

Summary of the Joint Meeting of CIME-CEME Istanbul, May 26-June 2, 2024

This is a summary of a joint meeting of the International Council for Mission Evangelization (CIME) and the Executive Commission for Missions and Evangelization (CEME), which met May 26 to June 2, 2024, in Istanbul (Friary of Santa Maria Draperis). The main goal of the meeting was to continue developing the *Ratio Evangelizationis* for the Order (REO).

Representing CEME were **Francisco Gómez Vargas, Dennis Tupas Tayo, Johannes Freyer,** and **José Rodríguez**. Nine of the thirteen Conference Secretaries for Missions and Evangelization were present to represent CIME: **Arcangel Borek** (North Slavic), **Oscar Castro** (Bolivariana), **Jovit Malinao** (East Asia) **Augustinus Nggame** (South Asia, Australia, and Oceania), **Edgar Alves Pereira** (Brazil-Southern Cone), **Damir Pavic** (South Slavic), **José Rodríguez** (ESC), **Natalio Saludes** (CONFRES), and **Adolfo Calderón Velázquez** (Mexico-Central America). Also present was **John Barker**, a member of the REO drafting committee and secretary for the meeting.

Introduction

The mandate to develop an REO was given by the General Chapter of 2021. Discussion of the proposed REO began at the CIME-CEME meeting of March 2022. In May 2023 the General Definitory accepted a proposal from the Secretariat for Mission and Evangelization to convene a group of subject matter experts to develop a structure and outline for the REO and to begin drafting the document. That group met in September 2023 to develop a proposed structure for the REO, which was then discussed and accepted (with suggestions) by the General Definitory. In December 2023 the Conference Secretaries for Missions and Evangelization received a copy of the structure, asking them to discuss the proposed structure and answer questions to assist in the drafting of the REO, and to submit their responses. In the meantime, the expert group continued its work, producing a draft of Part One of the REO in March 2024. This draft was not included in the materials discussed by the Conferences.

The main work of the May/June 2024 meeting of CIME-CEME was to review the responses from the Conferences regarding the proposed structure of the REO, to discern in them common topics and concerns, and to discuss (in a preliminary way) their possible inclusion in the REO. The following is a summary of the results of that meeting.

Proposed Draft of REO and Questions for Conferences

The proposed structure for the REO, accepted with suggestions by the General Definitory, is as follows¹:

Part One

- I. The Fraternal Spirituality of Saint Francis
 - a. The call to live according to the Gospel: *witness as brothers*
 - b. Subject and servant to every creature: *witness as minors*
 - c. Sent to proclaim the Gospel on the road: *witnesses and missionary disciples*
- II. Letting Oneself Be Evangelized
 - a. The source of evangelizing mission: *missio Dei and Jesus' plan*
 - b. The call to evangelizing mission: *baptized and sent*
 - c. The place of evangelizing mission: *our cloister is the world*
- III. In the World and the Cultures in Which We Live
 - a. The method of missionary evangelization: *contemplative in reality*
 - b. The subjects of missionary evangelization: *with all the baptized*
 - c. The style of missionary evangelization: *listening to the Spirit in cultures*
- IV. Witnessing to the Newness of the Kingdom of God
 - a. Evangelization and witness: *behaving spiritually among men*
 - b. Evangelization and life: *caring for life/creation-ecology*
 - c. Evangelization as brothers and minors: *prophetic fraternity in the world*
- V. On the Road to Formation
 - a. Called and sent: *integrating formation and evangelizing mission*
 - b. Ongoing formation: *in evangelizing mission with the people of God*
 - c. Initial formation: *to learn a style of communion and synodality*

Part Two

- I. Choices
 - a. The places of evangelizing mission
 - i. youth cultures and the digital continent
 - ii. parishes
 - iii. sanctuaries
 - iv. education
 - v. world of culture and science
 - vi. world of health
 - b. Some dimensions of our evangelizing mission
 - i. silent witness of life by renewing presences
 - ii. presence and proclamation among and with the poor, our teachers

¹ The proposed structure was modified somewhat by the expert committee during the drafting of Part One, although the main elements in the proposed structure are all present in some manner in the current draft.

- iii. presence in post-secularized and post-Christian environments
- iv. presence and dialogue between Christians and non-Christians
- v. mission for reconciliation and peace
- vi. co-responsibility for mission with laity and larger Franciscan family

II. Conclusions, Appeals, and Invitations

- a. Witness, proclamation, and mission: different faces of evangelization
- b. Our evangelizing mission in different contexts and realities in the world
- c. A renewed impetus for the evangelizing mission

The following questions were presented to the Conferences for discussion:

1. Do you think the *first part* of the structure of the REO is useful, applicable, and challenging in your context? Are there any clarifications, suggestions, or comments to report on the structure presented?

Relevant to Part Two:

2. List the possible avenues of missionary evangelization in which your entity/conference is involved. In your entity/conference, how do you strengthen and/or enable this ministry from the charismatic identity? For example, concerning youth culture and the digital continent; parishes/sanctuaries; in the world of health, education, culture and science, etc.? Cite Order or Church documents to support your responses/reflections.

3. How can you strengthen Franciscan missionary evangelization in these dimensions in your context, e.g., silent witness of life that renews our presences, presence and proclamation among and with the poor our teachers, presence in post-secularized and post-Christian environments, presence and dialogue between Christians and non-Christians, mission for reconciliation and peace, co-responsibility in mission with the laity and with the Franciscan Family? If possible, cite Order or Church documents to support your responses/reflections.

4. How should you witness, proclaim, and do your mission as Friars Minor in your realities? What do you want to appeal to challenge the world fraternity for a “renewed impetus” to carry out a “distinctively Franciscan” evangelizing mission?

How do you witness the Gospel in an entity or a fraternity of elderly or “burned out” brothers?² In addition to the Conference responses to these questions, the Secretaries were asked to prepare a presentation on current evangelizing mission activities and contexts for their Conferences.

² This question is not relevant to topics in the proposed structure of the REO but was added to the questions with the idea that the topic addressed may be included in the final draft.

The Meeting

On the first day of the meeting the General Secretary for Missions and Evangelization (GSME) welcomed the participants and presented a message from the Minister General. The Secretaries gave presentations on the evangelizing mission activities and contexts of their Conferences.

On the second day, the GSME presented the background on the REO; Johannes Freyer presented the work of the expert committee (including the draft of Part One), and the Secretaries presented the reports on the questionnaires from the Conferences. Finally, the linguistic groups met to discern what important points and considerations for the drafting the document emerged from the presentations and to present their findings to the larger group.

On the third day, the linguistic groups discussed in detail the questionnaire responses to questions 1 and 2 above. Again, the groups reported what emerged for them as particularly important for the REO.

On the fourth day, the linguistic groups discussed in detail the questionnaire responses to questions 3, 4, and 5 above. The groups reported what emerged for them as particularly important for the REO. Then the groups summarized and discussed the overall responses from the Conferences. The groups were also asked to submit recommendations for next steps that might be taken by the Secretariat for Mission and Evangelization to further the work evangelization or formation in evangelizing mission. The business of the meeting concluded with final comments from the GSME and a discussion of the next steps for the development of the REO.

The Results of the Meeting

According to the results of the questionnaires and the discussions of them by CIME-CEME, it was determined that the following *general topics* should be included in the REO:

1. younger generations (as forming in some way a “culture” of their own)
2. social media/digital continent
3. marginalized members of the Church (embracing, inclusion, retention)
4. collaboration with Franciscan family, local Church, and lay people
5. the disaffiliated, the unchurched Church
6. formation at all levels, but especially ongoing (context of ME)
7. collaboration with animating structures of our Order (secretariates, offices, etc.)
8. inculturation (many different cultures, different worldviews, including young and digital culture; includes some of the groups above; learning to speak of the Gospel in language people understand)
9. missionary evangelization in areas where Christians are persecuted or a minority in hostile contexts
10. testimony of fraternal life/avoidance of individualistic ministry
11. promoting identity and vocation of missionary evangelization for all friars; emphasize that one goal of the document is to inspire an evangelizing identity among all the friars
12. protection of minors and vulnerable adults
13. common understanding of new forms of evangelization
14. centrality of Eucharist, popular devotions, Christian spirituality, etc.

15. clarify why we are using the term “evangelizing mission”³
16. pastoral conversion
17. centrality of following Jesus Christ

Attention should be paid to the following *avenues of evangelizing mission*:

1. Youth and vocation ministry
2. Parish and sanctuary ministry
3. Colleges, schools and universities
4. Health and Sanitation: Care of the sick.
5. New forms of presence, life and evangelization, such as fraternity in popular or rural environments
6. Accompaniment through spiritual direction or assistance of the Secular Franciscans, as well as in house of prayer and hermitages
7. Direct service to the poor; attention to migrants and refugees
8. Interreligious and ecumenical dialogue
9. Special ministries (substance abuse, prison, marginalized groups, war trauma, military, etc.).
10. JPIC efforts to promote social, political, or economic well-being
11. Digital continent (social media) and other forms of mass media

Questionnaires and discussion indicated that the following might be suggested as ways to strengthen our *Franciscan charismatic identity as evangelizing missionaries*:

1. Attention to our life of prayer and fraternal charity
2. Fraternal projects of life and service (fraternal, provincial, interprovincial)
3. Formation in the Franciscan charism by, for example, offering Franciscan curricula in schools; publications, retreats, and other forms of adult formation
4. Develop common projects of evangelization with other members of the Franciscan family, including YUFRA, SFO, and the Poor Clares
5. Articulate guidelines regarding our behavior in the wider world, particularly in the digital world (social media)

Regarding the *care and evangelization of brothers who are struggling, or elder brothers*, the following recommendations were made:

1. Help prepare brothers to age
2. Encourage a ministry of prayer
3. Help elder brothers to see themselves as important and inspiration members of the fraternity, and treat them as such
4. Encourage elder brothers to write and share their memoirs and testimonies
5. Promote intergeneration dialogue
6. Provide professional help for elder brothers and brothers who are struggling with “burnout” or other difficulties

³ As opposed to “missionary evangelization.”

Recommendations for *next steps for the Secretariat for Mission and Evangelization* to further the work evangelization or formation in evangelizing mission:

1. GSME Secretariat animate workshops or ongoing formation programs in the different conferences regarding new forms of evangelization.
2. Commission of Parishes and Sanctuaries support formation of parish personnel in bringing various parish educational and other projects (preaching, OCIA, adult faith formation, young adult groups, religious education, etc.) into Franciscan evangelizing mission.
3. Secretariat of GSME oversee development of animating guidelines for evangelizing possibilities for digital media, including policies regarding public digital presence of friars.
4. Secretariat of GSME develop animation guidelines for processes and procedures in the recruitment, acceptance, and formation and accompaniment of missionaries *ad gentes*.

In his concluding remarks, Francisco reviewed the mandate of the General Chapter of 2021 to develop the REO and some guidelines for developing it. He also the presented several aspects of the present work of the SME, including:

1. Developing the REO
2. Regarding new forms of presence, life, and evangelization, there have been meetings for unions of Conferences, the union of Conferences of Europe, Latin America, and Africa. Next year there will be a meeting with the two Conferences of Asia, and also the United States and Canada.
3. A commission for the parishes is updating the 2009 document “Sent to Evangelize in Fraternity and Minority in the Parish.”
4. A commission for evangelization in schools is updating the 2009 document “Go and Teach: General Guidelines for Franciscan Education.”
5. Animating or searching for missionaries for the missions that depend on the General Minister; attending to the needs of missionary friars to develop a care for interculturalization and learning local languages. There are now missions in the Amazon, in Juba, South Sudan, Papua New Guinea, the Holy Land, Morocco, and Istanbul.
6. Developing initiatives to collaborate with JPIC entities. We are working on Mandate 28 of the General Chapter of 2021, concerning the Franciscan network of migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean and for Latin America.

The next step for developing the REO will be to convene a meeting of drafters in September 2024.