



## Plenary Council of the Order

### Presentation of the Final Document of the Chapter of Mats

*8<sup>th</sup> June, 2025*

Dear Brother Massimo and all the brothers, peace be with you!

I have in my heart so much joy and also so much gratitude for the trust and the possibility of having been able to accompany and follow the entire journey of the Chapter of Mats: what I have received is certainly much more intense than what I have been able to offer and donate.

May the Holy Spirit give you light, but also renewed and fresh “energies” for the assembly journey that you are beginning. May the next few days be, in the wake of those we have lived together, an exercise in sincere listening, constructive dialogue, verification and discernment of the steps necessary for the Order, but also days in which to enjoy mutual brotherhood, that which is written within the gift of love given by the Spirit one day to Francis, that is, the Good News that we are all children of a good and merciful Father, good news that has attracted us and continues to persuade brothers and sisters throughout the world,

The gift of a mutual brotherhood that I too experience on many occasions and that in these days has also been enriched by the joy of knowing so many new faces and names! grows in belonging is a beautiful gift! in order to connect the richness and intuitions of the Chapter of Mats with the Plenary Council of the Order, it seemed good to me, also in dialogue in recent days with the Commission that drafted the final text and with those who took care of the dynamics of participation, to briefly focus attention on some “key” words that characterize the Final Document of the Chapter of Mats, together with some food for thought and some perceptions experienced and received in the past few days in the face and from the formal and informal sharing experienced. It is, therefore, a simple restitution based on what has been produced so far, of what comes from a text constructed, in a singular and I would say also surprising way, because it was created through listening and the active participation of a small portion of the people of God, with different voices coming from every corner of the Earth, with forms of Christian life and vocational-professional responses and varied ministries. A Document, a content, suggestions, actions, which are returned first and foremost to the Order of Friars Minor, but which we hope will find acceptance and reception - “by contagion” - also in the sisters and brothers who belong to the Franciscan family, in the institutions that compose it and also in believers who only sympathize with the spirit that flowed from Francis of Assisi. On the other hand, as fr. Matteo Giuliani indicated to us, these words will also be able to speak to every man and every woman of good will who wants to treasure them.





## ***Openness to the Spirit***

The Document opens with this very clear certainty: the starting point and the first protagonist of the journey is the Holy Spirit. Liturgical time, the solemnity that we celebrate today seem to seal this certainty. It is He who inspired the Franciscan form of life; it is only He who can vivify it, renew it and open up new horizons!

It is He whom we must “seek” if we want to revive in ourselves and in the Order “the passion for the charism, the joy of fraternity, the boldness of the mission”. Therefore, full docility to his action, in the watchful awareness that this is certainly not a seconding of choices or attitudes of passivity and resignation. As a sister outside the Order, I feel I can say with freedom and joy that this awareness, that of knowing that docility to the Spirit does not mean immobility, can be felt in many signs of life. We have seen many small seeds patiently thrown where there seems to be only death ; the propensity to "dare" new ways to witness the Gospel and to announce it in geographical realities that are today strongly secularized and sterile is visible; the paths taken beyond the negative appearances of the present are recognized: there is so much "positive" in the narratives that, in recent days, we have heard and seen through images! Creativity and dynamism in the mission in many countries of the world, the desire to transmit the announcement of Christ in ways closest to the languages of young people, family closeness and solidarity with the poorest, signs of hope in the decision of many new brothers who today, in our time, welcome the call to follow Christ. We must not get used to these wonders of the Spirit who is a “gift from above”, who “descends upon believers”, who “is incarnated and manifests himself in ordinary life” (n. 1) and works in us “moving” us towards good! In these expressions of the Final Document, as in those in which the Spirit is recognized as the “animator” (n. 1), “motor” (n. 40), “voice” that guides (n. 8), we almost hear the echo of the language and thought of Francis of Assisi who, as we well know, conceived of the Spirit as the inspiring force to be radically made room for in personal and fraternal life and in that of the entire Order.

- ↳ The urgent appeal that comes from this key word, seems to me to be decidedly contained in what emerges from number 3 of the Final Document, that is, the need to create the conditions so that, in the current time that "dispersed" us, in the reality "saturated" with voices in which we live, the Spirit of Christ can take up residence in each brother of the Order, in each of us (see no. 3; see also the Johannine invitation that the Word of God enabled us to hear today that was dear to the heart of Francis: John 14, 23 – “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him”)

For life in the Spirit to have quality, according to what emerges from the journey of the Chapter, we need the courage to reclaim a "doing penance" that responds to the conversion that is necessary for us. The Final Document says: “slow down the times”,





# PLENARY COUNCIL OF THE ORDER

“dwell in interior silence”, “silence the words” and the “dominant voices” “fast from social media” (n. 3).

- ↪ A second emphasis that openness to the Spirit suggests is that His creative action finds in listening and in the processes of community discernment two essential conditions that are interior attitudes and at the same time methods, ways to overcome a criticality that has emerged repeatedly in the working tables, that of individualism and self-referentiality, to assume a “clearer, truer” vision

- ***Listening***

The emphasis that the Document proposes to us is twofold.

- The Spirit enables us to be “children”: He puts us in the conditions of listening suitable for having the capacity to welcome and discern the will of God.
- But, says the Final Document, for the work of the Spirit those conditions necessary for listening to one another are also created: “expropriation of ourselves and the capacity to place ourselves in an attitude of humble availability (criterion of minority)” (n. 8).

The desire to celebrate this Chapter of Mats, even in the stages experienced in the various entities, by widening the “space” of the tent to brothers and sisters in faith, in evangelization and in communion, shows us that it is the prerogative of the Order of Friars Minor to remotivate and dispose ourselves to a practice of reciprocity in listening, in the activation of a dialogical, inclusive thought, of participation and sharing, with trust towards the other. The Final Document itself is the outcome of this process.

The patient commitment of these days to harmonize different sensibilities, visions, rhythms, languages has been visible to all of us.

The daily work of deep mutual listening in the fraternity, in the entities, in the services, with those around us remains the greatest challenge (see the first part of the Final Document) with a call to insist practically on this dimension in ongoing and initial formation.

- ***Fraternal discernment***

Discerning means allowing oneself to be guided by the Spirit, evaluating new choices, identifying together times, priorities, and spaces for discussion.

Community discernment implies having the serenity to abandon something together and decide for what today can make the Friars Minor vital signs of a prophetic gift.





# PLENARY COUNCIL OF THE ORDER

- ✦ Haste and authoritarianism must be avoided. Openness to diversity and the ability to recognize “weak voices” should prevail (n. 9).

## **Charisma**

The word charisma is the most recurrent in the *Document*:

“Charisma is a gift that precedes us and shapes us, renews us, is the motive of our life, it is to be lived not explained”.

The expressions used are the confirmation of that definition that I personally find, in its plasticity, to be among the most suitable to describe the perennial, non-material, yet always vital trait of a charisma: “underground source of water with a perennial jet”!

A “hidden” gift, an “invisible root” that expresses itself and makes itself visible in a way of praying, of forming oneself, of serving according to a particular evangelical style, in a way of living relationships, fraternity.

The charismatic identity, which by its nature is in continuous growth and evolution, is the evangelical project that arises from the charisma, in its constant dialogue with history.

In the Final Document many traits of this charismatic identity, of this spirituality that the Order is called to embody today, were expressed:

- living fraternity as prophecy
- integrated and experiential formation
- mission as sensitivity to measure not only with evangelization, but also with the urgency of doing mercy to brothers who are in the most extreme conditions of life, restoring dignity, leading to Christ.

I think it is worth highlighting the fact that the term charisma is often linked to the term **transformation**.

Pope Francis stated in 2015:

*...charisma is not preserved by keeping it; you must open it and let it out, so that it comes into contact with reality, with people, with their worries and problems. And so, in this fruitful encounter with reality, charisma grows, renews itself and reality also transforms, is transfigured by the spiritual strength that that charisma brings with it.*

The word *transformation* can represent, understood in this sense, a challenge that urges every brother and every sister, every community and the entire Order to create and have within themselves a deeper interior space, which is nourished by the spiritual strength of the charism





because it helps us to transform reality and this means = knowing how to change the responses to situations.

- ↳ Changing is easier, it is an external act: many times, perhaps, we limit ourselves to this. To changing brothers or sisters from the fraternity, to changing a complex situation by “plugging it”. Faced with the fears of assuming “new forms of evangelization” and rethinking our structures – as was highlighted on several occasions during the Chapter – perhaps we should allow ourselves to be questioned by the paradigm of transformation, rather than that of change that leads us to do the same things, committing ourselves more, but not in a different way or implementing only marginal changes.

Transforming is making room for the potential of the charism that has not yet been expressed!

## ***Communion/Collaboration/Co-responsibility***

Il Finally, the *Final Document* repeatedly emphasizes the dimension of communion, collaboration and co-responsibility between friars and lay people and sisters, especially within the Franciscan family itself.

The ecclesial journey reminds us how important it is to continually renew ourselves in the belief that “sharing” the charism does not mean dividing the charism into pieces, but “possessing it together”, “participating in it together”. It is not a gift that each of us holds in our own “part” and moreover the Franciscan charism has in its “DNA”, the fact of operating in its fullness, in a plurality of forms! It has been so since the “origins” and the Franciscan family has, in fact, been a “charismatic family” for 800 years. There is no study and no conference that addresses this ecclesial dimension that Pope Francis has relaunched, in which the “example” of the Franciscan charism is not cited as the reality of a founding experience that has been forged and continues to communicate and generate - as we have also received and recorded in recent days - in the Church in many forms.

- ↳ The appeal, the call that has been highlighted is that
  - Greater complementarity of the identities arising from the same charisma
  - Of going a little beyond mere collaboration: the need for a more participatory approach has been highlighted, moving to a “real co-responsibility” – states the Document – activating “real processes of co-decision, co-formation and co-habitation”
  - That of giving the “we” of the charisma some certainties, renewed, identifying together fresher strategies capable of conferring a future also through a more solid organization, redefining collaborative networks.





# PLENARY COUNCIL OF THE ORDER

Honestly, I have enjoyed the communion of these days very much and I thought that from heaven many brothers and sisters who preceded us in faith will have also enjoyed it and who, for example, in the post-conciliar climate of the Seventies had beautiful intuitions in this regard: I think of the first international Franciscan meetings in Assisi at the beginning of the Seventies, of the dream of the Franciscan Movement.

Redefining collaborative networks, I believe, is not only a desire, but a duty that the Order and the Franciscan Family should assume, perhaps also rediscovering that state of "incandescence" that the post-conciliar years had triggered. However, I believe that it would also be interesting to try to understand and ask ourselves what the causes of a loosening of the Movement were and not stop, together, believing that the authentic journey in this sense is the most beautiful way we have to witness ecclesial communion.

Sr. Chiara Codazzi

*Vice-Secretary of the Chapter of Mats 2025*

