

**Homily on the occasion of the inaugural Mass of the meeting
with the General Visitors
General Curia - 8 July 2024**

We are at the beginning of our meeting of the Visitors General and the General Definitory. The purpose of this meeting is to reflect and discuss together on priorities, lines of action, processes and difficulties to be taken into account in the animation of the Friars of the Entities to be visited. In this way, it is intended to provide the information and tools necessary for a good performance of the task entrusted to the Visitors General.

Therefore, this Eucharist, celebrated on the first day of our meeting, is intended to be a supplication to the Lord God, the supreme good and the One who works all good, to grant us that these days may be fruitful.

The reading of the Book of Hosea, with recourse to the images of the bride who is seduced anew by the ever-faithful bridegroom, constitutes an invitation made by God to His people to renew fidelity to the covenant, understood as a response of love to God's love. This invitation made by the prophet reminds us that one of the fundamental objectives of the visit is the animation of the friars in their life and mission.

Let us remember that, in the mind of St. Francis, one of the main tasks of the Minister is to visit the brothers. Aware of the importance of this, he wrote in the Rule: "*The brethren who are ministers and servants of the other brethren, visit them, admonish them, and correct them with humility and charity*" (Rb 10:1). When he himself could no longer visit the friars because of "sickness or weakness," he wanted to write letters and send messengers who would continue, in his own words, to serve and administer "*the fragrant words*" of the Lord (2 Acts 2-3).

Therefore, in line with the words of the prophet Hosea and in harmony with the teachings of St. Francis, the visit to the friars implies, in the first place, the task of evangelizing, that is, of transmitting the fragrant words of the Lord, encouraging the brothers in the visit, to grow in the knowledge of their spiritual identity, fraternal and missionary in the here and now that they have to live.

Brother Visitors, just as Hosea brings to the memory of the people of Israel the depth of God's love, so you too, always open to the experience of this love, bear witness to the beauty of our vocation in the midst of our Brothers. In this way, in the face of the greatness of such love and the beauty of such a call, each friar must be invited to honestly recognize the quality of his response to God and of the fraternity in which he lives, without closing his eyes to the contradictions that may be preventing him from living his vocation with fidelity and authenticity.

Finally, in harmony with Jesus' invitation in the Gospel to give to God what is God's, to that God who, as Psalm 24 says, "*belongs to the world and all its inhabitants*", let us renew our commitment to restore by word and deed all the good that the Lord does in us and through us.

Dear Brothers, let us ask the Lord who makes us sharers through the Eucharist in his eternal and merciful love, that the example and intercession of Francis of Assisi may help us to live the ideal of fraternity and peace and that we may be witnesses in word and deed of His goodness, His beauty and His merciful power capable of generating a new world. Amen.

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Vicar General