life that gives everything back to the Father.



To be minor means not to keep anything for oneself, to choose the last place because it is the place that Christ has chosen.

The culture in which we live continually pushes us to appear, to assert ourselves, to seek recognition. Religious life is not immune to this temptation either. For this reason, cherish minority as a precious gift. One learns to become minor in simple things: in hidden services, in shared work, in corrections accepted with humility, in letting oneself be helped without shame.

The people of God will forget many of our words, but they will hardly forget a friar who knows how to listen, share the life of the poor and walk alongside the least.

St Francis recognised the face of Christ in the embrace of the leper. You too will meet him where the world passes by, in the poor, in the sick, in those who are alone, in those who seek meaning in life. Let yourselves be evangelised by them.

An Order that speaks all languages.

You belong to a fraternity that transcends the boundaries of Provinces and Custodies, of nations and cultures. It is one of the greatest gifts that the Lord has entrusted to our Order.

Do not allow yourselves to be closed in too narrow horizons. Learn from the years of formation to feel that you are brothers of the whole Order, even before that of a Province or a Custody.

Internationality does not simply consist in living with brothers other countries. It is to allow oneself to be converted by the other. Take an interest in your brother's culture, learn a few words of his language, and listen to the history of his people.

Unity is not born by erasing differences, but by letting the Spirit transform them into communion.

St Francis dreamed of friars sent into the world as humble men, without pretensions to domination, capable of meeting everyone with respect. That dream continues every time a fraternity becomes a home for people of different peoples and a sign of a truly Catholic Church.

A fraternity that evangelises.

"Behold, I am sending you out" (Mt 10:16). The mission does not begin when you receive a destination. Start today.



A reconciled fraternity is already the Gospel. From the way you look at one another, listen to one another, correct one another and support one another, your mission already begins.

One day you will be sent to preach, teach, accompany, serve. Some will leave for other continents; others will remain in their own land. But the first mission is to let yourself be sent.

The world is waiting for friars capable of inhabiting borders: the geographical ones, but also the human, cultural and spiritual ones. Today we are also called upon to cross digital frontiers, including those of Artificial Intelligence. They are decisive in the era-changing shift underway and require us to pay close attention. In all this, we are called to become not men who defend a space, but brothers who open paths of reconciliation and peace.

Do not be afraid to spend your life. The Order does not need first of all specialists, but evangelical men. The Church needs your generosity; the world needs your hope.

Walk in joy.

Many will look to you to see if Christ is worth following. It will not be perfection that will make you credible, but hope.

Franciscan joy is not born from the absence of trials: it is born from the certainty that Christ walks with us. St Francis knew misunderstandings, illnesses, and disappointments, and continued to sing; Facing death, he composed his song of praise.

Cherish this joy: it is the most beautiful gift you can offer to the Church and to the world.

“I have done my part; May Christ teach you yours.”

Tradition gives us the words that St Francis addressed to his brothers before his death: “I have done my part; May Christ teach you yours.” They span eight centuries, and today they reach each one of you. They are the surrender of a man who left everything in the hands of Christ.

I hope that you will keep this spark alive and let it be rekindled every day by the Spirit of the Lord. It is through men like this that the Lord continues to renew our Order, much more than with our structures or programmes.



As we celebrate the Eighth Centenary of the *Transitus* of our Father St. Francis, I entrust each one of you to the intercession of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, St. Clare and all the Franciscan saints.

May the Lord guard your vocation and grant you to persevere in joy to the end.

With affection, I bless you and accompany you in prayer.

Fraternally,



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