

**Homily for the Eucharistic Celebration**  
**Conclusion of Visitators' General meeting at the General Curia**  
**12 July 2024**

Dear Brother Visitators and Brothers of the General Curia,

*May the Lord give you peace!*

After these days of listening, discussing and working together, the Word of God once again enlightens, exhorts and consoles us.

The prophet Hosea enlightens us and reminds us that it is not our work that we are called to do, but God's work first. He himself heals us of our infidelities, makes us blossom and take root again, gives us new beauty. This seems to me a great word for our Fraternity, which is diminishing in number, wounded and in need of a new hope. May your ministry be this word of light and hope. Not a pittance of hope, but one that opens to us the greater horizon of our vocation. To rediscover it, to choose it together, is the way to restore vitality and meaning to our lives as Friars minor.

The passage from Matthew's Gospel is taken from the missionary discourse, in which Matthew addresses only the Twelve at the beginning, but in the verses that we have heard, it is addressed to all the disciples, and therefore also to us today. Jesus enlightens us realistically; he does not hide from us the difficulties of the mission and also its failure: "I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves" (Mt 16:10)! Jesus asks us to be attentive and discerning at all times, knowing that the protagonist of the mission remains the Holy Spirit, even in the face of opposition and even persecution. I do not believe that any of us will die a martyr's death in this ministry!

But there is a form of martyrdom that is the martyrdom of speaking and not seeing the reception and the results of change. There is the martyrdom of constantly listening to brothers that often seem to bear no fruit. There is the martyrdom of the passive aggressiveness of the brothers, of the apparent welcome that, in reality, is a closure and a rejection of another word, of a possible new way. There is the martyrdom of seeing one Province or another retreat into the maintenance of what exists, without looking beyond. This requires much strength, much humility and much prayer. And this is what I invite you to guard through the holy and perpetual action of the Spirit of the Lord (cf. Rule X, 8).

The Lord always consoles us, because he confirms that all this is his work and that we are at his service. May he give us the heart of the "useless" servants of the Gospel (cf. Lk 17:10), that of Francis, who at the end of his life reminded his brothers and sisters that it is Christ himself who teaches us the way, while he has made it his own. With these sentiments, sustained by the Word of God, I wish all of you a happy pilgrimage in the life and vocation of so many brothers in this difficult but favourable time of following Christ.

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Minister General