



CHAPTER OF MATS

Pentecost Homily

Assisi, 8 June 2025

In the first draft of the Rule of Life that he wrote for the friars, St Francis of Assisi requested that the Order's ministers meet at least once every three years for a Chapter meeting, on the Feast of Pentecost, at the Church of Santa Maria della Porziuncola.

By doing so, he intended for the Order's most important governing body, the Chapter, to convene under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in the presence of Mary, the mother of Jesus and our mother, whom St. Francis also referred to as the 'spouse of the Holy Spirit'.

Dear brothers and sisters, today, we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost with joy, celebrating the Coming of the Holy Spirit in the House of St. Mary of the Angels.

As we know, the Church's liturgy is not merely commemoration or a reference to past events; it is lively participation in the mysteries of our salvation. Through the sacraments and this Eucharist, God the Father, in his Son who died and rose again for us, fills us with his blessings and infuses the gift of the Holy Spirit into our hearts that encompasses all of God's gifts.

Brothers and sisters, today we pray for the whole Church and the whole world, and for the outpouring of the Spirit. May we recall the impetuous wind mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, which reminds us of God's breath that gave life to man in Paradise. May we also remember the strong wind that blew on the night of the exodus of God's people from Egypt, dividing the waters of the Red Sea and leading the Israelites from slavery to freedom. It is the same wind that the prophet Ezekiel recognised in his vision as the Spirit of God, restoring life and hope to a hopeless people represented by a pile of dry bones. Therefore, let us invoke the creative, liberating and transforming power of the Spirit for the Church, the universal sacrament of salvation, and for the whole of humanity. May the Spirit break down the walls of sin and pride, stifle hatred, selfishness and falsehood, and bring about peace, reconciliation, justice and love for humanity.

Pentecost appropriately marks the conclusion and fulfilment of the great Feast of Easter, which began fifty days ago. Today, Christ's Easter is realised in the Pentecost liturgy because it was necessary for every believer to participate in the mystery of the resurrection of the Son of God. Every human being must experience death to sin and be born again as a child of God, and this is only possible through the Holy Spirit.

In this Eucharist, 150 people from different parts of the world and different cultures are present, speaking a variety of languages. We are Franciscan friars, but we are also accompanied by a significant number of religious sisters and lay people who collaborate with us in our mission to spread the Gospel in the various countries where we are present. This week, during the Pentecost novena, we have gathered here near the Porziuncola to listen to one another, engage





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in dialogue and discern in a synodal spirit about our life and mission today. In this way, we can truly be a prophetic sign for our world.

We wanted to call this meeting the 'Chapter of Mats', in memory of the chapters that St. Francis and his brothers periodically celebrated here at the Church of St. Mary of the Angels to discuss and make decisions about their lives and missions. One of these chapters is known as the 'Chapter of Mats' because it was one of the last in which all the friars of the Order participated. There were so many of them — several thousand — that they had to be housed in huts made of mats around the small church of the Virgin.

Through this Eucharistic celebration, we wish to thank God for all the blessings we have received during these days of prayer, reflection, dialogue, discernment, and joyful communion. As St. Francis wrote at the end of his life, we too can joyfully say today: 'The Lord gave me brothers and the Lord gave me sisters'.

Biographers recount that, after making decisions about the future of the Order, most of the friars returned to their provinces at the end of their chapters. However, some groups were sent to different parts of the world, to various cultural and religious contexts, to proclaim the Gospel.

Today, on the day of Pentecost, we are all invited to renew our response to the Lord, who sends us out into the world — our cloister, as St Francis said — to proclaim the Gospel. Just as the Virgin Mary was able to conceive and give birth to the Saviour of the world by opening her heart unreservedly to the Holy Spirit, so too can we show the world the face of Christ by rejecting the acts of the flesh spoken of in the Letter to the Romans.

Therefore, as a Church, we renew our commitment today to proclaiming the wonders of God, just as the Apostles did on the day of Pentecost. Let us go to our families, our workplaces, our places of study and leisure and our communities. Let us pay particular attention to those in greatest need: the suffering, the forgotten and those who have fallen. Let us be like St. Francis and be signs of hope, prophets of communion and peace.

May the Spirit of the Lord accompany us.

Have a good mission, everyone!

Br. Ignacio Ceja Jimenez, OFM

Vicario generale

