



Letter to the Formators of Temporarily Professed Friars

Rome, 30th July 2026

Prot. 115595 (FS 113/26)

To all Formators of Temporarily Professed Friars

Dear Brother,

May the Lord give you peace!

With hearts full of gratitude for the service you render and for the dedication with which you accompany the brothers entrusted to your care, we wish to reach out to you through this letter, continuing the journey that, over the past few years, has led us to reflect together on the various stages of formation within the Order. Having already shared a number of reflections with the Provincial Ministers and Custodes, the Secretaries for Formation and Studies, those responsible for ongoing formation, vocation promoters, and the formators involved in the initial stages of formation, we now feel the need to focus our attention in a particular way on the period of temporary profession.

This is not merely an intermediate stage, but a time of great importance, during which the brother is called to strengthen his response to the Lord, to allow himself to be shaped ever more deeply by the Gospel form of Franciscan life, and to develop a personal synthesis of fraternal life, the following of Christ, and mission. It is a time in which the vocation, received as a gift, must gradually be embraced and lived as a daily responsibility within the concrete realities of life and relationships. Temporarily professed friars need guidance towards fidelity and perseverance, together with help in discovering that the centre of their lives is to be found not in themselves but in Christ.

Biblical Icon

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them: "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' And if anyone there shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the labourer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and its people



welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God has come near to you.'"¹

Saint Luke's Gospel presents us with a scene of profound spiritual and pastoral significance: "The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two..." This is not simply an episode in the life of Jesus, but a true icon of the life of every disciple.

The first striking feature is that Jesus appoints and sends. The call does not arise from personal initiative but from election. The disciple is chosen, called by name, and sent forth. The friar in temporary profession also lives within this same dynamic: he has not given himself his vocation; rather, he has received it as a gift, and continues to receive it day by day.

Being sent "two by two" is not an incidental detail. It indicates that mission is born from fraternity and is lived within fraternity. The disciple is never alone and never self-sufficient. He always belongs to a relationship, a bond, a communion that precedes him and sustains him. This has a direct consequence for formation: what is being formed is not an isolated individual but a brother within a fraternity.

Jesus then adds: "The harvest is plentiful." Even before sending them out, he educates the disciples' way of seeing. He does not send them to solve a problem but to recognise a work that God has already begun. The world is not, first and foremost, a place of absence but a place where God is already present. The brother in formation needs to acquire this contemplative gaze, capable of recognising the signs of the Kingdom already present in history.

Jesus then invites them to pray: "Ask the Lord of the harvest." Mission is born of prayer and remains rooted in it. Without this foundation, even the most generous commitment risks becoming empty. For this reason, the time of formation must be deeply marked by prayer, not as something added on, but as the very breath of life.

The instructions that follow are demanding: "*I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves... Carry no purse, no bag...*" The disciple is called to embrace a life of evangelical vulnerability. He does not rely on human securities but entrusts himself confidently to God's hands. He does not seek to dominate reality but to journey through it in trust. Here we find a profound harmony with Franciscan minority.

The first action Jesus asks of his disciples is striking in its simplicity: "*Say, 'Peace to this house!'*" Mission begins with a greeting, with a presence that brings blessing. It is not about conquering but about offering; not about imposing but about proposing. Peace is both the first gift and the first criterion of mission.

Finally, the mission takes shape in ordinary, everyday gestures: entering people's homes, sharing their table, caring for the sick and proclaiming the Kingdom. The disciple does not live apart from reality but is immersed in it. Mission is made up of relationships, closeness and shared life.

This Gospel icon reminds us that formation can never be separated from mission. The disciples learn as they walk, grow by living, and mature by being sent. In the same way, friars in temporary profession are called to allow themselves to be formed precisely within the experience of mission.

¹ Luke 10,1-9.



A Franciscan Reading

Saint Francis recognised in this evangelical way of life the very heart of his vocation. In the *Earlier Rule*, Chapter XVI, we find a particularly significant passage:

"The brothers who go among the Saracens and other non-believers may conduct themselves spiritually among them in two ways. One way is not to engage in arguments or disputes, but to be subject to every human creature for God's sake and to acknowledge that they are Christians. The other way is that, when they see that it pleases the Lord, they should proclaim the Word of God..."²

Read in its entirety, this passage reveals remarkable interior freedom and profound spiritual wisdom. Francis does not propose a rigid method but an evangelical attitude: to live among people with humility, free from every desire to dominate, while always remaining ready to proclaim the Gospel whenever prompted by the Holy Spirit.

This is the very same dynamic that we find in the disciples sent by Jesus: a presence that precedes words, a witness that prepares the way for proclamation. The friar is called to live among people not as a stranger but as a brother, sharing their lives, bringing peace and allowing himself to be touched by their wounds.

Thomas of Celano describes the first brothers in precisely this way: men who "went through the world" in simplicity, possessing nothing of their own, trusting in divine providence, and proclaiming the Gospel more by the witness of their lives than by their words.³ They went out together and returned together, sharing what they had experienced and supporting one another.

The *Ratio Formationis Franciscanae* states that formation is directed towards following Christ, poor and crucified, and towards service in mission,⁴ and that it is a lifelong process involving the whole person.⁵ Within this process there is a need for spiritual accompaniment. Clearly, this responsibility already belongs to the formators, but it may also be exercised by other members of the fraternity or by a personal spiritual director. The process of formation must also include careful attention to the physical and psychological well-being of those in formation, and formators should know when it is appropriate to seek the assistance of qualified professionals. The dignity of every brother and his right to professional confidentiality must always be respected.

The *Ratio* also emphasises that formation is experiential and takes place within fraternity and within the realities of everyday life.⁶ This means that a brother is formed not for mission first and then sent, but within mission itself and through it.

This period should constitute a serious preparation for Solemn Profession. The journey of each brother should be regularly reviewed by the *coetus formatorum*, the Secretariat for Formation and Studies, and the Provincial Definitory, so that discernment regarding his growth becomes a shared responsibility of all the competent bodies. Such evaluation should not focus solely on discipline or academic achievement, but on the integral growth of the whole person.⁷

² *Rnb* XVI,5-7; FF 43.

³ Cf. *1Cel* 39-41; FF 387-393.

⁴ Cf. *RFF* 3.

⁵ Cf. *RFF* 2.

⁶ Cf. *RFF* 43; 47.

⁷ Cf. *RFF* 215.



Fraternity as the True Womb of Formation

If the disciples are sent out two by two, then fraternity is not merely the setting for formation but the very place where the Gospel is learned and lived.

Friars in temporary profession need to be genuinely integrated into the life of the fraternity. Mere physical presence or formal participation is not enough. They should be able to share fully in every aspect of community life: prayer, work, meals, recreation, difficulties and responsibilities. For this reason, it is advisable that the number of temporarily professed friars in a local fraternity should not greatly exceed the number of solemnly professed friars. A proper balance should always be maintained.

Common prayer becomes the school in which brothers learn to stand before God together. Shared meals become moments of simple yet genuine communion, where fraternal relationships are built and strengthened. Recreation and leisure, experienced together by solemnly and temporarily professed friars alike, foster that spirit of familiarity which enables a fraternity truly to become a home.

Everyday life itself, with its ordinary responsibilities, possesses profound formative value. It is there that brothers learn minority, service, patience and mutual acceptance.

The relationship that you, as formator, cultivate with your Guardian is of fundamental importance. By observing your relationship, temporarily professed friars learn what fraternity means, what obedience means, and what it means to have a Guardian.

Throughout the Order we are witnessing the growth in the number of interprovincial and international houses of formation for temporarily professed friars. In such fraternities, the community of solemnly professed friars should be composed of brothers drawn from all the Entities involved. In this way responsibility for formation is truly shared, while the temporarily professed friars retain a living bond with their own Entity. This shared responsibility among the participating Entities should be clearly regulated in the Statutes governing the interprovincial house of formation.

The *Ratio Formationis Franciscanae* reminds us that fraternity is a "privileged place of encounter with God"⁸ and constitutes the network of relationships within which each brother grows.⁹ Without this concrete experience, formation risks remaining merely theoretical.

Fraternity and Mission: Experiences that Transform

Authentic fraternity never closes in upon itself but opens naturally to mission. Temporarily professed friars should be given the opportunity to engage in concrete experiences of evangelisation and service, through which they can gradually assume genuine responsibility.

Particular importance should be given to encounters with the poor and those on the margins of society. These are not optional activities but privileged places where the Gospel becomes visible and where the heart of the brother is transformed. The *Ratio* reminds us that friars are called to live among the poor and to share in their condition.¹⁰

⁸ RFF 17.

⁹ Cf. RFF 55.

¹⁰ Cf. RFF 25.



If these experiences are truly to become formative, they must be of sufficient duration. A few weeks are not enough. A brother needs time to enter into a particular reality, to learn, to make mistakes, to grow, and gradually to assume responsibility.

In this respect, the experience commonly known as the "Franciscan Year" has proved highly fruitful in various parts of the Order. It allows for genuine immersion in fraternal and missionary life, enabling the brother to move from simply observing to taking personal responsibility. Such periods should be carefully prepared and, whenever possible, adapted to the needs and gifts of each brother. Those responsible for mission and evangelisation, together with the animators of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC), should also take part in this preparation. The programme for this year should be approved by the Entity, and each temporarily professed friar should be entrusted to a suitable mentor who can accompany him throughout the experience.

To this end, we encourage all the Entities of the Order that have not yet done so to give serious consideration, through a process of careful discernment, to introducing a year of more intensive fraternal and missionary experience during the period of temporary profession. Since many of our temporarily professed friars pursue their academic studies at non-Franciscan institutions, this period could also include courses in Franciscan studies (Franciscan history, philosophy, theology, spirituality and thought),¹¹ enabling them to deepen the themes first introduced during the novitiate.

Intellectual Formation and the Unity of the Vocation

Alongside experiential formation, a sound intellectual formation is equally essential. The *Ratio* reminds us that study is an integral component of formation¹² because it enables the brother to deepen his faith, engage in dialogue with the contemporary world, and serve others more effectively.

At the same time, careful attention should be given to preparing those brothers who are called to ordained ministry, as well as to the formation of lay brothers for their own specific responsibilities and ministries. Nevertheless, it is essential to preserve the fundamental unity of formation.

We are all Friars Minor. We all share the same vocation. Differences in ministry must never become divisions of identity. For this reason, a common programme of formation should be maintained, complemented by personal accompaniment capable of respecting the gifts and vocation proper to each brother.

In this regard, we wish to recall the words of the Final Document of the International Meeting of Lay Brothers, held in Assisi in 2025: "As a standard across the order, all brothers in simple profession are to undertake Franciscan studies together, while in formation for ministry throughout the year and also in summer programs, weeklong studies programs, or by online courses among shared entities. This will be done in ways and through means that are appropriate for the context of our entities around the world. This formation is to include Franciscan identity, fraternal living, vocation of lay and ordained brothers, and evangelization according to our new *Ratio evangelizationis*."

The same document also states that it is necessary to "clarify the identity and vocation of the lay brother in the Franciscan tradition as one of the true expressions of being "brother" in minority, humility, and fraternity, helping all brothers value their distinct roles while affirming the shared

¹¹ Cf. *RFF* 210; *RS* 148.

¹² Cf. *RFF* 53.



mission, whether lay brother or ordained brother, and renewing our common vocation to live the Gospel together."

Conclusion

Dear Brother, your ministry is both precious and demanding. Accompanying brothers during this stage of their lives requires time, patience, the ability to listen, and genuine discernment. At times, you will be called upon to mediate between the temporarily professed friars and the solemnly professed brothers of your fraternity, and this will call for considerable wisdom and creativity.

There will be moments of consolation and moments of difficulty. There will be times of evident progress and others when little seems to change. You will not always see the fruits of your work immediately.

Yet it is precisely along this journey that God's work becomes manifest. You are called to cooperate faithfully and humbly with the Lord. Every act of care, every word of encouragement, and every moment shared in fraternity contributes to the shaping of a brother's heart.

Do not lose heart. The Lord continues to work, even when his action remains hidden from our eyes. Remain yourself within the Gospel dynamic: rooted in fraternity, sustained by prayer, and open to mission.

The sending of the disciples reminds us that Franciscan life is a life both received and given away, lived in fraternity and always open to mission.

Our temporarily professed friars are called to grow within this same dynamic, so that they may become authentic brothers and credible witnesses to the Gospel.

On behalf of the Minister General and his Definitory, we also entrust your ministry and the journey of these brothers to the intercession of the Immaculate Virgin Mary and our Seraphic Father Saint Francis, that they may teach us to live with simplicity, joy and fidelity.

Faternally,



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