



# ORDO FRATRUM MINORUM

## MINISTER GENERALIS

Curia Generale dei Frati Minori (OFM) Via S. Maria Mediatrix 25, 00165 Roma - Italia

Tel. +39.06.684919 - Fax. +39.06.632247 - eMail: [mingen@ofm.org](mailto:mingen@ofm.org)

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Rome, 27 September 2021

*Memorial of St Vincent de Paul, contemplative in charity*

To the Presidents of the Federations of the Sisters of the Order of St Clare

**Re:** Process of revision of the General Constitutions of the Order of St Clare

Dear Sisters,

*May the Lord give you peace!*

I am happy to write to you again in the first months of my service as a brother and minister of the Order of Friars Minor. I know that as such, I have a particular call to have special care and concern for you, following the express will of St Francis.

In this spirit, I am writing this letter to you at the beginning of the Novena to the Poverello on a crucial and delicate subject. It touches your life at its charismatic, ecclesial and concrete heart in this change of time. It also touches us, friars, because I am firmly convinced that the quality of the sisters' evangelical life sustains and motivates ours as friars, and vice versa. The same applies to the loss of zest, which affects us too.

The current text of your Constitutions dates back to 1985 and was approved in 1988. It has performed a valuable service, especially in giving ever-greater unity of inspiration and fundamental life choices to the Poor Clares scattered throughout the world, historically characterised by great diversity in living according to the same Rule. In particular, the current text has helped deepen your charismatic identity through contact with the Writings and spiritual theology of our Mother St Clare. Thus, after the centenary of 1993, we were able to deepen our understanding of them in a new way, reaching a knowledge that had never been possible in history. A true grace that enriches us greatly in our search for and development of a charismatically meaningful life!

The recent interventions of the Church on the life of cloistered nuns, the Apostolic Constitution *Vultum Dei quærere* (2016) and the Instruction *Cor orans* (2018) call for a revision of the text of the Constitutions considering the indications they contain. At the same time, it seems to me that the possibility of expressing the text in a language more attentive to today's concerns and bearing in mind the journey made in these almost forty years is opening up. I am mindful that this is a tremendous and demanding task and, at the same time, a very delicate one. I am partly aware of the differences in sensitivity and approach to the charism and how it is incarnated in the different areas of the world. So often, in the same Federations, we find various positions and choices. With the inevitable tensions it brings, I believe that this diversity cannot leave us standing still. We are called together, brothers and sisters, to stop, pray, reflect, reread the various facts. We must look for ways to achieve a text that reflects today's reality; that can express in a new way the perennial charismatic gift, which the Spirit has given to the Church through St Clare and so many sisters, who over the centuries, with many differences, have lived out her inspiration. I have reflected and prayed on this proposal, and I believe that the Spirit is asking us to do so today.

Therefore, dear Sisters and Mothers, I come to you to humbly ask you to embrace together in docility to the Spirit the invitation to revise and rewrite the text that helps you interpret and live St Clare's Rule today so that you can express the ongoing vitality of your charism.

We all know that it takes a lot of commitment and mediation skills. I know that there will be inevitable tensions and differences in views and methodologies. There may also be difficulties in listening and appreciating different experiences; certainly, intercultural dialogue will not be easy. In these forty years, the Order has grown in new areas, cultures and languages of the world. We cannot be worshippers of ashes, however sacred, but women and men capable of welcoming the newness that the Spirit sows around us and in us, so we will not cling to forms, gestures, symbols and methods of the past, nor will we seek novelty at all costs. We know that only the Spirit frees us and makes all things new; for this reason, he wants to infuse a renewed breath into our form of life. And is not the docile openness to his holy operation the ripest fruit of an authentic life of seeking the Lord's face in the highest poverty and holy unity? I believe it is worth it, with confidence, humility and boldness.

This letter announces the desire to revise the text of your Constitutions under my responsibilities as Minister General in virtue of the Rule of St Clare Chapter 1 and the Constitutions art. 121, to promote the process and accompany it with discretion through the Office *Pro Monialibus*. I personally undertake to follow the process and support it according to my responsibilities and with full respect for your autonomy. At the end of the process, I will present the new text to the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life for approval. I have already been able to speak with the Prefect, who is encouraging this necessary journey with fatherly closeness. The General Definitory has also been informed and is in agreement.

Dear Mother Presidents, the new General Delegate, Brother Fabio César Gomes of the Province of the Immaculate in Brazil, will be present in Rome after mid-November. Then we can begin our work with him, starting with the consultation to form an international commission that will call upon the Presidents, their Councils and the Sisters in the Monasteries at various levels to collaborate. In the past, at the official level, the commission was composed only of religious Assistants while making effective use of the sisters' work. Thanks to the new technological means, we will study ways to involve more people in this work.

I have spoken to you with candour and deep fraternal affection: I believe this is the spirit in which the work we are beginning will bear fruit according to God's heart. Let us ask the Lord to purify any other spirit, different, divisive, of opposition, of fear, without fearing it, because the Spirit of the Lord is greater. May the Lord help us seek together what pleases Him and achieve it according to the common good.

I wish you a glorious feast of our Holy Father St Francis, a true lover and imitator of Christ, who with our Mother St. Clare continually reminds us that the Gospel is the heart and passion of our life. I bless you and greet you fraternally,

Your brother and servant



*Fr. Massimo Fusarelli OFM*

Br Massimo Fusarelli, OFM  
*Minister General*

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