

The Order of Friars Minor

Orientations for the Pastoral Care of Vocations

“Come and see”
(Jn 1,39)



General Secretariat
for Formations and Studies
ROME 2002

Br. GIACOMO BINI, OFM

**MINISTER GENERAL
OF THE WHOLE ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR
AND HUMBLE SERVANT IN THE LORD**

DECREE

Wishing to help the Fraternities and the individual Friars “to welcome those who show an interest in the Franciscan charism, so that they may find a concrete proposal of life, according to the invitation of Jesus: “Come and see” (Jn 1, 39) (RFF 106), in conformity with the directives of the *General Constitutions* (cf. GGCC 144-147) and the documents of the Church on the pastoral care of vocations, having obtained the deliberative vote of the General Definitory in its session celebrated on the 17th January 2002, following the norm of the General Statutes (cf. art. 67 §§1-3) and using the faculties pertaining to our office, with the present decree

we approve and promulgate the

***ORIENTATIONS FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF
VOCATIONS
“COME AND SEE”
(Jn 1, 39)***

and decree that they are valid for our whole Order.

Furthermore, we decree that all our competent Provinces and Entities are obliged to draw up their own *Orientations for the pastoral care of vocations* in accordance with the directives

of these *Orientations*, with due adaptation to the different requirements and situations, in order that the vocational announcement and proposal (cf. *RFF* 105) and, at the same time, a suitable discernment and accompaniment can be assured for those who come to us to discern their vocation and make a choice of life (*RFF* 107).

Given in Rome, at the General Curia of the Order, on the 25th day of January, the Solemnity of the Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle.

Prot. 091725 (025/02)

BR. GIACOMO BINI, OFM
Minister General

BR. JOSÉ RODRÍGUEZ CARBALLO, OFM
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Sacred Scripture

Jn	<i>The Gospel according to St. John.</i>
Lk	<i>The Gospel according to St. Luke.</i>
Mt	<i>The Gospel according to St. Matthew.</i>
1S	<i>The First Book of Samuel.</i>

Other acronyms

CFL	<i>Christifideles Laici</i>
DVP	<i>Development of Vocational Pastoral Activity in the local Churches, CIVCVSVA, 1992.</i>
EN	<i>Evangelii Nuntiandi, Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI, 1975.</i>
ET	<i>Evangelica Testificatio, Paul VI.</i>
FC	<i>Familiaris Consortio.</i>
FE	<i>Fill the Whole Earth with the Gospel of Christ, Pentecost Letter of Br. Hermann Schalück, 1996.</i>
FLC	<i>Fraternal Life in Community, CIVCVSVA, 1996.</i>
FRV	<i>Fraternity for Reception of Vocations.</i>
GGCC	<i>General Constitutions, 1987.</i>
GS	<i>Gaudium et Spes, Pastoral Constitution of the II Vatican Council, 1965.</i>
IVT	<i>“In Verbo Tuo...”, Instrumentum Laboris of the International Congress for PCV, Assisi, 2000.</i>
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium, Dogmatic Constitution of the II Vatican Council, 1964.</i>
LGB/FD	<i>The Lord Gives Me Brothers, Final Document of the Congress of PCV, Assisi, 2000.</i>
MR	<i>Mutuae Relationes, CIVCVSVA, 1978.</i>

NMI	<i>Novo Millennio Ineunte</i> , Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, 2000.
NVNE	New Vocations for a New Europe, Pontifical work for Church vocations, 1997.
OF	<i>Ongoing Formation in the Order of Friars Minor</i> , Document of the General Secretariat for Formation and Studies, 1995.
OrPCV	<i>Orientations for the Pastoral Care of Vocations</i> , 2002.
OT	<i>The Order Today</i> , Letter of the Minister General, Br. Giacomo Bini, ofm, 2000.
PAY	Pastoral Activity with Youth.
PCV	Pastoral Care of Vocations.
PDV	<i>Pastores dabo vobis</i> , Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, 1992.
PI	<i>Potissimum Institutioni</i> , “Instruction on formation in Religious Institutes”, CIVCVSVA, 1990.
PrS	<i>Priorities for the Sexennium</i> , Definitory General, 1997.
ReM	<i>Redemptoris Missio</i> , Encyclical Letter of John Paul II, 1990.
RFF	<i>Ratio Formationis Franciscanae</i> , 1991.
TestC	<i>Testament of St. Clare</i> .
VC	<i>Vida Consecrata</i> , Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, 1996.

PRESENTATION

The General Secretariat for Formation and Studies organised an International Congress for the Animators of PCV of the entire Order in St. Mary of the Angels (Assisi) from the 7th to the 30th of October 2000. The massive response given to the convocation and the active participation of all the Animators of the PCV that were present were given some shape in the final document of the Congress, *The Lord Gives Me brothers*. In this document the Secretary General for Formation and Studies was asked to draw up the *Orientations for the PCV* that would serve as the basis for the working out of a Provincial Project for PCV.

The Definitory General accepted this suggestion of the Congress and appointed an “ad hoc” Commission to draw up the said *Orientations*. This commission was composed of Brothers José Rodríguez Carballo, Secretary General for Formation and Studies, Ernest Siekierka, Vice-Secretary General for Formation and Studies, Massimo Fusarelli, from the Province of Sts. Peter and Paul of Rome (Italy) and Sergio Bałdyga, from the Province of the Assumption of the B.V.M. of Katowice (Poland). The Commission was aided in its work by other Friars. The Definitory General, in its session of the 17th January, approved the final text and the Minister General, with a decree signed on the 25th of the same month, approved and promulgated the document that bears the title of *Orientations for the Pastoral Care of Vocations*. “Come and See” (Fn.1, 39), which we now present.

The objectives of the document

The *Orientations for the PCV*. “Come and See” (Fn 1, 39) is a document that, as far as is possible, takes into account the

whole reflection carried out during recent years on the topic of vocational pastoral activity in the Church and Order. In particular, it took account of the document *The Lord Gives Me Brothers* and of the reflection carried out during the Congress of Animators of PCV (cf. *OrPCV* 1), as well as the Instrumentum Laboris of the Congress, “*In Verbo Tuo*”.

Taking all this reflection and the experience of many of the Animators of PCV into account, as the very title itself indicates and as the Congress of PCV requested, the *Orientations for the PCV*. “*Come and See*” (Jn 1, 39) has proposed:

- ❖ to offer methodological indications that can help in drawing up the *Provincial Project for PCV* (cf. *OrPCV* 10) and laying the basis for a specific project of working with the young (cf. *OrPCV* 9);
- ❖ to clarify some fundamental principles of PCV. For this, after clarifying the meaning of PCV in our Order and keeping the *General Constitutions* especially in mind (cf. *OrPCV* 7), it points out the close relationship that exists between PCV, evangelisation and youth pastoral activity (cf. *OrPCV* 8-9), as well as the bonds between PCV and initial and ongoing formation (cf. *OrPCV* 9);
- ❖ to indicate some anthropological and theological elements (cf. *OrPCV* 11-12), as well as some essential elements of the Franciscan vocational journey (cf. *OrPCV* 13-14) that must underlie, inspire and motivate the vocational work of the Brothers;
- ❖ to point out the fundamental criteria for vocational discernment in the area of human, Christian and Franciscan maturity (cf. *OrPCV* 17);
- ❖ to indicate the general and specific objectives of the PCV in the areas of evangelisation (cf. *OrPCV* 19) and fraternity (cf. *OrPCV* 21);

- ❖ to provoke reflection within the fraternity and in all those who work in the PCV. The “*Orientations for the Pastoral Care of Vocations*. “*Come and See*” (Jn 1, 39)” present some questions and offer some proposals (cf. *OrPCV* 20, 22) to this end.

It is not a matter, therefore, of a PCV Project for the Order. That seemed to be a difficult target to achieve, given the different social-cultural situations, in which the Brothers dedicated to the PCV live and work. It did not appear to be convenient either, given the need to inculturate the PCV into the local environment. For this reason the document itself recognises that we are dealing with an “instrument that is inevitably incomplete” (*OrPCV* 10), which must be made concrete in the Provincial Project for PCV, in the drawing up of which the greatest possible number of Brothers of an Entity should participate (*OrPCV* 10). In any case, we believe that the *Orientations for the PCV*. “*Come and See*” (Jn 1, 39) contains some precious elements that should be taken into account during the work of PCV throughout the Order.

Fundamental convictions of the Orientations

There are some convictions accepted by a great majority of Animators in the PCV. Our document could not but re-echo some of them. Here are the principles:

The PCV is in close relationship with pastoral activity

All pastoral activity is, by its very nature, oriented towards vocational discernment in that it has as its final objective, to help the believer to discover the concrete path towards realising the life project to which God calls him. Vocational service must be seen as the soul of all evangelisation and of all pastoral activity in the Church. In fact, this, if it is authentic, maintains the believer vigilant and attentive to the many daily

calls of the Lord, makes him capable of recognising the call of his life and of giving a “free, willing and generous response, which carries into effect the grace of vocation” (*VC* 64).

For this reason, the PCV “cannot be reduced to an activity closed in on itself, but must be in close relationship with evangelisation and ordinary pastoral activity” (*OrPCV* 8) and especially with Family Pastoral activity, so that parents may take up their responsibility to be the first vocation animators, liberating themselves and helping their children to overcome the great obstacle that today seriously effects, limits and, in many cases, makes vocations impossible: that blockade within the egoistic, hedonistic, utilitarian, calculation and power perspectives.

In the PCV, today more than ever, it is not just a matter of being “snipers”, of falling into a practice of “lax and unwise recruitment” (*VC* 64). In a culture like ours, and taking account of the young who come to us (cf. *OrPCV* 6), it is necessary to base the vocational proposal on an adequate catechesis, on a solid ecclesiology and within a theology of the religious life that suitably appreciates all vocations within the people of God (cf. *OrPCV* 8).

The PCV has its most suitable “humus” within Pastoral Activity with Youth (PAY)

In the Church and also in the Order there is a fairly generalised consensus that PAY and PCV go hand in hand. If PAY is complete and efficient only when it opens up to the vocational dimension, the PCV will find its vital environment in PAY (cf. *RFF* 114).

If all pastoral activity, especially that of youth, is vocational and vocational reality is the summit of all other pastoral activity, “the most authentic way to support the Spirit’s action is for Institutes to generously invest their best resources in

vocational work, especially by their serious involvement in working with youth” (*VC* 64). The PCV, in principle, relies on PAY, arises from it and, generally, cannot develop if this is absent. On the other hand, PAY will be formative from the Christian point of view only if it is open to the vocational dimension. For this reason, the *Orientations* reminds us that “the PCV recognises a privileged relationship, even though not an exclusive one, with the PAY”, since, “from the theological-pastoral point of view both pastoral sectors, the PCV and PAY, are rooted within the one vocation and mission that unites all believers by virtue of baptism” (*OrPCV* 8).

This principle has clear consequences for both PAY and the PCV. PAY must accept that the vocational dimension is not something that comes at the end or is only for a minority, but must be constant throughout the whole process of evangelisation and education in faith of adolescents and the young, the principal objective of the PAY. For its part, the PCV must be profoundly respectful of the gifts that the Spirit gives to each one and must also pay special attention to evangelisation and education in faith, in such a way that it can be a true journey in faith and lead to a personal encounter with Christ.

Prayer occupies an essential place in the PCV

A conviction that is gaining ground among the agents of PCV is that of “the centrality of prayer for vocations in the PCV”, which is very far from being “one initiative among many” (cf. *OrPCV* 12), but is rather the first and irreplaceable service that we can offer to the cause of vocations. Given that a vocation is a gift from God, the vocational call can only resound and make itself heard in prayer.

Given this relevant place that prayer should occupy within the PCV, “it is important that spiritual theology should help to understand better the reason why and the how to pray for vocations” (*OrPCV* 12). In this sense it must be clearly stated

that prayer for vocations cannot be understood as an easy way out of the problem. That would be an alienating prayer. To pray for vocations is, first of all, to set out to seek, promote and provoke them. To pray for vocations is also to create the environment where it would be possible and easy to hear the call of God. To pray for vocations is, finally, to take up the task of converting evermore to the Lord who constantly calls us to follow him “more closely” (cf. *GGCC* 1).

In this context also, it seems necessary to underline the biblical and Marian dimensions of the whole PCV and the importance of the liturgical year, especially of the great celebrations of the Franciscan calendar, as a permanent school for the vocational journey.

The PCV is a real formative stage

The fact that the PCV appears within Chapter VI of the *General Constitutions*, dedicated to formation, stresses three aspects that seem to be of the utmost importance:

- ❖ The PCV, by its very nature, belongs to the topic and problem of formation;
- ❖ It has its own configuration and formation journey that, like formation in general, have a relationship with the processes of growth of the person in his totality;
- ❖ The Animators of the PCV, like the formators, have to deal with the processes of growth of the person in his totality.

The *Orientations for the PCV. “Come and See”* (*Jn* 1, 39) takes an important step in relation to other documents of the Order in respect to placing the PCV within the formative process: “The PCV... forms an integral part of the journey of initial formation, within and in continuity with ongoing for-

mation” (*OrPCV* 9). As such, the PCV has three fundamental moments: the annunciation of the vocation, the vocational proposal and discernment, all in a methodological climate of accompaniment (cf. *OrPCV* 9).

Given the complexity of situations that the PCV presents today, the Animator is required to have a suitable preparation, (cf. *OrPCV* 9), so that he is not only able to make the “announcement of the gospel of vocation” and “a courageous proposal”, but can also accompany whoever is questioning himself about his life (cf. *Lk* 24, 13ss) by educating him, that is, drawing out that which the young man carries in his heart (cf. *Lk* 24, 17-29), by forming him in such a way that he can begin a “path of gradual identification with the attitude of Christ towards the Father” (*VC* 65) and by helping him during discernment in such a way that he can arrive at making an option for life and, if he feels called, freely opting for our way of life (*RFF* 107).

On the other hand, the *Orientations for the PCV “Come and See”* (*Jn* 1, 39) stresses without palliatives the role that ongoing formation plays in all of this process. The document says, “We can only design a credible pedagogical-formative proposal for the young if it is evermore clear to us Friars Minor that ongoing formation constitutes the vital and ordinary environment of the formative process. A Fraternity that becomes more aware of the vocational gift it has received in and for these times, will be a generating place of vocations, capable not only of preserving, but also of promoting and pushing the gospel intuition of St. Francis towards the future, opening up new perspectives to the charism” (*OrPCV* 9).

Some challenges that the PCV puts to us today

In order to overcome the vocations crisis and, above all, to make a vocational proposal suitable to the times we live in, it

is necessary to change the strategy to be followed and, in particular, the attitudes with which we approach this reality and carry out the PCV.

Some of the fundamental attitudes with which the PCV is carried out and which, in one way or another, appear in the *Orientations* are:

Confidence. Confidence in the Lord cannot be lacking at the moment of asking for vocations (cf. *Mt* 9, 35-38), and of carrying out the “ministry” of PCV. It is necessary to conquer the almost certainty that we are faced by the impossible. All vocations are born in the heart and it is God who rules in the heart of man. “Have confidence in the Lord Jesus who continues to call men and women to follow him” (*VC* 64). That which seems impossible to us is not so to God, “nothing is impossible to God” (*LK* 1,37). The present moment is presented as a *kairòs*, original and dense, “of promises for the future”. Any moment of history is “God’s time”, since his Spirit continues to work even today (Cf. *OrPCV* 2).

Lucidity. For a suitable vocational proposal it is decisive to look sharply and clearly at the world that surrounds us and at that which people about us feel, think and live. It is especially necessary to know the world of youth well (cf. *OrPCV* 6). In what world are we making the vocational proposal? To which young people are we making it? How do we do it? Why do we do it? Youth expects a clear proposal from us, “an explicit presentation”, a courageous proposal (cf. *VC* 64). But this clarity requires that youth easily intuits that the proposal comes from the Lord and that the agent of the PCV is only a mediator (*IS* 3). It requires also that the proposal is not an answer to *our* needs, but to *his*; not to our preferred values, but to the gospel values that are at the root of the vocational experience of Francis. It must not be forgotten either that clarity goes hand in hand with radicalism. Without radicalism and intensity in the way of living those gospel and Franciscan values and in the

form of vocational proposal, the vocational discourse will only reach the heart of the young man seeking “to discern his own vocation and arrive at an option in life” (*RFF* 107) with difficulty.

Conviction. Audacity is needed to propose to a young man today to “come, follow me” and this is born of the conviction and witness of our life, of us who one day said, like the prophet, “here I am, send me” (*Is* 6, 8). Only if we show through life, rather than in words, “the attraction of the person of the Lord Jesus and the beauty of the total gift of self for the sake of the Gospel” (*VC* 64), only if we “disclose the beauty of following Christ and the value of the charism by which this is accomplished” (*VC* 66), will our vocational proposal have a “force of attraction for Christians seeking to determine their vocation” (*GGCC* 145, 1; *RFF* 104). Only he who strongly wishes to be able to live his vocation seriously – “intense and continuous prayer, profound and fraternal communion of life, authentic and shared minority with the poorest, makes a clear and courageous announcement of the Gospel and has a serious and suitable formation” (*OrPCV* 13) –, only he who is capable not only of proposing the beauty of our charism, but also of having it experienced, will be able to create a “humus” from which a renewed and efficient PCV can spring.

Illusion. Each vocation is born from experiencing the gratuitous love of the Lord who, coming into our life, fixed His gaze upon us and loved us (cf. *Mk* 10, 21) and immediately called us and said “Come follow me” (cf. *Mk* 1, 16ss). From this experience of gratuitousness, the illusion of sharing the event and of speaking passionately about the Lord (cf. *Jn* 4, 39) and of the vocational proposal takes hold. A warm and quality welcome that is shown through sharing life and projects springs up. A life of generous and total commitment to God and others is born, not for what these can give, but for what they are: “You received without charge, give without

charge” (*Mt* 10,8). The PCV should question us about the way we live our vocation. Only he who lives it “with joy and authenticity” can turn himself into a stimulus to others so that they also may encounter Christ and follow him (cf. *OrPCV* 14).

Constancy and patience. Taking into account the present situation of our candidates (cf. *OrPCV* 6), we cannot be in a hurry. The constancy of the farmer and the patience of the artisan are needed in the PCV. A vocation is like a seed: it sprouts, grows and matures, but it can also die. Vocational discernment requires a prolonged, personalised accompaniment; it needs a “patient effort” on the part both of the one who is called and of the agents of PCV (cf. *VC* 64). The time scales in vocational processes these days are long because of, among other things, the fragility, instability and fear of life-long commitment that are found in many of the candidates for the consecrated life. Every important decision of life requires time. A life-long option, which in principle is “forever”, needs even more time.

Some priorities in the field of PCV

Among the many priorities that an Entity must assume in the area of PCV, I will point out some that appear to be fundamental and which, in one way or another, are present in the *Orientations for the PCV*. “*Come and See!*” (*Jn* 1, 39).

- ❖ **To assume, on the Fraternity and Provincial levels, the responsibility of being Animators of the PCV.** “The responsibility for encouraging and supporting new vocations belongs to all fraternities and to all the individual friars” (*GGCC* 145,2). We cannot continue to delegate something to which we are obliged. Nobody can dispense us from the proclamation of the gospel of vocation through the witness of our life. Nobody can dispense us

from announcing Francis (person, word and life) for the purpose of provoking in others the desire to share in his experience of gospel life. Nobody can dispense us from attention to new vocations. Nobody can dispense us from being Animators of the PCV (cf. *OrPCV* 9. 13).

- ❖ **To plan the PCV adequately.** There do not appear to be any strategies or methods that, in themselves, we could classify as being more privileged than others in fomenting vocations are. What’s more, we must be conscious that “the question of vocation does not pertain to immediate organisational, functional or structural calculations” (*OrPCV* 2). God calls whom he wills and how he wills. And a man can freely accept or reject such a call. Two freedoms meet. However, it is necessary to work out a PCV project that takes into account the elements that are indicated in the *Orientations for the PCV*. “*Come and See!*” (*Jn* 1, 39), especially with regard to all that is said in numbers 10 and following.
- ❖ **To opt clearly and decisively for PAY.** This is the indispensable basis of the PCV. It is necessary to create suitable social environments for the young, to evangelise them, announce Jesus Christ to them, to opt for a process that helps the young to pass from the elementary stages to others of greater commitment and depth, to form agents of youth pastoral activity (cf. *OrPCV* 8).

* * *

If “the problem of vocations is a real challenge which directly concerns the various Institutes but also involves the whole Church” (*VC* 64), it is also a challenge to and questioning of us. Whether we are suffering the consequences of what is being called “vocational winter” or we find ourselves in a “vocational spring”, the PCV is something that deserves an adequate effort, competence and confidence, from all. For

an authentic PCV, it is necessary to go for an effective, unceasing, courageous and decisive vocational initiative. The wish of those who prepared this document, as well as the Definitory General, who approved it and the Minister General, who promulgated it, is that these *Orientations for the PCV*. “*Come and See*” (Jn 1, 39) can be of help to all who are investing a lot of spiritual and material energy in the vocational sphere (cf. VC 64), to all those who, with courage and confidence in the Lord, are disposed to “put out into deep water” (Lk 5,4) and to all those who give joyful witness to the “beauty of the total gift of self for the sake of the Gospel” (VC 64) and fearlessly invite others to have the same experience: “*Come and See*” (Jn 1, 39).

BR. JOSÉ RODRÍGUEZ CARBALLO, OFM
Secretary General for Formation and Studies

PREFACE

1. Pastoral activity for vocations has gradually assumed a growing importance in the journey of the Church since the II Vatican Council: the council documents, many of them official pronouncements¹ and various international² and continental³ Congresses have opened up perspectives for a correct theology and corresponding praxis of vocational pastoral activity. The following seem to be the most important among them: making the most of the history of salvation (vocation as a personal and original history), the need for discernment of the signs of the times, the universal call to sanctity of the Church, stressing communion for the one mission through the diversified contribution of charisms and ministries.⁴

The Order, on its part, has followed the path of the Church on vocational pastoral activity in its process of renewal, desired by Vatican II. The GGCC of 1988 represent the mature fruit of this itinerary which passed through the General Chapters of two decades, especially the extraordinary one of Medellín, in 1971,⁵ and the Plenary Council of the Order on Formation in 1981.⁶

After the Constitutions, various International Congresses for the different categories of formators, the *Ratio Formationis Franciscanae*⁷ and *To Fill the World with the Spirit of Christ* of the Minister General Br. Hermann Schalück,⁸ have sustained the deepening study of the meaning of vocational pastoral activity within the specifics of our charism.

The General Chapter of Assisi, 1997, accepted the calls for such a journey, requesting the Definitory General to promote the International Congress of Vocation Animators, later held in Assisi in 2000.

The long journey has permitted a gradual clarification of the meaning, ends and spheres proper to vocational pastoral activity, until it was recognised as a real and proper stage of Franciscan formation and a privileged field of fidelity to the charism and mission of the Order.

The present “Orientations” are inserted into this process and wish to offer to the Entities of the Order and to the local Fraternities a pastoral and methodological instrument for continuing the path of reflection and projection of the PCV in its proper cultural, religious and ecclesiastical contexts.

THE PRESENT SITUATION OF THE PCV IN THE ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR

A look at the present moment

2. The preparation for the International Congress and its celebration, with the final document that arose from it, have allowed us to “test the pulse” of the present situation of the PCV throughout the Order.⁹ Thanks to this meeting, a great variety and wealth of situations and of ways of carrying out the PCV emerged. It is possible, therefore, to unify this range of experiences and methods for the pastoral care of vocations in the various places and geographic and cultural contexts in which the Order is inserted. It is also possible to focus on some common elements, valuable for identifying the directions towards which our international Fraternity is moving in this field and which are decisive for its present and future.

The chorus-like response of the Entities to the Congress is a demonstration that the need for listening and meeting in such spheres is alive in the Order, as is also the requirement for orientation and common lines of thinking and acting for the PCV in a Franciscan key. It is evident, in fact, that the Congress was able to express all this, thanks to the path the Order had taken through a series of steps during the 30 years since the II Vatican Council in order to rediscover, revitalise and actualise the charism in these our times.¹⁰

It clearly emerges that the question of vocations is at one with the vitality of the charism and its embodiment today.¹¹ The present time has appeared as a turning point, an original and dense *kairòs* full of promise for the future, but also a period of commitment to finding meaning in it. The conviction that every period of time is God’s time has been forcibly con-

firmed, since his Spirit is at work even today, opening real passages for the proclamation of the Gospel and for the invitation to share it in our way of life.¹² On this basis the requirement is to have the PCV move in harmony and continuity with the itineraries of ongoing formation, in order to encourage personal and community renewal.

A chapter on the embodiment of the charism today is nothing other than the fundamental question of finding prophetic and thoroughly new ways for the charism to “present itself” in the most diverse environmental, cultural, social and religious situations until it is “almost born anew from them”, without imports or intake from outside, thus guaranteeing unity in diversity.¹³ We recognise that it is the first duty of the PCV to permit, through the presentation, proposal and accompaniment phases, the profound and respectful listening to cultures and diversities. In that way, it will be possible to recognise that from vigilant attention to the gift of vocation there can arise new expressions of the form of evangelical life given to St. Francis of Assisi and guarded in time with dynamic and creative fidelity.

The question of vocation, therefore, does not pertain to immediate organisational, functional or structural calculations, but is ascribed in the first place to a serious theological – and specifically anthropological and ecclesiological – reflection inherent in the relationship and significance of certain vocations with the Christian community.

3. In order to encourage the PCV and, in particular, the demand for growth and visibility of the Franciscan charism within the different cultures, three urgencies are pointed out:

- ❖ the vital attention to the history of the world and to the Church, without turning in on one’s own small sphere;
- ❖ the importance of deep study of anthropology and eccle-

siology that found, inspire and motivate vocational pastoral activity as such, with the aim of emphasising a better relationship between the view of man, the theology of vocation, the theology of vocational pastoral activity and pedagogical-pastoral praxis;¹⁴

- ❖ the requirement of studying deeply some essential periods of the Franciscan vocational journey, in continuity with the inspiration of St. Francis, mediated by the living spiritual and charismatic tradition of the Order and of the Franciscan Family in history.

The panorama that emerges from the long journey travelled and from the recent Congress seems shrouded in lights and shadows, but it is animated by a sense of hope and optimism for the future.

Reactions to the vocations situation

4. Looking at the numbers of novices and professed, the overall situation of vocations in the Order is good. We can rightly affirm that the number of vocations is not the main problem of our PCV, at least on the general level!¹⁵

In this context, the situation of the numerical trend of vocations is very different in the various countries and regions.

It is the situation of vocational perseverance that determines overall the reduction in the number of Friars in the majority of the geographic regions. The numerical growth of the Friars does not correspond adequately to the demands of fraternal life and missionary evangelisation proper to our vocation. We note that the number of Friar novices and newly professed is greater than the number of those who “meet sister death”. Of particular significance is the reduction in the

number of Lay Brothers, despite the increased sensitivity and esteem for this vocation.

Some statistical data on the number of vocations in the Church, in religious life in general and in the Order, have already been given in the *Instrumentum Laboris* and in the International Congress.¹⁶

Certainly, the results are not always in proportion to the efforts made. While some Entities get encouraging results, though still working on the elaboration of the PCV, there are other Entities in which, although investing many means and efforts in PAY and PCV, the hoped for results are not achieved.

5. Faced by the numerical drop in vocations throughout the greater number of the Entities of the Order, the reactions have been very diverse and contradictory.

Among the *positive reactions*, we note that in many Entities, Friars are showing an increasing interest in the PCV, precisely because of the reduction in vocations. This attitude is very visible in the care for the preparation of friars for the work and for the elaboration of projects for PAY and PCV; in the personal and community prayer for vocations; in the renewed attention to spiritual direction and personalised accompaniment of the young in vocational discernment; in the greater courage of the Friars in making the vocational proposal; in the increase of “houses of reception” for young people, with a great variety of activities: retreats, social gatherings, spiritual exercises, etc. Many Friars are convinced that the crisis we are going through, far from leading us to discouragement, self-pity or facile resignation, should stimulate us, in the light of the lessons we can draw from the past, to make an attentive reading of the signs of the times and to pay a growing and positive pastoral attention to the question of vocations.

Other *reactions are of a contrary indication*. Among these we can underline the following: some Entities are living the situation in an attitude of self-pity, caused by a certain guilt complex: they have no vocations, it is thought, because of the absence of witness to our way of life; other Entities are preparing themselves for a slow agony, convinced that all is coming to an end; others, finally, are waiting for better times to come.

The presentation of the reactions is necessarily generic and over simplified. That notwithstanding, it is an invitation to study attentively the different reactions found in the geographical and cultural contexts in which the Order lives in order to take them into account in projecting a renewed PCV.

The present-day situation of our candidates

6. Faced with the tendency of vocations in the Order and the reactions to it, we can take a step forward and question ourselves on the profile of our candidates, that is of the young people who are coming to us and who we approach during the different stages of the PCV, up to the vocational accompaniment.

Keeping in mind the itinerary that led to the celebration of the Congress,¹⁷ the profile of our candidates appears to be the following:

- a. On the level of *human maturity* there is a broad typology of young people who come to us. There are young people who offer motives of hope, showing a good desire for freedom and authenticity together with the autonomous capacity of planning their own life and of generously nourishing desires and “dreams” for the future. There is also a good sensitivity towards some present-day topics such as justice, peace and the integrity of creation, non-violence.

ce, service, etc. There are also those who live intensely in the culture of subjectivity and distraction. In this context, youth seems to live a kind of nomadic affective existence, centred on their own needs and incapable of accepting the *other*. The consequence is an identity not yet achieved, still to be deepened and consolidated, but it is like an unfinished project and always open in an indefinite manner. Here we also note the tendency towards consumerism and non-commitment, towards a life lacking in any great idealistic impulse. These young people are characterised by a psychological, emotional and sexual fragility, often complex and very shattered, together with a certain weakness of thought.¹⁸

- b.** With regard to *Christian formation* there is no lack of those who have a good basis of knowledge of the faith of the Church, with an openness to the Gospel message and a sincere seeking of God through his Word, with a desire for prayer and gospel radicalism. These generally come from committed church groups. Those who have a Christian formation that is inadequate for today's requirements are, however, much more numerous. Often their religious formation is based on forms of spirituality and devotion or church vision that are traditionalist. At times they are also victims of sects or fundamentalist expressions. The religious formation influences the vocational motivations, which should be identified carefully, with great respect for the human person and with regard to the mystery of the call of God. Generally, poor religious formation goes hand in hand with weak vocational motivation. It is possible to cite, among others, the search for the so-called "social climbing", or refuge and security, even psychological, in our Fraternities. Then there are candidates who have lived morally difficult situations. Together with these young people, we cannot forget those who come to us moved by an ideal of unconditional dedication to Christ in accordance with the model of life left

to us by St. Francis. These young people come to us having already decided on a choice of life inspired by gospel radicalism.

- c.** On the *level of culture* and of *intellectual preparation*, there is a great plurality of situations. It ranges from those with university education to those who knock on our doors with only elementary studies done. This latter situation often impedes them from adequately facing up to philosophical, theological and other study courses and of inserting themselves quietly and without complexes into the Fraternity.
- d.** In relation to *the vocational and Franciscan dimension*, the candidates are very fascinated by the message and personality of St. Francis. Later on they often discover the personality of St. Clare who mirrors the contemplative dimension of the Franciscan charism in an exemplary way. Attracted by these two great friends of God, the young people are predisposed to being inspired by them in identifying their vocation. The initial impulse is usually very strong, but it cannot remain on the level of feelings or admiration for the Poor Man of Assisi or for his "Little Plant". There is need of a real and personal knowledge of the life of St. Francis and St. Clare and, at the same time, of a deepening knowledge of one's own life history in view of the serious process of vocational discernment. Within the Franciscan dimension, the young people feel themselves particularly attracted by life in fraternity and with essentials only. These values are understood as a manner of entering into relationships that is alternative to the present-day culture, which is strongly competitive and centred on possession and consumption of goods and relationships.
- e.** With regard to *the place of origin*, the candidates coming from seraphic colleges or Minor Seminaries, still present

in some Entities, do not constitute the majority any more. They come, rather, from youth groups (in some cases from Fra.Youth or PCV), prayer groups, from volunteer experiences. Some come from the Universities, but very few from our own colleges. There is no lack of those coming to us without any kind of prior vocational accompaniment. It must then be pointed out that in many cases, the candidates to the Order do not come from “our groups” or from the Parishes entrusted to us.¹⁹ In some Entities a certain number of candidates come from other Institutes, from diocesan Seminaries and even from other Entities of the Order. These phenomena require vigilant attention and a lot of discretion.

- f. With regards to *age*, the major part of the candidates comes to the Postulancy at 18-20 years of age. Yet, there is an ever-greater number of candidates, especially in the western world, coming to our doors between the ages of 30 and 40 years and even beyond that. In different Entities the question of age is considered in a personalised way: the principal criterion of discernment is the openness of the candidate to enter vigorously into a formative itinerary.

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE PCV IN THE ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR

The meaning of pastoral care of vocations in the OFM

7. The *Instrumentum Laboris* “In verbo tuo” has helped us to reset the meaning of PCV in the widest contexts of our specific vocation and mission, keeping in mind how much the universal Church has matured in this regard. We therefore question ourselves on the relationship of the PCV to evangelisation and formation, starting with a reflection on what our documents say about such a proposal.

These documents “translate” vocational pastoral activity as “pastoral care of vocations”. The etymological analysis of the words allows us to discover the deep meaning and, therefore, the “identity” of vocational pastoral activity. It is, first of all, “care”, in Latin “cura”, a noun derived from “curare” and which means to take a thing or person to heart, take care of, be preoccupied for, take charge of something or someone. These meanings clarify the full involvement of the person called to “curare” (to take care). The PCV is a “priority ministry” that, on a par with formation, requires the vigilant, loving and respectful attention of the vocational pastoral agent to his questioner, who carries within him the *inscrutable mystery* of the gift of a vocation. This dimension of mystery sends us back to the essential gratuitousness of any vocational gift whatsoever, so as to require of the vocational animator-formator a great sense of mystery, respect and capacity for humble and clear discernment, of himself first of all and then of others.²⁰

The PCV is, in addition, a “pastoral” care. The adjective “pastoral” calls the mind back to the figure and duty of a Shep-

herd (pastor), who in this context assumes the whole of biblical semantic intensity. Therefore, the term “pastoral” highlights the style with which the “cura” should be carried out: the style of the “biblical shepherd”, an image created by God the Father and by Jesus in order to express their relationship with the people and with each person. It is deduced from this that he who is called to “pastoral care” must make the sentiments of the God-Pastor of Israel his own: closeness, constant accompaniment, understanding and education in freedom.

“Pastoral care” has “vocations” as its direct object, here understood in both the broad sense of any vocation within the people of God and in the strict sense of Franciscan vocations. The PCV must be conceived, at the same time, as a broad project, directed to all young people so that they can discern the mission to which God is calling them and as a specific project directed at those young people who show a determined interest in the various forms of living the Franciscan charism: First Order, Second Order and SFO.²¹

The PCV in evangelisation and youth pastoral ministry

8. The observation that the number of vocations is diminishing often generates a kind of pastoral activism made up of original initiatives, of captivating hypothesis, arriving in the best of cases at vocational itineraries; or else we are moved to thinking, discussing and reflecting in various kinds of meetings and congresses. At times the reaction can lead to emphasising one sector of pastoral activity over another, as for example, youth pastoral activity.

We wish to question whether it is more necessary today for the PCV to try to hook onto this or that pastoral sector, or if it should not try to reflect more on the meaning and consequences of a PCV inserted into the broader horizons of evangelisation, re-thought out today within the missionary nature

of the Church. Let us once again go over some of the essential stages of this becoming aware.

The Church finds the origins of mission in the Trinity, a mission that belongs to its very being and is not limited to being one function among others. Within the Church, the choice of being the People of God, the consecration as a royal, prophetic and priestly people and the mission of proclaiming the Good News form one indissoluble unity. The Church, mystery of communion, finds itself the first addressee of the mission; it is evangelised and, then, sent to announce.²² There is, therefore, no vocation without a mission in the Church and, within it, in the Consecrated Life and finally in our Fraternity.²³

In this spirit, we recognise that *evangelisation is at the heart of the founding identity of our Order*: we exist because we were evangelised²⁴ and are, therefore, evangelisers in Fraternity, otherwise our vocation would be without meaning.²⁵ It is precisely in our way of life that we find the privileged reason for an efficient evangelisation. In so far as we are consecrated persons we are called to be witnesses to the sanctity that constitutes the heart of the Church, as Paul VI so magnificently put it: “(Religious) embody the Church in her desire to give herself completely to the radical demands of the beatitudes”.²⁶

In this sense, the PCV cannot be reduced to an activity closed in on itself, but must be in close relationship with evangelisation and the ordinary pastoral activity within the fabric of the particular Church. Working in favour of the PCV means, then, responding to our vocation and mission! Within this horizon of communion, it is within the particular Church and in collaboration with the Franciscan family and laity that the PCV can truly become “*a joint commitment of the whole Church*”!²⁷ The Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* reaffirmed these orientations, requesting a vocational animation for our time that is carried out in the organic integrity of the legitimate diversity within the Church communion and in a

more courageous and effective collaboration with the laity.²⁸ The need is felt for openness to new charisms and ministries, different perhaps from the usual. The appreciation and place of the laity is a sign of the times, still partly to be discovered. This will be shown to be evermore precious, alongside the discovery and greater appreciation of the proper vocational meaning of Christian matrimony.²⁹ The Entities that live in countries of the young Churches are a help to us and are prophetic in this sense.

The PCV certainly recognises a privileged relationship, though not an exclusive one, with the PAY.³⁰ This has the task of accompanying the young, not only those “close” to us, but also those “at a distance” in discovering their human and Christian identity through a well outlined path of faith in the Christian communities. In this sense the PAY is naturally vocational since any journey of faith, by its nature, opens a person up to listening to his/her personal calling. The PAY is carrying out its vocational duty if it leads to faith and to the following of Christ. The Christian vocation is based on this concrete faith and this presents the requirement for discernment in the choice of a life project and commitment within the Church and to humanity, especially to the service of the poor.

Some basic orientations are necessary for both one and the other. From the theological-pastoral point of view both pastoral sectors, the PCV and PAY, are rooted in the one vocation and mission that unites all believers in virtue of baptism. The PAY is not identical to the PCV, but it is united even in its distinction.

Given these premises, it is evident that from the point of view of methodology and pastoral ministry the praxis of vocational recruitment, wherever and in whatever form it persists, has to be overcome in order to enter into a clear and decisive promotion of Church vocations that takes into account the itinerary of human and Christian maturity.

The PCV on the ongoing and initial formative journey

9. The PCV lives in the bosom of the Church, the mystery of communion, and therefore closely touches on our very vocation and mission. For this reason it is found right on the edge of the vital relationship between evangelisation and formation.

From the *annunciation* of the gospel of vocation, the PCV matures in the vocational *proposal*, until it flows into *accompaniment* and *discernment* of the gift of vocation that each baptised person carries within him. This is the formative task that invests the PCV and that cannot do without a correct and complete vision of theological anthropology in a Franciscan key. The question about the “human project” that it is desired to follow remains, in fact, preliminary to any formative action whatsoever. The dialectic tension between the two dimensions needs to become a resource and challenge for a quality PCV.

The welding of the PCV to the formative journey demands a deepening of a pedagogical character that leads to clarifying and specifying:

- a.** The way to accompany the young in seeking and finding the full realisation of his being a person in the encounter with and the vocational response to the *other* who calls.
- b.** How to put down foundations so that this itinerary is carried out in terms of a sacrificial love, understood as gift, as the pure offering of self to the other.

We can only design a credible pedagogical-formative proposal for the young if it is ever more clear to us, Friars Minor, that ongoing formation constitutes the vital and ordinary ambient of the formative process.³¹ A Fraternity that becomes ever more aware of the vocational gift it has received in and

for these times, will be a generative place of vocations, capable not only of preserving, but also of promoting and pushing the gospel intuitions of St. Francis towards the future, opening up new perspectives to the charism.³²

To this clarity of content there corresponds also a gradual, evermore mature growth in awareness within the Order. It is necessary to continue to invest a lot in ongoing formation so that initial formation, of which the vocational proposal and accompaniment are the first stage, can develop in a coherent way.³³

We have become conscious in stages of the fact that the PCV, in so far as it offers a specific accompaniment and discernment in view of human and Christian maturity and of the concrete vocational option, forms an integral part of the journey of initial formation within and in continuity with ongoing formation. This integration highlights the importance of the PCV even for the purposes of the future solidity of vocations.

Thanks to such greater clarity, the profile of the Animator appears more marked by the traits of a formator, together with those of the pastoral agent. The dynamic unity between these dimensions can be encouraged and promoted only within the concrete journey that occurs in and between the Entities and Conferences.

For that reason, the formation of the Animators becomes ever more urgent, in their quality as formators and as pastoral agents, so that the PCV may always be more of a common action of all the Friars, of the whole Fraternity and not only of the few entrusted with it.

When dealing with the *specific project* directed at the young who offer a certain hope of being able to follow Christ by embracing the Franciscan “way of life”, the PCV should be based on:

- a. The witness to Franciscan life with the purpose of offering to others the charism of St. Francis as a proposal of life.
- b. A presentation of St. Francis (person, life and word) with the aim of inviting others to share in his experience of gospel life.
- c. An orienting activity to discern, welcome and cultivate new vocations to the Franciscan life, aroused by the Holy Spirit.³⁴

INDICATIONS OF METHODOLOGY: FROM ORIENTATIONS TO PLANS FOR THE PCV

The methodology

10. The “Orientations” for the PCV in the Order of Friars Minor constitute an inevitably incomplete instrument because of the world-wide nature of the Order, of the social-cultural differences that this carries with it and of the need to proceed always along the path of inculturation into the local environment.

In drawing up the Provincial project for the PCV it will be important to involve the vocational *équipe* (team), the Provincial Secretary for Formation and Studies, the Secretary for Evangelisation and the Provincial Definitory, from whom the coordination and synthesis is expected, following an ordered methodological course:

- a. *To clarify and work out the anthropological, theological and Franciscan horizons* within which the PCV moves. At this stage some stimuli are offered, which should be accepted, transposed and inculturated into the various contexts in which the Order lives and grows.
- b. *To allow oneself be interrogated* by the documents and the questions that follow, revisiting those that have already been stated in the “PrS” and have emerged in the “LGB/FD” of Assisi.
- c. *To take up again the analysis of the situation* of those who come to us with a vocational question, of the world of youth, our privileged addressee, and of our local and provincial Fraternities as the ambient with which the candidates come into contact and are inserted.

- d. To identify objectives, agents and addressees of the PCV on the local and provincial levels in the areas of formation, evangelisation and Fraternity, in such a way that we see clearly the goal towards which we tend, the means which we intend to use in coherence with our charism, the workers with direct responsibility (Animators for the PCV), those who collaborate (the other Friars, religious Institutes with which we cooperate, laity, experts, etc.) and finally, those to whom we turn in the various phases of the journey of vocational announcement-proposal-accompaniment.
- e. To extend the provincial project for the PCV.
- f. To indicate times and means of evaluating the project.

The anthropological and theological horizon

11. Let us take up again some of the essential anthropological and theological-pastoral elements that found, inspire and motivate the PCV as such. The objective is that of highlighting a greater relationship between the vision of man, theology of vocation, theology of vocational pastoral activity and pedagogical-pastoral praxis,³⁵ while keeping in mind the principle of subsidiarity and emphasising the Franciscan style.

Let us begin with a short account of *anthropology, which leads us to consider man as a person*, in the sense that he is called to an *existential relationship*. The person takes shape, therefore, as an *identity*, in that he is in relationship with himself, as a *communication*, in that he is in relationship with others, as *participation*, in that he is an unconditional opening to the totality of being.

In the Judaic-Christian vision the human being is considered “an image and likeness” of God (cf. *Gen* 1,26). Consti-

tuted by a fundamental relationship with God, this is the “you of God”.³⁶ In Jesus Christ the face of God and the face of man are revealed; the man who is questioned about himself and his destiny finds light in Him, who is the way and the destination.³⁷ In the Holy Spirit, *the new law of the Christian*, the itinerary of Jesus Christ, becomes that of the disciple, called to follow him. The believer, in his vocational response, is called on to enter on a journey that is not a repetition of the life of Jesus, but lives on the grace of that life; in this His experience, unique and unrepeatable, is made present again. The Beatitudes, which are the autobiography of Jesus, become then a possible course of action for every believer so that he may journey in Him and they insert him into that lived by Jesus, making him a “new gospel”. And since the life of Jesus has found its fulfilment in the paschal gift of self, man finds his fullness in sacrificial love.³⁸

This biblical vision clashes with the fact that man today conceives and understands himself from the point of view of self only. Today all is dictated by the state of mind, by personal existential problems that are dramatic at times. Man reflects an image of self that is partial and frequently fragmented; he has difficulty in finding a unifying centre. Thanks to globalisation – fundamentally of an economic kind but at the same time cultural – this problem is spreading on the planet level, inviting the proposal that we turn to the young in research.

Our PCV is faced with the challenge of not becoming tired of reflecting on and going deeply into such anthropological premises.

12. Any vocation whatsoever finds in the Church, mystery of vocation and the “house and school of communion”,³⁹ the place that gives rise to it and the bosom that protects and nourishes it. “The Church, being by her very nature a “vocation,” is also a begetter and educator of vocations... We can now see the

essential dimension of the Christian vocation... it is a gift whose purpose is to build up the Church and to increase the kingdom of God in the world”.⁴⁰ We should look on the Church, then, as the place of reciprocity and communion of all vocations.⁴¹ Within the one vocation of the Church, in fact, all vocations flourish, not in conflict but in dynamic and reciprocal relationships between them. The origin and the Church destination of vocations profoundly mark the pastoral care for vocations; concretely, the Christian community is the native place in which all vocations are born, grow and mature. We know that today many vocations are born on the margins of the Christian community. This is a notable challenge for pastoral action, invited to think evermore radically on the one vocation and mission of all the baptised, and, nevertheless, on the importance of an active collaboration with the laity, even within the PCV.

In order to achieve these great aims, the PCV needs to constantly redesign itself within the contexts of communion and sharing of charisms, of breathing with large lungs, so that the Church may be evermore the People of God on pilgrimage in time and *called* to love.

Within these great coordinates, quickly recalled, it is possible to take up and examine once again a pastoral theology that might initiate a significant project of PCV.⁴²

Within this horizon, the call for the centrality of prayer for vocations in the PCV cannot be lacking. Keeping in mind the command of Jesus to pray to “the Father of the harvest...” (*Mt* 9, 38), it is important that spiritual theology should help to understand better the why and the how to pray for vocations.⁴³ Prayer for vocations is not, in fact, just one initiative among many, that comes from the only biblical indication we have in reference to the number of “workers”, who are always few in respect to the “harvest”, which, on the other hand, is always abundant.

The Franciscan vocational journey: some essential features

13. It is opportune here to refer to some qualifying features for a Franciscan vocational journey. For that purpose, we are invited to look at the experience of our father and brother St. Francis and at how much he has given us in that synthesis of life, prayer and spiritual reflection that are his writings.

Two prayers help us to summarise the vocational itinerary from the point of view of the young man searching and of the Fraternity that receives and accompanies: they are the “Prayer before the Crucifix” and the prayer “Omnipotens”.

In the “Prayer before the Crucifix”, the young man places himself before the crucified and resurrected Lord with the attitude of one who asks light for his life, in view of a more refined capacity for discernment oriented towards the choice of life. The prayer clearly flows from the lively desire of St. Francis to know his vocation, almost to complement the question made in the dream of Spoleto: “Lord, what do you want me to do?”

The second part of the request concerns the gift of the theological virtues. St Francis is aware that the way of discernment is possible to man only as the fruit of the gratuitous initiative of God.

In the “Omnipotens” prayer it is the whole Fraternity that requests, for itself and for whoever enters onto the path of vocational discernment, the ability to travel the itinerary that leads to full and perfect communion with the Trinity. Before an “omnipotent, eternal, just and merciful” God we recognise our poor and fragile human reality and ask to be able to fulfil, through God himself, that which we know He wants and to want always that which pleases Him.

On this itinerary it is the Holy Spirit, desired above all other gifts, who fulfils the interior action of purification, illumination and lighting of love so that we can follow the footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ and thus reach the Father, in order to enjoy the Trinitarian communion and to be, we ourselves as a Fraternity of Minors, a glorification of the Trinity.

In the two prayers the desire of the young man, to understand the meaning of his life and the desire of the brothers, to be capable of living their vocation, meet. It is thus that the journey of the Fraternity is opened up to the gift of new brothers and the journey of each one is opened up to the gift of the Fraternity, becoming one unique journey, sustained by the Spirit, in the footprints of the Lord Jesus Christ towards the Father. It is this journey of the young man, who joins us “through divine inspiration”, and of the Fraternity, which receives and accompanies, that we are called to discover and travel in our Order at this time of grace in which the Lord has granted us to live our vocation.

The “divine inspiration” returns both the young man and our Fraternity to a fundamental attitude of openness and reception before the Spirit, the authentic protagonist and animator of each vocation. In this way we are made even more aware of the fact that the pastoral care of vocations, before being an action in favour of anyone, is a common commitment of fidelity to the following of Christ, made possible by the Spirit.

Intense and continuous prayer, profound and fraternal communion of life, authentic minority shared with the poorest, a clear and courageous announcement of the Gospel and a serious and suitable formation will constitute the premise and *humus* from which a renewed and efficient pastoral care of vocations could sprout, capable not only of proposing the beauty of our charism, but also of having it experienced.

14. *St. Clare* also, “the First Little Plant” grown in the charism of *St. Francis*, shows us some fundamental attitudes that form part of a correct vision of vocation. At the end of her life, *St. Clare* reminds us in her Testament: “Among all the other gifts which we have received and continue to receive daily from our benefactor, the Father of mercies, and for which we must express the deepest thanks to our glorious God, our vocation is a great gift. Since it is the more perfect and greater, we should be so much more thankful to Him for it”. For this reason the Apostle writes: “acknowledge your calling”. The Son of God became for us the Way which our Blessed Father Francis, His true lover and imitator, has shown and taught us by word and example”.⁴⁴ The background attitude is that of thanking the Father for the gift of vocation, conceived as a concrete manifestation of His mercy. For *St. Clare* it is also evident that the Franciscan vocation consists of accepting and lovingly following the Christ who made himself our way, just as *St. Francis* himself indicated in an essential way. In short, in order to persevere it, it is indispensable “to know”, that is, to examine and love one’s own vocation ever more.

These are words that do not give us a “recipe” for the PCV, but they indicate to the Fraternity some essential conditions for being able to live its vocation with joy and authenticity, and thus become for others a stimulus to meet with Christ and to follow Him.

THREE NETS TO BE CAST

15. The congress of Assisi chose as a biblical icon of reference the episode of the miraculous draft of fishes, in which Simon Peter, trusting only in the word of Jesus casts his nets⁴⁵ against all logic of calculation and efficiency. We are aware that the PCV of our Order also has the need to carry out this act of confidence in the Word of the Lord and to cast its nets once again. We have identified three nets, in particular, which we are asked to cast into the sea with confidence: they are those of formation, evangelisation and fraternity.

The net of formation

16. The “PrS”, summarising our fundamental legislative texts, reminds us that “formation is the *sine qua non* condition for assuring the quality and credibility of our life and mission; for effectively transmitting to young candidates for the Order our *forma vitae* along a journey of formation in which every stage is clearly defined and where the succession of stages is characterised by unity, gradualism and consistency; for being in a position to proclaim and propose to the young people of today the Franciscan charism in a form which they find concrete and attractive”.⁴⁶

It is reaffirmed that Franciscan formation, in this sense, is a dynamic and unitary human, Christian and Franciscan process⁴⁷ of growth in the vital adhesion to the Gospel, on a journey of continuous conversion that takes place in the Fraternity and the real world.⁴⁸ Each one is involved personally in this process, in enhancing both the common vocation and the particular gifts. These elements are central also for that which is specific to the PCV.

The General Objective

To announce the gospel of vocation integrally, with the aim of:

- ❖ promoting the person in his dignity;
- ❖ supporting him in openness to and in response to the baptismal call to live in Christ according to the Spirit;
- ❖ accompanying him in recognising and responding to the gift of a personal and specific vocation in which the common vocation is realised and made concrete. Such a gift is transmitted in and by a Fraternity of Friars Minor, called to live the Gospel at this time of change and in the most diverse cultural and social contexts.

Specific Objectives

1. **To deepen the bonds between ongoing formation and the PCV.** The various projects (provincial, community and personal, provincial project for the PCV) are privileged instruments for this end. It is necessary to specify what it is intended to do in them in order to study *ad intra* the identity of the Friar Minor, starting with the assimilation of the Priorities of the Order,⁴⁹ and proposing *ad extra* our way of life by following the sequence of annunciation, proposal, accompaniment and discernment.
2. **To put every effort into setting up the FRV in the Provinces,** in order to pass from the animation of the PCV entrusted to the individual to the construction of vocational Fraternities that – besides presenting our cha-

rism better – are an excellent pedagogical means during the process of accompaniment and vocational discernment and a place of formation for fraternal life.⁵⁰

3. **To encourage teamwork** in vocational discernment, paying attention that there is a just balance between experts in the field of spiritual life and experts in the field of human sciences (psycho-pedagogical). Such *teams* should be open to collaboration with the laity.
4. **To examine the profile of the Animator,** in which various functions converge: of animator, formator and pastoral companion. The essential outlines of this figure are placed on the boundary between the Fraternity and society, especially with the world of youth that is in perpetual transformation. His significance as an authentic formator should be clarified more and better accepted in the Fraternity.
5. **To assure a suitable formation and accompaniment to the Provincial Animator of the PCV.** For this, it is necessary to guarantee a serious accompaniment to the Animators of the PCV themselves on the provincial level and suitable courses should be held, on the Conference level or in homogenous social-cultural areas, to facilitate listening, accompaniment and human and spiritual discernment.
6. **To form vocational Animators together so that they can know the history of men,** by being present on the journey of the men of our time, understand the culture, encourage dialogue and announce the gospel of vocation from within the reality of the people.
7. **To take care of the growth of the faith dimension in the young, on the pedagogical and spiritual levels.** All this is expressed in the life of a living relationship with

God through progressive growth in contact with the Word of God, with personal prayer and sacramental life. The Church and community dimensions in this growth should be taken care of in a particular way so that the young person may become involved in all the dimensions of his person, including the emotional.

8. **To encourage awareness by the young of their being protagonists in the course of vocational accompaniment**, by cultivating in the Animator profound and attentive listening to the life of the young person, who can have within him a new and original gift of vocation. This itinerary helps to avoid relationships of dependence and gradually prepares the young person to take on personal responsibilities.
9. **To take care, during the proposal, to go to the vocational depths of the identity of the Friar Minor within the common vocation of the Order** before making any specification of ministry (lay brotherhood, permanent diaconate or priesthood).
10. **To make adequate use of the human sciences and of experts in such sciences**, provided that they have a Christian point of reference in their anthropology and that they know and appreciate the religious life, for the purpose of encouraging a journey of growth towards an authentic maturity, whether in the Animator of the PCV or in those who are setting out on the vocational journey.

Evaluate the effect of these elements and the real possibility of gradually achieving the objectives given above on the provincial, local and, in accordance with possibilities and conditions, on the Conference levels.

The criteria of discernment

17. The central task is that of knowing and applying the criteria for discernment of candidates proposed in the RFF⁵¹ as they have been integrated into the International Congress of Assisi. Such criteria are not a rigid cage, but they must be seriously taken into account in order to help the young person travel along an existing path of growth in knowledge of self, of what he wants to do in life and of what God is calling him to do. Such criteria are also an indispensable help to formators for basing their discernment on verifiable elements.⁵²

1. **Criteria for the discernment of human maturity.** Besides the need for a “reasonable psycho-physical health”,⁵³ we here list the fundamental aspects of human maturity to be kept in mind during discernment:
 - a. Emotional maturity should be judged as the balanced and progressive capacity for relationships with oneself, with others, with God, in the sense of:
 - ❖ Reconciliation with one’s own history;
 - ❖ The acceptance of the other in his diversity;
 - ❖ The recognition of God in His transcendence.
 - b. The sense of identity and self-acceptance, the capacity to relate one’s own personal story as a unitary and positive memory, recognising one’s limitations and integrating the wounds and sufferings of life.
 - c. The sense of personal freedom, initiative and responsibility for one’s own life and autonomy in respect to family relationships.
 - d. The capacity to discern, to carry out stable choices and to maintain commitments.
 - e. The possibility to move towards full integration of one’s emotions and sexual orientations, identifying the

weight these elements carry in the overall personalities of the candidates.

- f.** The capacity to live with a kind of solitude “inhabited by God” typical of the consecrated life, in which it is also learned how a totally extinguished emotionality in the abstract or a naturally perfect sexuality do not exist.⁵⁴
- g.** Some priority requirements are indicated for the evaluation of the *emotional-sexual* area,:
- ❖ To feel oneself loved.
 - ❖ To feel the need to love through positive relationships of friendship and collaboration.
 - ❖ The capacity to live a progressive domination of self, transcending and overcoming egocentricity, growing in freedom from material things, controlling one’s impulses, learning to live with and for the Fraternity.
 - ❖ Awareness and acceptance of the gift of one’s sexuality and the desire to live and grow in celibacy and chastity. On the problems connected with the emotional-sexual area it seems necessary to refer also to what some recent documents of the Church say in this regard.⁵⁵
 - ❖ The will to develop oneself physically, psychologically, intellectually, socially, morally and spiritually.
 - ❖ A disposition towards manual labour.
 - ❖ Openness and receptivity to new values, attitudes, perspectives and experiences.
 - ❖ The capacity to accept, live, dialogue and work with others, even of different cultures.
 - ❖ The capacity to develop positive interpersonal relationships with men and women.
 - ❖ Openness to the needy, especially the poorest, stimulating generosity, sacrifice and the ability to share.

- h.** With regard to sexual orientation, some essential elements of discernment are offered:
- ❖ Accompany the candidates in becoming aware of the causes of their problem with regard to the emotional area, often not of a sexual origin.⁵⁶
 - ❖ Accompany the candidate towards the integration and control of his inclinations and tendencies, without indulging in compromises that justify a “third way” lived in an ambiguous manner between celibacy and matrimony. The meaning of this *mastery over such tendencies* is understood not only as a willing effort, but also as a progressive freedom with regard to the tendencies themselves, in the heart, in the mind, in the will and in the desires.⁵⁷ Besides that, it is important that these tendencies are overcome progressively, becoming ever less the cause of tension and disturbance in quietly living the requirements of a mature consecrated life.
 - ❖ Accompany the candidates along a journey of truth about their sexual orientation, avoiding both undervaluing and excessively emphasising this dimension in such a way that the candidates may be led to know it well and to allow themselves to be helped to grow.
 - ❖ Make sure that the candidates do not identify themselves with the problem that they live in this sphere, accepting to grow even through a demanding journey of formation.
 - ❖ In the evaluation of the candidates pay attention to:
 - the absence of the sense of sin,
 - a prolonged situation of sexual promiscuity,
 - an attraction to minors.
 Such evaluation is valid for all candidates, independently of their heterosexual or homosexual orientation.

Vocational projects for those who have lived similar situations should be discouraged, since they would make it difficult for the person to grow and mature harmoniously.

2. **Criteria for the discernment of Christian maturity.**

Given that “the pastoral work of vocational promotion attentively nurtures the Catholic faith of candidates for the Order (cf. Rb 2: 3) and mindful of the fact that the environment from which they come does not always offer the possibility of knowing and practising an authentic life of faith.”,⁵⁸ it is necessary, in order not to go along with superficial choices, to be attentive to the following elements of Christian maturity:⁵⁹

- a. The will to seek and do the will of God.
- b. The will to pray and become a person centred on God.
- c. Personal relationship with Jesus Christ, nourished by regular celebration of the sacraments, by reflection on His Word and serious commitment to follow Him.
- d. A living faith translated into words and action.
- e. Knowledge of and adherence to the contents of Catholic faith and morality and a love for the Church.⁶⁰
- f. Awareness of the presence of God and of His saving action in one’s own life, in the Church and in the world.
- g. The will to be evangelised and to evangelise.
- h. A prophetic, missionary and ecumenical spirit.

3. **Criteria for the discernment of Franciscan maturity.**

The requirements proper to the Franciscan life⁶¹ are to be considered as necessary criteria in the work of discernment. The elements of Franciscan maturity on which the discernment⁶² should be carried out regard the capacity to live:

- a. a life of penance expressed in a continuous conversion to Christ and to gospel life according to the spirit of St. Francis;
- b. the life of the Friars Minor characterised by a pacific and humble heart and by a happy and courteous spirit;
- c. fraternal life expressed in the capacity to live with others as brothers, to embrace the great Franciscan Family and to be in brotherhood with all peoples;
- d. life as love for one’s vocation, and to love in accordance with one’s own vocational choice;
- e. life fed by the spirit of prayer and devotion;
- f. a life of availability and good will towards service and work;
- g. a life of poverty and simplicity and the will to be with and for the poor;
- h. a life of justice and peace;
- i. life animated by love and reverential respect for creation and the environment as reflections of the presence of God;
- j. a personal, community and professional life according to a contemplative attitude.

The criteria of discernment are to be applied while having the reality of each geographic and cultural area where the Order is implanted in mind. It is a matter of a work of interpretation that commits each Entity or plurality of Entities among themselves.

In order to continue the journey in the provincial and local Fraternities

18. We suggest the reading of all that is proposed in the fifth chapter of the “PrS” and in the first chapter of the “LGB/FD”. We add some questions and proposals to this suggestion, with the aim of facilitating the passage from intentions to acts.

Questions

- ❖ What formative interventions are urgent and possible for *the local and provincial Fraternities*, in order to deepen the Franciscan identity in view of vocational reception and accompaniment?
- ❖ What are the concrete ways of collaboration and integration between PCV and OF?
- ❖ What formative interventions are urgent and possible with regard to *Animators for the PCV* so that they can develop, in a competent way, their own ministry of formators in the field of vocational discernment?
- ❖ What formative interventions are necessary with regard to the *young* who enter into our itineraries of vocational discernment in order to help them, as autonomous and responsible subjects, to reach a human, Christian and

Franciscan maturity that is sufficient to embrace our way of life?

Proposals

- ❖ To ask ourselves what kind of vocations our present theology and pastoral praxis are generating and what consequences these will have on the life of the Church and Order.
- ❖ To specify, *in the personal, community and provincial projects*, the goals, contents, means and time of evaluation for personal and community formation in view of vocational reception and accompaniment.

The net of evangelisation

19. “Reflecting on our identity in recent decades, we have come to appropriate once more our ancient roots: we are a Fraternity, an evangelising Fraternity. This is our vocation and our *raison d’être* in the Church and in the world. The prophetic gesture which is being demanded of us today is that of handing on this precious treasure entrusted to the Friars Minor by St. Francis. Our duty is that of rendering testimony as Brothers, to make known “the good, every good, the supreme good, the Lord God living and true”.⁶³

We are called to embody this vocation, accepting the appeal for missionary evangelisation within the mission of the entire Church and in vital and prophetic communion with it.⁶⁴ An evangelisation that should be new in its methods, spirit, means and passion, aimed especially at “giving witness to the very life of Jesus, reflected in a mirror and made tangible in a Fraternity of “two or three” united and rooted in His name alone”.⁶⁵

The net of evangelisation is also called on to go down into the depths, to fish in the most transparent waters of an authentic fraternal life, which is our primary way of evangelising. Therefore, “in the epochal passage of time that we are living, rooted in God and the heart of history, we are asked by God and man to change the moment in which we live into a time of grace, guarding the quality of our life and the seriousness of our projects. There is still a long way to go for our prayer life to become a dynamic and creative reality and for our Fraternities to become living cells of the Gospel, privileged places of encounter with God and with men”.⁶⁶

With regard to what is specific in the PCV, it is interesting to discover how the witness-announcement can become a specific vocational itinerary. The Church routes for the announcement of the Word, for the liturgy and for charity, correspond to as many places of witness-announcement in regard to the vocational proposal and accompaniment. The passage to be watched is that which goes from these pastoral journeys to attention to the personal call. The Fraternity that announces, celebrates and lives the presence and the service of the poor encourages this essential step.⁶⁷ We are called in a particular way to rediscover the audacity of mission, the courage to *go forth* again into the midst of the men of our time.⁶⁸

In our Entities it is important to take care of the connections between the moment of formation and that of evangelisation so that nothing will be missing from the healthy balance of the PCV, placed almost on the edge between the two dimensions. It will be necessary, in particular, to continue to deepen and to take care of the dynamic collaboration between PCV and PAY.

General Objectives

To make the identity of the Fraternity that, being evangelised, evangelises both visible and eloquent for the purpose of:

- ❖ becoming a place for announcing the beauty of the vocation through the quality of our witness;
- ❖ implementing the clear choice for evangelisation through the diverse means and in the diverse places and areopaghi of the mission.

Specific Objectives

1. **To move towards a fraternal life that is more authentic in minority, poverty and solidarity**, in order to be capable of creating a Fraternity that evangelises and gives coherent witness to the vocation of the Friar Minor on the basis of a clear and conscious identity, as it is indicated in our Rule, GGCC and the Priorities of the Order.
2. **To become aware that our charism is never an end in itself**, but is for the Church and in the Church, part of a whole but not the whole. This is essential for participation in the one mission of the Church, the People of God and mystery of communion.
3. **To root our evangelising action in the experience of the mercy of God** and in the growth and proposal of the primacy of “the spirit of prayer and devotion”, on which all our existence must rest.⁶⁹
4. **To recognise the vital insertion of the PCV within the ordinary pastoral activity in organic communion**

with the particular Churches, integrating it with the PAY, with the other Franciscan religious Institutes, with the laity and the young themselves. In this way the evangelisation of a vocational culture and the assumption of the vocational interrogative (“Lord, what do you want me to do?”) as the key question for every Christian and every community are favoured.

5. **To promote a spirituality of communion**, making it emerge as the educational principle in all the places where man and Christian are shaped, where the ministers of the altar, the consecrated and the pastoral workers are educated, where both families and communities are built.⁷⁰
6. **To make space for all the gifts of the Spirit**, without seeking uniformity, but rather an organic integration of legitimate diversity, whether within the Fraternity, the world or the Church. From here it is possible to announce and promote all vocations.
7. **To encourage the integration of the PCV into the provincial activity of evangelisation**, looking out for contact with the forms that are more consonant with our charism (missions to people, missionary evangelisation, justice and peace, etc.).
8. **To enhance the international dimension of our Fraternity in the vocational annunciation, with special reference to the missionary identity of the Friar Minor and of the whole Fraternity.**⁷¹ This should be carried out in such a way that, in the vocational announcement and proposal, these essential aspects of our being and action are not lacking. In this way the Fraternity is asked to rediscover and revitalise these dimensions.
9. **To enhance the particular identity of each local Fraternity**, in such a way as to evangelise the various aspects

of the Franciscan charism, which embodies the diverse elements proper to the apostolic Fraternity, gathered by the Spirit and oriented along the path of following Jesus (e.g., the hermitage and the experience of praying with Jesus; the evangelising Fraternity and the experience of announcing the Gospel with Jesus; the Fraternity of assistance to the sick or poor and the experience of taking care of the sick and poor with Jesus; the parochial Fraternity and the experience of love for the People of God with Jesus, etc).

10. **To grow in responsibility for the explicit announcement of the gospel of vocation**, without stopping at forms of simple testimony, but cultivating the capacity to communicate the beauty and the substance of the gospel of vocation, even to the young who are “distant”.
11. **To review the structures and the use of the means at our disposal** so that they do not constitute an anti-testimony in respect to the message we communicate and the kind of life we say we are promoting and proposing.
12. **To take up with prophetic courage the announcement of the gospel of charity**, through commitment to an operative and concrete love towards every human being, especially towards the poor. It is a question of an essential place of announcement, of proposal and of vocational discernment, especially to the part of the world of youth that is less favoured socially.
13. **To open up to the use of new languages and of new means of mass media** in order to spread the gospel of vocation, paying attention, however, to give privilege to those that are more in harmony with the choice of minority, poverty and solidarity with the least of men.
14. **To know, appreciate and open oneself up with more**

conviction and courage to the active sharing of the Franciscan charism with the laity, even to audacious and prophetic forms of collaboration with them in the PCV.

15. **To promote the educational places** that give precedence to a vocational education, such as the family, the parish, associations and movements.
16. **To evangelise the young**, going out courageously to the poor, those who are distant from us and the immigrants; the world of the University and of culture in general and towards the Church movements, listening to the appeals of the young, taking account of the mediating culture in which they are formed today and through which they communicate, proposing an accompaniment that may help them to unify their life and accept responsibility for their existence in a vocational key.
17. **To evangelise the world of culture**, especially working so that a real and proper “culture of vocation” is affirmed gradually and in a way that is consonant with the diverse cultures.⁷²
18. **To take care, in diverse geographic and cultural contexts, of meetings and dialogue with the eastern Churches and the different Church Communities, as well as with other religions,**⁷³ in order to better understand the situation of pluralism and of cultural exchange, favoured by the massive phenomenon of migrations.
19. **To evangelise the families and collaborate with them**, so that they may become an environment that would favour and accompany the growth of the whole person, and help the children to mature their choices for life in a vocational perspective.

The provincial project for the PCV, which takes into account the above indicated elements, should be harmonised with and inserted into that of Evangelisation.

In order to continue the journey in the provincial and local Fraternities

20. We suggest reading all that is indicated in Chapter four of the “PrS” and in the “LGB/FD”. The questions and the proposals that we make here are intended to help in casting the net of vocational evangelisation on the personal, community and provincial levels.

Questions

- ❖ What aspects of our charism are witnessed to in a clear and explicit way through our life and the life of our local and provincial Fraternities? What aspects are, on the other hand, in shadow and should be taken up again and developed? What contradictory messages would we find that we give if we were to compare what we propose in words with what we live and give witness to through a certain use of means and structures?
- ❖ What initiatives for evangelisation of the world of the young and of families are we carrying out in a vocational key? Which should be strengthened? Through what initiatives, means, collaboration?
- ❖ What is the vital insertion of the PCV in the broadest context of evangelisation in the provincial plan?
- ❖ What collaboration between the various Entities should be strengthened in order to overcome provincialism and

to enhance the internationality of the Order in the key of vocational announcement? Looking at the near future, what initiatives could be proposed in this direction?

Proposals

- ❖ Whatever it is intended to do in the area of vocational announcement to the various categories of people with whom contact is made, should be indicated in the personal, community and provincial project.
- ❖ The addressees, the purpose, the fundamental contents, the ways and means and the times of evaluation, should be indicated in the provincial project for the PCV, following the scheme “Announcement-Proposal-Accompaniment”.

The fraternity net

21. “We Friars Minor, having committed ourselves to “follow more closely the Gospel and the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ” are constituted into Fraternities and as Fraternities. In these the grace of having brothers as a gift is granted to us; we cultivate those human and Christian values through which full human, Christian and Franciscan maturity can be attained; we entrust ourselves to God and make ourselves followers of the poor and crucified Christ; we welcome the “words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the words of the Holy Spirit”; we listen to the invitation to go and announce the Gospel. It is from the Fraternity, therefore, that the practical orientations of our life and mission must spring”.⁷⁴

In continuity with that said in the preceding points, we recognise that “the fraternal life, understood as a life shared in love, is an eloquent sign of ecclesial communion”.⁷⁵ An authentic fraternal life lives within this great scale of reference and, far from closing in on itself in some kind of narcissistic

fraternity, it opens up to the broadest dimensions of the Church and world.⁷⁶

For these reasons, the Fraternity, on its different levels, is the primary place of vocational proposal and accompaniment. The provincial Fraternity is called to assure suitable formation to whoever is called to this ministry, the vocation Animators, and the necessary structures to receive and cultivate vocations to the Franciscan life. Each local Fraternity is the ordinary place for looking after vocations through the channels of its daily life and mission.⁷⁷

General Objectives

To continue the renewal of the quality of fraternal life, with the aim of:

- ❖ living Fraternity as the primary place of vocational proposal and accompaniment;
- ❖ promoting the involvement of all Friars in the PCV;
- ❖ creating new and significant forms of fraternal life;
- ❖ encouraging communion and collaboration between the Entities and with the Franciscan Family.

Specific Objectives

1. **To promote the quality of fraternal life**, starting from a convinced and radical assumption of all that is prescribed in the Rule, the GGCC and the Priorities of the Order. In order to do this, it is indispensable to identify the positive aspects of making the charism relevant that are already present in the Fraternities and to develop

them, while quietly recognising the gaps in respect of which we are called to conversion. Without retraining in the life of communion in Fraternity it is impossible to efficiently communicate our specific charism to the young and to offer them the fundamental vocational experience of “Come and see!”

2. **To overcome the mentality of delegation and encourage the involvement** of all Friars of the local and provincial Fraternities in the PCV, animating them to take on commitments of praying for vocations, to open the different Fraternities to the reception of vocations, according to their own specific life and mission, and so be able to effectively offer the possibility of experiencing special aspects of the charism in Fraternity. The gift of the old and infirm Friars, who are a precious testimony to the Franciscan life, should not be ignored.
3. **To identify new areas and environments in which to dare to insert ourselves** with Fraternities capable of being significant and incisive in the present-day, post-modern society that is so complex and fragmented on the relational level in order to offer the young the possibility of an experience of Fraternity that could help them to build up authentic, communal and self-offering relationships with God and the brothers.
4. **To encourage the communication of significant experiences of Fraternity** within the Order, especially through the Internet so as to increase the awareness of belonging to a worldwide Fraternity and be able to open up the future of the Order to an ever greater and more effective internationalisation.
5. **To encourage collaboration among the Entities** on the interprovincial, Conference and Order levels through the exchange of projects and materials, the carrying out

of common initiatives in activities and formation, the production of formation aids and shared information, so as to keep up with the present mobility of the young and facilitate the over-coming of a mentality that is too sheltered by local perspectives.

6. **To examine the particular charismatic ties with the Poor Clares, the SFO and Franciscan Youth**, growing in mutual esteem until we achieve sharing and reciprocity in the communion of the charismatic gift that binds us.
7. **To seek forms of collaboration with the other components of the Franciscan Family**, so as to express the unity of the Franciscan charism, as well as with those church groups and movements that ask our collaboration in the field of youth and vocational pastoral ministry or in that of spiritual accompaniment. It is good, however, that such collaboration should be carried out with respect for our own and others’ identity and specific nature.
8. **To seek ways of meeting and collaborating with the Church movements and groups**, accepting their requests and challenges, without prejudices.
9. **To set up FRV (Fraternities for the Reception of Vocations) in the various Entities**. According to the indications that emerged from the Congress of Assisi, the provincial government should take note of the possibility of effective collaboration between the provincial Animator for PCV, the Guardian and the members of the Fraternity where the FRV is located when setting up the FRV. The members of FRV, in particular, are asked to have an attitude of continuous conversion in order to bring about:
 - a. A real *family atmosphere* characterised by dialogue, confidence, sympathy and exchange of experiences.
 - b. A more marked attention to the *spiritual life of the bro-*

thers who gather to listen to the Word, for the breaking of Bread and for the prayer of the Church.

- c. An attentive openness to *prophetic achievements* in accordance with the choices and indications of the Order in the dimensions of minority and evangelisation.
- d. *Sharing in the concrete services* (kitchen, cleaning, work, and the animation of prayer).
- e. *Suitable and generous reception* of the young people with their sensibilities, needs and their human and spiritual expectations.

Promote the organic insertion of the PCV in the local projects of Fraternity.

With regard to the FRV, pay the necessary attention to the various ways of expression, without making any one particular model absolute.

In order to continue the journey in the provincial and local Fraternities

22. We suggest the reading of all that is indicated in the first three chapters of the “PrS” and in the third chapter of “LGB/FD”. The questions and the proposals that follow are an effort to help in casting the constitutive net of our being Friars Minor in our times: the net of Fraternity.

Questions

- ❖ What aspects of fraternal life are already present in our local and provincial Fraternities? What characterises our Fraternity as positive? In the light of the Priorities, what

stimulus can we give to these aspects?

- ❖ What aspects of our fraternal life should be retrained, in the light of the Priorities of the Order, in order to offer significant experiences of Fraternity to the young of today and be such as to offer them a suitable atmosphere for living the encounter with the Lord, an appropriate accompaniment in order to be capable of discovering, in a vocational key, the meaning of their life and suitable support in response to the Franciscan vocation?
- ❖ What collaboration can better express our sense of belonging to a Fraternity and the dimension of Fraternity as constitutive of our identity and our vocation?
- ❖ What forms of collaboration already exist and what can be promoted with the Poor Clares, SFO, Franciscan Youth and the rest of the Franciscan family?

Proposals

- ❖ All that it is intended to implement in the area of the spirit of prayer and devotion, of communion in fraternal life, minority, poverty and solidarity in order to define our Fraternity in view of a temporary or prolonged acceptance of vocations, should be indicated in the personal, community and provincial projects.
- ❖ An attempt should be made to indicate a house to be declared the FRV in the provincial project for the PCV. There should also be an attempt to identify significant aspects of our life and mission that are present in various Fraternities of the Province, so as to offer to the young in search of their vocation the possibility of experiencing the wealth and variety of situations in which the Fraternity is embodied.

Notes

- ¹ JOHN PAUL II, *PDV*, 1992, 34-41; *VC*, 1996; *NMI*, 2001; CONGREGATIONS FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, FOR THE INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *SPV*, ROME, 1992.
- ² *Pastoral care of vocations in local Churches*. Concluding document of the II International Congress of Bishops and those responsible for Church vocations, Elle Di Ci, Turin, 1983.
- ³ 1St Continental Congress of Latin America in 1994; THE LATIN AMERICAN EPISCOPAL COUNCIL, *Youth and Educational Pastoral activity in the faith. VI meeting of Youth Pastoral – Caracas – October 1988*. SEJ, Bogota 1989; LATIN-AMERICAN EPISCOPAL COUNCIL (CELAM), *The process of education in the faith of youth*, Bogota 1993; THE PONTIFICAL WORK FOR CHURCH VOCATIONS, *Vocations pastoral in the local Churches of Europe, Work document of the Congress on vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life in Europe* (Rome, 5-10 May 1997), Edizioni Paoline, Milan 1996; PONTIFICAL WORKS FOR CHURCH VOCATIONS, *NVNE*, 1997.
- ⁴ *Work document of the European Congress*, n. 4.
- ⁵ COMPI, *Formation in the Order of friars Minor*, in *Documents of the extraordinary General Chapter* (Medellin 1971) Bologna 1972.
- ⁶ PLENARY COUNCIL OF THE ORDER, *Document on Formation*, Rome 1981.
- ⁷ GENERAL CURIA OFM, *RFF*, Rome 1991.
- ⁸ H. SCHALÜCK, *FE*, 1996.
- ⁹ The International Congress of Animators for the PCV in the OFM was held in Santa Maria degli Angeli (PG) from the 7 to 30 October 2000, with the participation of 125 vocations Promoters.
- ¹⁰ Cf. CIVCISVA AND CV, *MR*, 1978, 11: “The very charism of the Founders appears as an “*experience of the Spirit*,” transmitted to their disciples to be lived, safeguarded, deepened and constantly developed by them, in harmony with the Body of Christ continually in the process of growth”.
- ¹¹ Cf. PAUL VI, *ET*, 1971, 55: “Looking at you and at your life, young people can understand well the call that Jesus will never cease to make resound in their midst”.
- ¹² Cf. “The Lord gives me brothers”, DE, in *Acta Congressi Internationalis pro Animatoribus OFM Curae Pastoralis Vocationum promovendae*, p...; cf. also *Lumen Gentium*, 46: “Let no one think that religious have become strangers to their fellowmen or useless citizens of this earthly city by their consecration”.
- ¹³ Cf. G. BINI, *The Order Today*, Rome 2000, III, 1.
- ¹⁴ Cf. *New vocations for a new Europe*, n. 25.
- ¹⁵ Cf. G. BINI, *The Order Today*, page 15: “As I look at the Order I think the real problem here is not the lack of vocations but rather our inability to

- recover an ordered and harmonious set of values which we will live with joy and conviction, in such a way that the perennial fruitfulness of our charism will again be vindicated. What is really at stake is not so much whether the structures of the Order will continue or whether we will end up with more or less friars, but whether there will still be a *quality of Franciscan life, lived to the full, today and right up to the last day of our life*".
- 16 Cf. *Instrumentum Laboris* I.2, in *Acta Congressi Internationalis pro Animatoribus OFM Curae Pastoralis Vocationum promovendae*, p. 247-252.
- 17 Cf. *Instrumentum Laboris* "In verbo tuo" I, 2.3, in *Acta Congressi Internationalis pro Animatoribus OFM Curae Pastoralis Vocationum promovendae*, p. ...
- 18 Cf. CICVSA, *Potissimum Institutioni*, 1990, 86-89.
- 19 Cf. *The development of vocational pastoral activity in particular Churches*, 62.
- 20 Cf. *New vocations for a new Europe*, n. 35.
- 21 Cf. *Instrumentum Laboris* "In verbo tuo", III, 1.
- 22 Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 44; *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 9; *Redemptoris Missio*, 1-3; *Christifideles laici*, 8; *Vita Consecrata*, 17-22.
- 23 Cf. IX SINODO DEI VESCOVI, *Instrumentum laboris*, 62.
- 24 Cf. GGCC 86; *Report to the General Chapter of Assisi 1997*, 4.10.1996, 119-122; *PrS*, c. 4.
- 25 Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 72.
- 26 Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 69.
- 27 Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 64.
- 28 Cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 42-46; cf. also *Christifideles laici*, 15.55.65.
- 29 Cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 1981, especially nos. 50; 63; 66.
- 30 Cf. *The development of vocational pastoral activity in the local Churches*, 67-70.
- 31 Cf. SECRETARIAT GENERAL FOR FORMATION AND STUDIES, *Ongoing Formation in the Order of Friars Minor*, Rome 1995.
- 32 Cf. *RFF* 104 and 106.
- 33 Cf. G. BINI, *The Order Today*, II, 1; GENERAL SECRETARIAT FOR FORMATION AND STUDIES, *The Spirit of Prayer and Devotion*, Rome 1996, Topic 14, 1-2.
- 34 Cf. GGCC 145.
- 35 Cf. *New vocations for a new Europe*, n. 25.
- 36 Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 12.
- 37 Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 22: "only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light... Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear".
- 38 *Redemptionis Donum*, 5: "This meaning emerges against the background of the Gospel paradox of losing one's life in order to save it, and on the other hand saving one's life by losing it "for Christ's sake and for the sake of the Gospel," as we read in Mark" (*Mk* 8,35).

- 39 *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 43.
- 40 *Pastores dabo vobis*, 35; cf. *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 3.
- 41 Cf. *Christifideles Laici*, 19. 45; IX SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Instrumentum Laboris*, 66.
- 42 For the rest you are referred to the LGB/FD of the Congress, which offers starting points for an anthropological and theological reflection, which is always necessary to found an intelligent service to PCV.
- 43 Cf. *New vocations for a new Europe*, n. 27.
- 44 Cf. *TestC* 1-5.
- 45 Cf. *Lk* 5, 1-11.
- 46 *PrS* 5.
- 47 Cf. *RFF* 44-54.
- 48 Cf. *RFF* 41-44.
- 49 Cf. *RFF* 104: "The pastoral work of vocation promotion makes each provincial fraternity conscious that it is the witness of their lives given by the friars which is the chief force of attraction for Christians seeking to determine their vocation".
- 50 Cf. *RFF* 106: "The pastoral work of vocation promotion prepares the fraternities to welcome those who show an interest in the Franciscan charism, so that they may find a concrete proposal of life, according to the invitation of Jesus: "Come and see" ".
- 51 *RFF* 116 and Appendix n. 1, besides the *LGB/FD*, 1.4-16b.
- 52 Cf. *Vita Consecrata*, 65.
- 53 *RFF* 116.
- 54 Cf. G. Bini, *The Order Today*, p.38.
- 55 Cf. *Potissimum Institutioni*, 39.
- 56 Cf. *New vocations for a new Europe*, 37, IV, d.
- 57 Cf. *Potissimum Institutioni*, 39.
- 58 *RFF* 108.
- 59 Cf. Appendix *RFF* 2 and *FD* 1.4.14b.
- 60 Cf. *RFF* 108: "The pastoral work of vocation promotion attentively nurtures the Catholic faith of candidates for the Order (cf. *Rb* 2: 3), mindful of the fact that the environment from which they come does not always offer the possibility of knowing and practising an authentic life of faith"; Appendix 2.
- 61 Cf. GGCC 1; cf. G. Bini, *The Order Today*, p. 15.
- 62 Cf. Appendix *RFF* 3.
- 63 *PrS* 4.
- 64 Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 44b: "The evangelical counsels which lead to charity join their followers to the Church and its mystery in a special way. Since this is so, the spiritual life of these people should then be devoted to the welfare of the whole Church. From this arises their duty of working to implant and strengthen the Kingdom of Christ in souls and to extend that Kingdom to every clime. This duty is to be undertaken

to the extent of their capacities and in keeping with the proper type of their own vocation. This can be realized through prayer or active works of the apostolate. It is for this reason that the Church preserves and fosters the special character of her various religious institutes”.

⁶⁵ Definitory General, *Letter for the Solemnity of St. Francis 1999*, in “Acta Ordinis”, III (1999) 252-254.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Cf. H. SCHALÜCK, *Fill the Whole Earth with the Gospel of Christ*, n. 48: “Here we will consider the heart of our vocation, which is rooted in the Gospel, nourished by a deep experience of contemplation and lived out in Fraternity. Here we find, too, the nucleus of evangelisation”.

⁶⁸ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Discourse to the Franciscans of Missione al Popolo*, Rome, 15.11.1982: “Go, you who are the brothers of the people, into the heart of the masses, to that abandoned and exhausted crowd like sheep without a shepherd, for which Jesus felt compassion... Go you also to the men and women of our times! Do not wait for them to come to you! Try to reach them! Love spurs us to it... The entire Church will be grateful to you for it”.

⁶⁹ Cf. *The Heart turned towards the Lord*, Document on the contemplative dimension of the Franciscan life, in *Acta Consilii plenarii OFM di Malta*, 1995, 180-190.

⁷⁰ Cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 43.

⁷¹ Cf. G. BINI, *Letter to the international Council for Missionary Evangelisation*, 10 July 1999: “We need to change our mentality, to review our structures. Since the II Vatican Council, the Church has revised its identity through a renewed ecclesiology. A similar effort has been carried out within the Order: on all continents we have missionary projects, foundations and other young Entities; each Friar and each Entity should feel themselves called to help in the needs of other Entities. New times and new situations oblige us to review interprovincial and international solidarity. The disposition to collaborate with the Friars of other Provinces, attention to and generosity with regard to the urgent needs of the Order, the systematic exchange of information and all that could serve for animation are becoming evermore urgent. Our times, characterised by changes and crises, require a new impetus in animation and in the missionary activity of the Church. The possibilities and the needs of mission are moving towards new horizons: courage and enthusiasm are asked of us, the same courage and enthusiasm that animated the formidable evangelising work of our co-friars in the past” (in “Acta Ordinis” II [1999] 163).

⁷² Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE, *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, n. 38 and H. Schalück, *Fill the Earth with the Gospel of Christ*, from n. 175, where some “guiding elements for the evangelising activity, which we try to take care of constantly as Friars Minor according to the diversity of places and situations” (n. 133) are indicated.

⁷³ *Ibid.* and cf. The General Chapter of Medellin 1971, which invited us to “personify” the Franciscan life in the culture of the local Church and the General Chapter Assisi 1997, which reminded us of “... discovering the diversity of faces and cultures”.

⁷⁴ *PrS* 2.

⁷⁵ *VC* 42.

⁷⁶ Cf. CIVCISVA, *Fraternal Life in Community*, 10: “Religious community is a visible manifestation of the communion which the foundation of the Church and, at the same time, a prophecy of that unity towards which she tends as her final goal”.

⁷⁷ Cf. *RFF* 110-112; *Ongoing Formation in the Order of Friars Minor*, 48-51.

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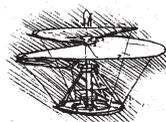
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