Order of Friars Minor

«Let us begin, Brothers!»

(*1Cel* 103)

OFM GUIDELINES FOR THE SEXENNIUM 2021-2027

Rome 2021

Presentation

Dear brothers, *May the Lord give you peace!*

The General Chapter asked us to *renew our vision* and *embrace our future*. The General Definitory has begun to reflect on how to launch this invitation and let it develop among the friars, Entities and Conferences. It is a significant task, and it is essential to take the right path. For this reason, it seemed appropriate to us in this time that the Church is facing in today's world to propose a synodal journey to the whole Order. We strongly feel the urgency of encouraging mutual listening among us friars, also involving others.

For this reason, after discerning with the General Definitory and the Curia animation offices, while I present the Guidelines for the sexennium 2021-2027, **I hereby announce a Chapter of Mats to be celebrated in 2025**.
The preparation will begin in January 2022 and will be discussed with the Presidents of the Conferences in May 2022. It will then continue at the various levels of the Order among us friars and with those with whom we share the charism in many ways and also with people who remain on the margins of the Church.

We trust that this path will help us to have the elements necessary to *renew our vision* and *embrace our future*. Not alone, but together with others. In this way, we feel we are responding to a call of the Spirit to our family, to embrace our identity as a *contemplative fraternity in mission*, in a renewed and prophetic way in this time.
I am sure that this itinerary, which is new for us, will help us to broaden our vision and prepare ourselves in a renewed way for the 2027 General Chapter.

I entrust this journey to the Virgin of listening and to the presence among us of our least brother, St Francis, to his little plant, St Clare, and to the many brothers and sisters who have preceded us in the steps of following Christ.

I greet you with the living hope of a new stage in our journey.

Fraternally

SIG. MINISTRI GEN. LIS TOTIUS ORD. FRATR. MINORUM

Br. Massimo Fusarelli, OFM
Minister general and servant

Rome, 8 December 2021
Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Guidelines 2021-2027

1. ***In the beginning, faith***

Where to start again, dear brothers? First of all, we want to focus on what lies at the foundation of our being Christians and, therefore, our being friars: faith.

This reminder at the beginning of these guidelines is not surprising. None of us can take faith for granted. It asks us to recognise and welcome every day the presence of the God of Jesus Christ, who speaks to us in our personal lives and in the history we live.

It seems to us that we all need such a return to the foundation of faith: we can always start from there, from those gifts of faith, hope and charity that the Spirit of the Lord arouses in us, together with every other holy operation. Therefore, let us be open to his action that regenerates and sustains us: only with his transforming power will we be able to accept the invitations that the General Chapter has addressed to us.

2. An *invitation to gratitude*, from which everything starts fresher and newer because we become aware of the great gifts God has given us and feel the need to respond joyfully, offering our whole lives in thanksgiving.

An *invitation to renew our vision*, letting faith transform our view of the world and history. It enables us to prophetically grasp the signs and words that God is addressing to us today, in this world of ours, without contenting ourselves with wearily repeating the past.

It is an *invitation to conversion and penance*, which we so badly need, asking for the grace of practical choices that will transform and renew whatever in us, in our fraternities and our environments, allows itself to be dominated by the "spirit of the flesh".

An *invitation to mission and evangelisation*, which is an essential part of the evangelical way of life we have embraced: following the Lord Jesus who came to proclaim the good news to the poor and deliverance to prisoners.

It is an *invitation to embrace our future*, the one the Lord is giving us, not the one we desire, in the certainty that God's dreams are better

than ours. His plans bring full life and peace, that peace which Francis proclaimed and which sometimes, by grace, we also experience in our lives.

3. These guidelines will offer all of us, Friars Minor, an overall vision of the direction we want to take in the next six years. It will include a careful look at what the world is experiencing, at the Church's indications and insights, at the ever-inspiring fruitfulness of our charism, transmitted to us by Francis and Clare of Assisi and by so many of our brothers and sisters over eight centuries.

In these guidelines, you will find *only* a global view and, therefore, necessarily somewhat generic: more detailed indications will come in their own time. But we believe it is good to announce the directions of the next journey immediately so that each entity, in the coming years, can harmonise its specific formation path with the guidelines of the Order.

4. ***A synodal journey***

The next few years will be marked for the whole Church by the synodal journey that has just begun. We Friars Minor are also living in this environment. For this reason, we want to launch a synodal journey that involves us friars and the sisters and brothers we meet every day. This synodal journey is deeply rooted in our identity as lesser brothers, a *contemplative fraternity in mission*. It seemed to us that the Chapter of Mats belongs to our tradition and responds well to the need to have an open space for mutual listening in this time of the Church.

For this reason, we want all the proposals that follow to be part of this global view, in a process made up of different steps, lived in a fraternal collaborative manner and focused on an important event, which we want to announce immediately: a *Chapter of Mats* that will be celebrated in 2025. The preparation and its celebration are intended to encourage us, friars, to listen to one another. Firstly, to those who share our charism and mission, but also to those who remain on the margins of the Church and our fraternity.

The first step in this mutual listening will take place in the Conferences, to which we will send a request in January to draw up reflections and proposals that the Presidents can share at their meeting next May. The synodal journey must start from the grassroots. This listening will lead to proposals for all interested parties, which will be sent and presented in due course over a four-year period.

5. *Two levels*

Within this synodal context, in the coming years, the animation proposal of the Order will move on two levels: on the one hand, the centenary commemoration of the last years of the life of Francis of Assisi (1223-1226/2023-2026), and on the other hand the proposals for animation and formation indicated by the General Chapter.

6. *The Franciscan Centenary through the Centenaries*

We will recall some significant events of the last years of the life of Francis: in 2023, the approval of the *Later Rule* and the Christmas of Greccio; in 2024, the stigmata; in 2025, the *Canticle of Brother Sun* and in 2026, his blessed Transitus.

Each year some lines of inspiration will be indicated to live out the great gift of the Franciscan form of life today, not only for us but for the contemporary world. These proposals, for all the friars and each Entity, will be formulated by a Commission of the entire Franciscan Family, which intends to celebrate this centenary together, in a perspective of fraternal deepening of the common charism for our time.

7. *The indications of the 2021 General Chapter*

The Chapter formulated several requests, which we summarise in six areas of work. In some of them, each friar will be personally involved; in others, some will not be directly engaged, but it is helpful for all to have a brief overview of our commitment in the coming years.

8. ***Formation for a renewed identity as friars minor***

One issue that needs to be addressed is our fraternity's makeup, formed of lay and clerical brothers: we want to rediscover our common fundamental identity as *brothers*.

To this end, the GSFS will evaluate the path of initial formation proposed in the various entities. In addition, each Conference will be asked to organise a conference of lay brothers. Finally, the results of these area conferences will feed into an international gathering of lay friars to be held in 2025 in synergy with the Chapter of Mats.

The theme of studies will also be the focus of the GSFS, which will continue to accompany the path of renewal and redevelopment of the Pontifical Antonianum University towards the possibility of a Franciscan University, which by 2023 will hold an International Convention of OFM Study Centres.

These initiatives are in complete harmony with the synodal journey.

9. ***Mission and evangelisation***

The Chapter decided that a *Ratio evangelizationis* be formulated for our Order. The GSME will involve all the Entities of the Order in drafting this Ratio. We want this text to be born from the life and reflection of all and together animate and revitalise our evangelisation.

For its part, the GSME has begun to rethink its mission and structure to better animate missionary evangelisation today. The areas of pastoral care in education, parishes, sanctuaries and ecumenical and interreligious dialogue will also be the object of renewed attention.

10. ***Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults***

An *Office for the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults* has been established to work in close collaboration with the *International Commission for Safeguarding*. The office's objective will not only be the handling of cases of abuse but the development of prevention programmes in view of a "distinctively Franciscan culture" of protection and safeguarding in all our entities.

11. ***Fraternal economy***

The Chapter asked that the economic management of the Order grow in a spirit of fraternal economy, emphasising solidarity and co-responsibility. To this end, by 2023, Conferences or groups of Conferences will organise Conferences for Ministers/Custodes and Provincial/Custodial Bursars. These conferences will also offer tools to increase good practice in economic management. This practical area of our life also touches on the synodal journey we have begun.

12. ***Justice, peace and the integrity of creation***

The JPIC Office will offer proposals to continue the initiatives of the *Laudato si' Revolution* and the proposed *JPIC Training Centre*, which offers online formation opportunities in some areas: integral ecology, migration, human rights, digital evangelisation, conflict resolution, project management. In addition, the JPIC Office will strive to develop the *Franciscan Mediterranean Network* and the Latin American *Franciscan Migrant Network*, involving the Entities concerned.

13. ***Structures of the Order***

The Chapter asked for a comprehensive review of the structures for the functioning of the Curia and the Order, starting to simplify them and make them more versatile, at the service of the universal fraternity. A Commission has already been appointed for this purpose and has begun its work. In particular, a complete revision of the current structure of the Conferences was requested. The General Definitory wants to accompany the Conferences in their growth and decline. In the spirit of the synodal path, we want to be present in a lively and effective way in a rapidly changing world.

14. ***Conclusion***

The path ahead of us is complex and demanding, but at the same time, fascinating and exciting. The Spirit of the Lord and his holy operation are our strength, which animates and sustains us.

The poor Francis set out along the paths of the world to bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus with a few companions. We, too, are present today in the five continents to continue that journey and live as brothers and minors, at the service of the Kingdom of God and all humanity.

Let us begin again, brothers, to serve the Lord!

TIMELINE 2021-2027

2021

- 29.11.2021 in Greccio – Announcement of Franciscan Centenary of centenaries

2022

- January – sending of the synodal journey forms to the Conferences
- May – Meeting of Conference Presidents to launch the synodal journey
- Sending of the Centenary Celebration Booklet to all the friars
- Meetings on Fraternal Economy (for Conferences and/or groups of Conferences)

2023 > Centenary of the Rule and Christmas of Greccio

- Meetings on Fraternal Economy (for Conferences and/or groups of Conferences)
- International Convention OFM Study Centres
- Meetings of the Conferences with the General Definitory in the synodal journey

2024 > Centenary of the Stigmata

- Meetings of lay friars (by Conferences)
- Meetings of the Conferences with the General Definitory in the synodal journey

2025 Holy Year > Centenary of the Canticle and the friars' arrival in Mexico

- International meeting of lay friars
- Chapter of Mats, the culmination of the synodal journey

2026 > Centenary of the transitus of St Francis

- International Conference of studies on Franciscan biographies of the last century

2027 > GENERAL CHAPTER

Order of Friars Minor
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