

INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS

LIVING ACCORDING TO THE FORM OF THE HOLY GOSPEL



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Coppo di Marcovaldo (attr.),
St. Francis and scenes from his life,
Florence, Basilica di Santa Croce

(Photo C. Giusti - Archive of the Opera of Santa Croce)

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

1. Documents of Vatican II

AG	Ad Gentes
DV	Dei Verbum
GS	Gaudium et Spes
LG	Lumen Gentium
PC	Perfectae Caritatis
PO	Presbyterorum Ordinis

2. Magisterial Documents of the Catholic Church

AL	FRANCIS, <i>Amoris Laetitia</i> , <i>Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortatio</i> , March 19, 2016.
SAFC	CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, <i>Starting Afresh from Christ</i> , May 19, 2002.
CVer	BENEDICT XVI, <i>Caritas in Veritate</i> , <i>Encyclical Letter</i> , June 29, 2009.
CCC	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i> .
CIC	<i>Code of Canon Law (Codex Iuris Canonici)</i> , January 25, 1983.
ICF	CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, <i>Inter-Institute Collaboration for Formation</i> , December 8, 1998.

Economy	CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, <i>Economy in the Service of Charism and Mission. Boni dispensatores multiformis gratiae Dei</i> . Guidelines, January 6, 2018.
EN	PAUL VI, <i>Evangelii nuntiandi, Apostolic Exhortation</i> , December 8, 1975.
EG	FRANCIS, <i>Evangelii Gaudium, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortatio</i> , November 24, 2013.
DC	BENEDICT XVI, <i>Deus caritas est, Encyclical letter</i> , December 25, 2005.
GEx	FRANCIS, <i>Gaudete et Exsultate. On the call to holiness in today's world, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortatio</i> , March 19, 2018.
Justice	JPIC COMMISSION, <i>A Formation Itinerary for a Prophetic Religious Life. Guide us in your justice (Ps 5,9)</i> , Città di Castello 2010.
LS	FRANCIS, <i>Laudato Si. On Care for our Common Home, Encyclical letter</i> , Mai 24, 2015.
NMI	JOHN PAUL II, <i>Novo millennio ineunte, Apostolic Letter</i> , January 26, 2001.
PdV	JOHN PAUL II, <i>Pastores dabo vobis, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortatio</i> , March 25, 1992.
PI	SACRED CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, <i>Potissimum institutioni</i> , Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes, 1990.
RF2016	CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, <i>The Gift of the Priestly Vocation. Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis</i> , December 8, 2016.

VC	JOHN PAUL II, <i>apostolic exhortation Vita consecrata</i> , March 25, 1996.
VG	FRANCIS, <i>Veritatis Gaudium. On Ecclesistical Universities and Faculties</i> , <i>Apostolic Constitution</i> , December 27, 2017.
FLC	CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, <i>Fraternal Life in Community</i> , 1994.
NewWine	CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, <i>New Wine in new Wineskins. The Consecrated life and its ongoing Challenges since Vatican II</i> . Guidelines, January 3, 2017.

3. The Writing of Saint Francis

Adm	<i>Admonitions.</i>
AC	<i>The Assisi Compilation.</i>
AP	<i>The anonymous of Perugia.</i>
BIL	<i>Blessing of Brother Leo.</i>
CtC	<i>Canticle of Brother Sun</i> , 1225.
3LAg	CLARE OF ASSISI, <i>Third Letter to Agnes of Prague</i> .
4LAg	CLARE OF ASSISI, <i>Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague</i> .
ER	<i>Earlier Rule</i> , 1221.
ExhP	<i>Exhortation to the Praise of God.</i>
1LtF	<i>First Letter to the Faithful.</i>

LBL	<i>Letter to Brother Leo.</i>
LR	<i>The Later Rule</i> (with papal seal), 1223.
LtAnt	<i>Letter to Brother Anthony.</i>
LMin	<i>Letter to Minister.</i>
OfP	<i>Office of the Passion.</i>
PrCr	<i>The Prayer before the Crucifix.</i>
PrG	<i>Praises of God</i> , 1224.
SalBVM	<i>Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.</i>
SalV	<i>Second Letter to the Faithful.</i>
Test	<i>Testament</i> , 1226.
TPJ	<i>True and Perfect Joy.</i>

4. The Hagiography of Saint Francis of Assisi

2Cel	THOMAS OF CELANO, <i>vida segunda</i> .
SCom	<i>Sacrum commercium sancti francisci cum domina paupertate.</i>
1C	THOMAS OF CELANO, <i>The Life of Saint Francis</i> .
AP	<i>The Anonymous of Perugia.</i>
LMj	SAINT BONAVENTURE, <i>Major Legend</i> .
L3C	<i>Legend of the Three Companions.</i>
MO	<i>Mirror of Perfection</i> (longer version).
ScEx	<i>The Sacred Exchange between Saint Francis and Lady Poverty.</i>

5. Documents of the Order

FrCh	JOHN CORRIVEAU, Circular Letter 9: <i>On Our Fraternal Charism</i> , 1996.
EBr	JOHN CORRIVEAU, Circular Letter 11: <i>Evangelical Brotherhood</i> , 1997.
POT	JOHN CORRIVEAU, Circular Letter 16: <i>The Poor – Our Teachers</i> , 1999.
GBCW	JOHN CORRIVEAU, Circular Letter 20: <i>Gospel Brotherhood in a Changing World</i> , 2002.
Const	<i>Constitutions of the Order of Capuchin Lesser Brothers</i> .
Post2004	Convention on Post-Novitiate, final document, 2004 in <i>Analecta Ofmcap</i> 120 (2004) 1015-1026.
GUW	MAURO JÖHRI, Circular Letter 8: <i>Get Up and Walk</i> , 2010.
FFCh	MAURO JÖHRI, Circular Letter 4: <i>Let us Fan the Flame of our Charism</i> , 2009.
MHO	MAURO JÖHRI, Circular Letter 5: <i>Mission at the Heart of the Order</i> , 2009.
JöhriIdent	MAURO JÖHRI, Circular Letter, <i>Friars Minor Capuchin: their Identity and sense of belonging</i> , October 4, 2014.
JöhriGift	MAURO JÖHRI, Circular Letter, <i>The Indispensable Gift of Lay Brothers for our Order</i> , April 5, 2015.
JöhriPrayer	MAURO JÖHRI, Circular Letter, <i>Saint Francis of Asissi: a man transformed in prayer</i> , October 4, 2016.

6. Plenary Councils of the Order

I PCO	First Plenary Council of the Order, Quito, 1971.
II PCO	Second Plenary Council of the Order, Taizé, 1973.
III PCO	Third Plenary Council of the Order, Mattli, 1978.
IV PCO	Fourth Plenary Council of the Order, Rome, 1981.
V PCO	Fifth Plenary Council of the Order, Garibaldi, 1986.
VI PCO	Sixth Plenary Council of the Order, Assisi, 1998.
VII PCO	Seventh Plenary Council of the Order, Assisi, 2004.
VIII CPO	Eighth Plenary Council of the Order, Rome, 2016.

7. Holy Scripture

1 Cor	<i>First Letter to the Corinthians.</i>
1Jn	<i>First Letter of John.</i>
1Pt	<i>First Letter of Peter.</i>
2Cor	<i>Second Letter to the Corinthians.</i>
Col	<i>Letter to the Colossians.</i>
Eph	<i>Letter to the Ephesians.</i>
Gal	<i>Letter to the Galatians.</i>
Heb	<i>Letter to the Hebrews.</i>
Jn	<i>Gospel of John.</i>
Lk	<i>Gospel of Luke.</i>
Mk	<i>Gospel of Mark.</i>
Mt	<i>Gospel of Matthew.</i>

Phil	<i>Letter to the Philippians.</i>
Rom	<i>Letter to the Romans.</i>
Rv	<i>Book of Revelation.</i>



PRESENTATION

And after the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel. And I had this written down simply and in a few words and the Lord Pope confirmed it for me. And those who came to receive life gave whatever they had to the poor and were content with one tunic, patched inside and out, with a cord and short trousers. We desired nothing more (Test 14-17).

“Jesus in his heart, Jesus on his mouth, Jesus in his ears, Jesus in his eyes, Jesus in his hands.” (1Cel 115). Having the same feelings of Jesus according to the style of St. Francis is the ultimate and fundamental criterion of our entire formation program. **Formation** consists in **con-forming** to the form of life of the Holy Gospel, an authentic path to holiness.

1. OBJECTIVE

The *Ratio Formationis* has as its ultimate goal to strengthen, throughout the formation process, our unique charismatic identity; that is, the values shared and accepted by all, which in turn are embodied in distinct cultural contexts. Only the general principles are presented of formation are presented in the Ratio. It is the responsibility of each circumscription to develop its formative projects in the light of these general principles.

2. STRUCTURE

The text is divided into three chapters and three annexes. The first chapter intertwines the history of Francis with ours, holding in the background the life of Jesus, who illumines and **inspires charismatically** the present and the future of our formation.

The second chapter presents the five constitutive dimensions of the entire *RF* from an ecclesial point of view. Every formative process must **integrate**, in a balanced way, the five dimensions that shape us: human, spiritual, intellectual, professional, etc. These dimensions, taking into account the basic principles of Franciscan Anthropology, and its cultural and charismatic values, allow us to discover the specificity of our vocation and form of life.

The third chapter introduces the dimensions, in a progressive and in-

itiatory form, of the different formation stages. **The nature** of each stage, **the objectives**—marked by a strong Christological accent—to be achieved, **the dimensions**—with a special emphasis on the Franciscan proprium, and the **specific times** and **the criteria** for discernment are therefore presented. Furthermore, the following themes of particular interest are inserted: **work**, in harmony with the concerns of our Order expressed in the VIII PCO; the **economy**, driven by the learning of skills that allow a fraternal and transparent management of money; **justice, peace and ecology**, following the recommendations of Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, as well as the indications of the recent JPIC manual of our Order; and **new information and communication technologies**, which are connected with most of the anthropological changes that are occurring in our world.

The *RF* concludes with three attachments that monographically deal with the issues of culture, academic study and human maturity, especially in terms of sexual and affective concerns.

3. STYLE

Chapter I presents the figure of St. Francis with a poetic language so that, through its universal and symbolic character, it can inspire our form of life in varying cultural contexts. For its part, Chapter II, having the most pedagogical contents, uses a more *exhortative* language, reserving a more *normative* and *proactive* language only to chapter III and in the annexes.

An *RF* for the whole Order should not excessively use a normative language style; for this reason, intentionally, beginning with a narratively sober and sufficiently dense text, a certain tension is maintained among the norm, the exhortation, the proposal and the desire, so as to respect the natural tension among the general proposals of a Ratio and the concrete proposals of a *local formation program*.

4. METODOLOGY

The expression *text on a journey* is the one that best expresses the intention to use a dynamic and participatory methodology. Through various channels we have collected proposals, suggestions and insights from all the brothers. It is therefore a collective text, incomplete and open to successive phases of elaboration of a definitive document.

Rather than saying what needs to be done, we offer a text that orients and helps us to discover the sensitivity and the current trends in the field of formation and to provide paths that can be meaningful and authentic in today's world. It is therefore necessary to avoid the ideological principles that prevent reflection from having reality as its point of departure and arrival.

5. READING KEYS

Christological: The protagonist is Jesus. The sense of **following** is the background from which the life of St. Francis is interpreted and with which we build our identity.

Anthropological: Franciscan anthropology is dynamic and positive, converting the **relational-experiential** reality into its fundamental interpretive category.

Franciscan: the relational category makes **fraternity** the appropriate space for the growth and integration of our identity and our charism. From freedom and responsibility, our personal and fraternal life must be built with authenticity.

Capuchin: **Sobriety** is the category that best defines the Capuchin interpretation of reality, where simplicity becomes the way of searching for the essential. The concept of reform belongs to our charism, understood as an existential need for continuous updating and renewal.

We invite you to a fraternal, attentive, critical and proactive reading.



FRANCIS, OUR BROTHER

The Lord granted Brother Francis the grace to begin to do penance by leading him among lepers. He showed mercy to them and after hearing the voice of the crucified Lord at San Damiano he embarked upon the gospel life in order to follow in the footsteps of Christ, with a burning desire to pattern his life upon Him in everything. In this way, true love of Christ transformed the lover into the image of the Beloved (Const 3,1).

1. It is only by living that we learn to live. Our experiences and encounters along the way are what constantly shape our identity in a dynamic manner. To build up the person we are is an exciting challenge, and not without difficulties. But we have a model, Jesus, who by walking the paths of our humanity discovered His own divinity: the Son, by becoming our brother, reveals our ultimate and final goal: to be brothers, only to become, at last, sons and daughters of God as well. Brotherhood is the way. Francis was so fascinated by the humanity and humility of God the Most High, who in Jesus makes himself poor and crucified, that he made the *Gospel our form of life*: to be brothers, in order to be more human, like Jesus, and to tell the story through the authenticity of our life lived in brotherhood.

TestCI 1-5

Cf. LtOrd 28;
Adm 1,16;
1Cel 84,115;
2Cel 211;
L3C 2; LMj 9,2
Cf. Test 14-15

I. SILENCE

*O God, sublime and glorious,
come and enlighten the darkness of my heart;
give me an honest faith, a firm hope and a perfect love,
that I may know your holy will, obey it,
and not go astray (PrCr 1-3).*

2. Oh the bliss of those who listen to silence: their eyes fill with light, their steps head straight for the depths of the heart. Let silence touch us, and we enter into deeper kinship with the world, open ourselves to peace, and live a more authentic life.

In silence we glimpse the presence of the Mystery, and learn that, if we are to allow Him to meet us, it is necessary to search for oneself, taking care of that inner space which goes beyond the limits of the superficial, and makes fruitful relationships with others possible: in them we also discover who we are. Silence is

Cf. 1Cel 6,10,
71,91;
LMj 5,6;
AP 56; MO 55

the source of desire, of dialogue and beauty, and, when it turns into contemplation, is the opportunity to welcome the gentle whisper of the voice of God¹.

1Re 19:3-15

I.1. Meaning

3. God loves human beings into existence and invites them to live, gifting them with freedom. By so doing, God grants to humankind the capacity to be architects of their own selves. This logic of creation teaches us that living consists in taking responsibility for the journey, in shaping one's own life, trying to discover our vocation: that which the world is expecting of us, the gift the Creator gives to us. Life is a gift that makes its demands.

Cf. 1R 23,1

4. The heart of the Gospel is the form of life of Jesus, who chose not to spend his life for His own benefit, but by living for others. In Him we discover that life consists in the art of the encounter. Jesus, by opening Himself to God and becoming an open door to encountering others, teaches us the Christian paradox: that to possess life, we must surrender it.

Phil 2,6-11
2LAg 19-20

Jn 12:24-25

5. Who would not wish to be a great knight? In his youth, Francis dreamt of nothing else: of being the greatest, the most powerful, the most admired. He seemed to have all the answers, until one day he was confronted by war, and experienced suffering and the shadow of death. The dream turned into a nightmare. He was taken prisoner in the battle of Collestrada and, imprisoned in Perugia, he discovered that the world was not what he thought it was. After his prison experience came sickness and crisis, when nothing made sense any more: he sees nothing but conflicts and enemies, fragments of a broken world. He feels lost.

Cf. 1Cel 3;
L3C 4; 2Cel 4

1 Cf. P. D'ORS, *Biography of silence. An Essay on Meditation*, Parallax Press, Berkeley 2108.

6. When things become meaningless, life fills with fears that take us over and prevent us from knowing who we are. Then, feelings arise which we never knew before, casting a cloud over the way ahead: the anxious search for power, the desire to compete, the temptation to exclude others. Meaninglessness turns to loneliness, and loneliness to egoism, preventing us from seeing who we are. However, deep in the core of every human being, like an ever-beating heart, lies the desire for God².

Cf. 2LtF 63-71

I.2. The search

7. A person discovers who he or she is when they launch out and start walking. Itinerancy (movement outward and inward, contact with other people, other cultures and ideas) is part of the deepest core of the human condition. It is this attitude that keeps us alert against conformity and compromise; from these God protects us by enticing us with the gift of a life that is open and always new.

Gen 12:1

Cf. 2R 6:1-3

8. To follow Jesus means to live as He lived: always on the way, proclaiming the reign of God. This model of itinerant life keeps us rooted on what is fundamental. Our Franciscan tradition invites us to follow the poor and naked Christ, and to discover that His poverty frees us from the superfluous, that His nakedness leads us into the mystery of truth.

Cf. ER 9,1;
LR 6,2

9. The life of Francis is full of questions: why do people kill one another? Why is there poverty and exclusion? Why suffering? On the way to Apulia, on his second attempt to become a knight, he is awakened by a dream: *Whom do you wish to serve, the servant or the Master?* Francis understands that anyone running away from himself never finds himself. He has to abandon

2 Cf. A. GESCHÉ, *Le sens (Dieu pour penser VII)*, Le Cerf, Paris 2003.

his armour, come off the high horse of his pride, be taken for a coward and a failure, and start again. It would take him a lifetime to unravel the meaning of that dream in Spoleto.

Cf. AP 6;
L3C 6; 2Cel 6

10. To live means always starting all over again. The horizon remains open, to remind us that the meaning of life is built up, step by step, that the road is covered in tracks that disclose a part of the mystery. What we have to do is search with a passion, and walk on trustingly.

I.3. Mystery

11. Mystery is the part of reality that is never exhausted. Behind and beyond what we see, there is so much more. Humanity has failed in its attempt to reduce existence to the powers of its own reason. In the same way, faith is not exempt from the danger of constructing idolatrous images of a god made to the measure of our needs³.

12. To avoid falling into this temptation it is necessary to confront our experience with Jesus' experience of God. This is what we find in the Gospel: the encounters, the words and the silence through which Jesus enters the depths of the mystery of God. In Him He discovers a love that is unconditional, free and always open.

13. Not without pain, Francis has to let go of his former images of God. He must leave behind the god who turns strong men into knights, who justifies the power of a few, who annihilates those who think differently, who incites hatred for the enemy. It is then that he experiences the dark night of loneliness and the absence of God. In the silence and through creatures, Francis begins to sense the presence of the Creator.

Cf. 2Cel 7;
L3C 6

3 Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Fides et Ratio*, 1998.

I. 4. Beauty

14. Human beings are naturally attracted to everything beautiful, because encountering beauty helps to overcome the experience of fragmentation. The beauty of the world opens us to a relationship of interdependence, which makes us brothers to all. There is nothing superficial about this: contact with real beauty enables us to know who we are and what we are doing in life.

Cf. Itinerarium 2,8

15. If we look carefully, we see how the Gospel also speaks to us of Jesus' relationship with creatures: in them, He finds a place where He can contemplate God. Jesus' discovery of the beauty of the world — the harmony of beings, their absolute dependence on God — helps Him construct a fraternal way of being together with everything that exists. The form of life lived by Jesus -- His authenticity, His inner freedom, His ever-open hands, His eyes full of mercy and tenderness -- is beauty in all its fullness. His is the most beautiful life⁴.

Cf. 1Cel 22;
L3C 25; AP 11;
L3C 29
Cf. 1Cel 80-82;
2Cel 165;
LMj 8,6

16. Francis, reader of the Gospel, is also a reader of creation. In the pages of the Book of Life, he reads of God's desire to enter into relationship with every creature. In each one of them he discovers the different ways in which God becomes present, and, together with them, becomes a fascinated witness of God the Creator, whom he addresses with the words: *You are beauty*.

PrG 4. 5

II. THE ENCOUNTER

*Let no-one leave you without first having seen
your eyes filled with mercy (LMin 9).*

17. No man is an island. God has created us unique and unrepeatable, but not self-sufficient. Individualism (the tempta-

Gen 2:18.20

⁴ Cf. T. SPDILIK – K. I. RUPNIK., *Teología de la evangelización desde la belleza*, BAC, Madrid 2013.

tion to reduce reality to one's own personal vision) destroys our capacity for relationship and hinders true personal fulfilment, by turning the other person into an object of self-affirmation and domination. Interdependence requires that we recognise others as different, and that we welcome them as gifts that enrich us. Without free and open relationships, life lacks meaning, since it is in discovering "otherness" that our own identity is constructed.

Encounters are the most important experiences in the life of Francis. Nothing happens by chance; rather, everything happens at specific times and places: while searching for the way, Francis is led to the peripheries of Assisi. Outside the city walls, in the little hermitage of San Damiano, he can hear the Word more clearly and, on the strength of it, is enabled to go out to encounter the lepers and follow the poor, naked Christ.

L3C 1-35

II.1. The Word

18. In the Gospel, Francis finds his way of life. He invents nothing, but discovers that the issue is to live as Jesus lived: *The Most High Himself revealed to me that I was to live according to the form of the Holy Gospel*. Jesus, as an itinerant preacher, proclaims the good news of the Kingdom: the free love of God that excludes no-one. To be precise, the Gospel —the book that recounts the encounters in Jesus' life, most of them with poor, sick and out-cast people — proposes that we build our lives around this capacity to encounter others. The Beatitudes and the invitation to mercy sum up perfectly the type of encounter with the world to which Jesus calls us.

Test 14

Mt 5:3-12

Mt 9:10-13

19. For Francis, the Gospel suffices, he lives *in and on* the Scriptures and makes his home in them, as in a house for us who are

2Cel 104;
LMj 11,1

disciples of Jesus this is the vital frame of reference and discernment. He becomes present among us each time we remember His Word, and when we try to live our lives in the light of His words. Francis himself, in love with the words of Jesus, alerts his brothers to the temptation to overlay the Master's unadorned and simple word, and invites us to live evangelically and *sine glossa*.

Cf. Test 38-39

20. In Francis we see not a deaf hearer of the Gospel, but a man who tries to live whatever he hears. From him we learn that the word of God is only understood in depth when it is put into practice; that to live centred on the word generates a new style of relationship: brotherhood. To live as brothers is the mirror of the values of the Kingdom, its most beautiful proclamation, the most genuine form of sharing the desire for God. To welcome diversity in a brotherly way constitutes the most credible way of contemplating and telling the story of our God, who makes himself a "lesser brother" in the mystery of the incarnation of the Son⁵.

1Cel 22

Cf. 1Cel 38;
LMj 6,5

II.2. The leper

21. To take the risk of being present with the heart, inside the human misery of another: this is the dynamic of mercy. Some war wounds would leave their mark on the emotional memory of Francis until the end of his life. The gentle gaze of God's mercy helped him to know, to welcome and to integrate his own wounds and shadow side. Only one who has experienced mercy can show mercy. This is something that completely changes our ways of relating to others: from accusation and judgement lead-

⁵ Cf. D. DOZZI, *Così dice il Signore. Il vangelo negli scritti di San Francesco*, EDB, Bologna 2000.

ing to guilt, we are led to empathy and understanding, inviting us to responsibility. For Francis, sharing the life of lepers was a school in the true sense. From that moment, the free gift of mercy became the foundation of the new project of evangelical living inspired by God Himself.

Cf. 1Cel 17;
3LC 11

22. *It seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body.* For a long time, Francis feels insecure in the presence of lepers, and protects himself: up go the walls, he keeps his distance, he hides. It wasn't a fear of physical contagion, but something more profound, it was fear of sharing the same fate as the lepers: fear of not being accepted, of being excluded, of having no rights, of not being known or loved by anyone. Being invisible: being nothing and nobody.

Test 2-3

23. Francis kisses the leper - although we should really say, allows himself to be kissed. It was not just an act of sheer will-power to overcome his repugnance. His kiss was the expression of a sincere emotional experience, which eventually drove out all fear and transformed his whole emotional universe. Everything starts to take on new meaning: bitterness becomes sweet, a transition takes place, from needing to be recognised by others to having a good knowledge of oneself. Thanks to the lepers, Francis begins to know himself and experiences the meaning of gratuitous giving. To kiss the Gospel and to kiss the leper are the same thing; listening to the words of Jesus and hearing the cry rising from the flesh of those who suffer, are the same thing: it is always Jesus who is speaking, and who kisses⁶.

Mt 25:31-46
1Cel 17; 2Cel 9;
L3C 11; LMj 1,5

6 Cf. F. ACCROCA, *Tutto cominciò tra i lebbrosi. Gli inizi dell'avventura spirituale di Francesco d'Assisi*, Porziuncola, Assisi 2014.

24. Among the lepers, far from all false security, true interior security arises. Here is the evangelical paradox: the less the power, the greater the freedom. Where there is nothing to lose, real security is born, as a gift freely given. Here Francis learns another decisive lesson that was to leave its mark on his life and on that of his brothers: the incompatibility between brotherhood and power. Anyone who wants to be a lesser brother must give up any kind of dominion.

Mc, 10:42-45
Cf. ER 3,9; 6,3;
16,6;
SalV 16-18;
2LtF 47

II.3. The Son, poor and naked, has made Himself our brother

25. Jesus, naked and crucified, lives at the half-ruined hermitage of San Damiano, surrounded by the lepers, awakening closeness and solidarity in those who contemplate Him. This is no judge who judges and condemns, this is a brother who shares our trials. *He was born poor, lives more poorly and dies utterly poor and naked on the cross.* He does not keep his Sonship for Himself; on the contrary, He makes himself our brother, showing us that brotherhood is the best way to discover God.

Cf. 2Cel 10;
L3C 3; LMj 2,1;
L3C 13

Test 45

Phil 2:6

26. Francis wants to follow Jesus more closely, traversing every stage of His life, step by step, from Greccio (the Bethlehem experience) to La Verna (the Calvary experience). Discipleship, following the Master, is always at the centre: *He was always with Jesus! Jesus in his heart, Jesus on his lips, Jesus in his ears, Jesus in his eyes, Jesus in his hands, he bore Jesus always in his whole body.*

Cf. 1Cel 84-87;
LMj 107
Cf. 1Cel 94-96;
2Cel 217;
L3C 69-70;
LMj 13, 1-3
1Cel 115

27. Love, not sin, is the heart of the mystery of the incarnation. The Most High and All-Powerful presents himself to us, mysteriously, as the Lowest, divested of all power. God is total self-giving, absolute surrender. He keeps nothing back for Himself. The cross, the *Tree of Life*, recalls the commitment of Jesus to justice and to the excluded: so far does he identify with them that he

Cf. OfP 7,9
LtOrd 28-29

ends up like them: hanging from a tree, like a criminal outside the city. His life and death make it clear that God is no part of a system that excludes anyone. This is the lesson of the Resurrection: it is the final, definitive word of love that God speaks concerning the life of Jesus. This was how Francis understood it⁷.

Gal 3:13

II.4. The birds and the flowers

28. The big obstacle in the way of our following Jesus is the fear that consists in bringing into the present something we think could happen to us in the future, thus preventing us from moving forward. The opposite of fear is trust, the serene and joyful affirmation of the present that moves us onward towards whatever must happen. *Look at the birds of the air... Look at the lilies of the field, see how they grow.* Birds (symbols of freedom) and flowers (images of providence) are put forward by Jesus as models of the trustful disciple, who feels supported by God's loving kindness and tries to live each moment in depth.

Mk 10:32

Mt 6:26

Mt 6:28

29. In Francis, a new way of being holy is revealed to us. He falls in love with flowers, holds conversations with the birds and has close encounters with creatures; among them, he feels he is one of them. To the stones of enclosed spaces he prefers the cloister of the world, filled with colourful flowers that bear witness to the beauty of the Creator, and with the music of the birds that sing for God's glory. Tired of the empty speeches of experience, Francis learns a new language from the lilies and the birds, a free and gratuitous word, full of trust and inspiring absolute confidence in the Lord.

Cf. 2Cel 165;
LMj 9,1; LP 88;
MO 118
Cf. ScEx 63

Cf. 1Cel 58-61;
80-82;
2Cel 165;
L3C 20-21;
LMj 12, 3-4; 8,6

Mt 6:7-8

⁷ Cf. G. IAMMARRONE, *La cristologia francescana. Impulsi per il presente*, Messaggero, Padova 1997.

III. DESIRE

Let us desire nothing else, seek nothing else, delight and take pleasure in nothing else but our Creator (ER, 23).

30. The search for meaning awakens the world of desire. We are talking about a key that sets our whole being in motion, launching us into an encounter with reality. Desire is always clothed in concrete experiences, keeps us alert to the energy of life, and connects us to Jesus, inspiring us to share his sentiments, to be like Him. Francis, a *man of desires*, allows God to transform his desire to be a knight into an even more sublime desire: to be like Jesus.

Phil 2:5

III.1. The gaze

31. *It seemed too bitter for me to see lepers.* It is always a temptation to avert one's gaze and remain blind. Who can break the tendency we have to look only at ourselves? Conversion consists precisely in changing our way of looking at things, moving from indifference to compassion, allowing what we see to affect and transform us.

Test 1

Lk 10:30-37
Cf. Test 1-3

32. Nothing escapes God's vision: he *looks* at the poor and *hears* their cry, he turns them into the apple of His eye. Through them, God looks at us. These are the paradoxes of the Gospel: we are seen by those we do not wish to see. Only when Francis lets himself be seen by the eyes of the God of the lepers is he able to open his own eyes and learn how to look.

Ex 2:23-25

33. The Christ of San Damiano, on whose open eyes Francis rests his gaze, becomes the mirror into which Clare invites us to look. In His eyes, our eyes are filled with mercy. Something in His way of looking at us moves us from silence to listening,

3LrCl 12-13
Cf. LMin 9-11

from solitude to solidarity, from contemplation to compassion. Thus begins the process of the transformation of our desires: we start by looking at things like Jesus, and end up seeing them as He sees them. And that is not all: you end up being another Christ. And more yet: you yourself become another mirror, so that whoever sees you, sees Jesus⁸.

Cf. 4LAg 15-27

34. Contemplation invites discipleship, and discipleship invites contemplation. Both sustain the meaning of our life as brothers. Together, from the vantage point of brotherhood, we extend God's gaze over the world prophetically, denouncing injustice and becoming witnesses to the hope and joy of the Gospel.

III.2. Brotherhood

35. *The Lord gave me brothers.* It was revealed to Francis that to be able to live like Jesus, brothers are indispensable. God has created us different, unrepeatable and unique. Brotherhood does not deny individuality; on the contrary, it protects it from individualism; it does not destroy the individual, but enriches him with the gift of a broader space. Our identity as brothers can only be constructed in terms of relationship.

Test 14

36. The project of Clare and Francis consists in following Jesus as brothers and sisters, in different, complementary styles. While Francis restores the model of itinerant preaching proper to the first disciples, Clare focuses on listening to and serving Jesus, in the style of Martha and Mary in the house at Bethany⁹.

Lk 10:38-42

37. Our identity and charism are expressed in the way we live relationships. Poverty focuses us on what is fundamental, pre-

8 Cf. T. MATURA, *En oración con Francisco de Asís*, Arantzazu, Oñati 1995.

9 Cf. N. KUSTER, *Franz und Klara von Assisi. Eine doppelbiografie*, Grünewald Verlag, Ostfildern 2011.

venting material things from becoming obstacles among us: *And those who wished to adopt this life gave all that they possessed to the poor, and we desired nothing more.* All the brothers are equal: it is up to everyone to work with their hands; preaching is not the exclusive preserve of clerics; one's place of origin does not count. Brotherhood guarantees freedom and fosters gratuity in inter-personal relationships, and these require, unconditionally from all the brothers, that they renounce any kind of power. For Francis, without freedom, creativity and responsibility, no truly fraternal relationships can exist: In whatever way it seems better to you to please the Lord God and to follow his footprints and poverty, do it with the blessing of the Lord God and my obedience.

Test 16-17
Cf. 1R 7,1-9;
2R 5,1-4;
Test 20-22

LtL 3

38. The difficulties Francis encountered in fraternal relationships give credibility to the words he spoke to a brother who asked for his help: problems among brothers are not solved by escaping to a hermitage. Not to wish others to be better Christians requires that we give up demanding that the other should meet my expectations, and should behave as I would in his place. Only in this way can we open up spaces where all is gift, freeing us from the anxious need to dominate. The secret for living up to these demands lies in contemplation. It is indispensable, for in it our eyes are charged with mercy: *Let there be no brother in the world who has sinned, however much he may have sinned, who after he has looked into your eyes, would ever depart without your mercy.*

LMin 8

Cf. LMin 9

III.3. The Church

39. *And the Lord gave me such faith in churches.* The Franciscan project, with its creative fidelity and its sense of belonging on the periphery, gives the Church a new evangelical style. Our Lady of the Angels, the Portiuncula, the cradle of our Order, is

Test 4

surrounded by profound affective connotations: here were born the lesser brothers and the poor sisters; here, the brotherhood gathers around *Mary, the Virgin made church*. According to Celano, this space of meeting and rest, this memorial of the origins, was the place that Francis loved most. The Portiuncula constantly calls us back to what is small and essential, it is the model of Franciscan ecclesiology and the sacrament of a church of brothers who proclaim the good news by living in brotherhood.

Cf. 1Cel 21-22;
LMj 2,4
SalV 1

Cf. 1Cel 106

40. *In this world, I see nothing corporally of the most high Son of God, except His most holy Body and Blood.* The Church, the mystical Body of Christ, is born of the Eucharist¹⁰. It is the symbol that sums up the whole life and message of Jesus: a free and total gift of Himself. The washing of the feet, the gesture on which the Church rests, highlights its deepest meaning and vocation: service, as its specific mode of being in the world. This involves a genuine experience of love and justice, where to see and touch the Body of Jesus helps us to see and touch Him in the bodies of the poor, and in that way to unmask all counterfeit spirituality. The Eucharist is for us *the source of the Church's life: the root, the focal point and the very heart of our fraternal life.*

Test 10
LG 4

Cf. Adm 1,1-22

Const 48

41. The Church's meaning lies not in proclaiming itself to itself, but in proclaiming Jesus. The missionary dimension lies at the heart of our project: to be a Capuchin means being ready to go where no-one wants to go. Always in the style of Francis, who set out to meet the Sultan Malik Al-Kamil and to build peace through dialogue and respect. From him we learn that the Gospel is not imposed, but proposed, that mission starts from the recognition of the truth that dwells in the other person. The testimony of our life as brothers is without a doubt the most credible way of proclaiming this: *Let them not quarrel or argue*

Mt 28:18-20

Cf. 1Cel 57;
LMj 9,8

10 Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 2003.

or judge others when they go about in the world, but let them be meek, peaceful, modest, gentle and humble, speaking courteously to everyone, as is becoming.

LR, 3,10

III.4. The world

42. God has placed the world in our hands: outside of it there is no salvation. Our social, economic and cultural structures are undergoing a transformation. There are inevitable challenges: to put an end to the scandalous inequalities by which large parts of humanity are excluded; to achieve sustainable development that respects the environment; to find pathways of dialogue between different religions, so that God does not become the pretext for any kind of war; to build a society in which intercultural harmony is our greatest treasure.

43. The malfunctions and wounds of our world can only be cured by love, by fostering a culture of encounter that breaks the logic of possession and domination and forms us in the logic of the free giving of self. It is a matter of passing from the *right to be* to the *gift of being*, thus overcoming fragmentation into friends and enemies, incompatible with Franciscan spirituality, which recognises the other as a brother/sister, never as a threat¹¹.

44. Our way of understanding poverty is deeply rooted in the experience of gratuity and interdependence, which naturally favours a culture of solidarity, helping to recover the communal sense of existence. The new times require that we abandon the culture of consumerism and design new sustainable lifestyles, being aware of the fragile environment and of the life of the poor. A world without walls, without wars and without poverty is still

11 Cf. O. TODISCO, *La solidarietà nella libertà, Motivi francescani per una nuova democrazia*, Cittadella Assisi 2015.

possible. Structures must facilitate encounters between people, and never choke the creativity of our charism: what we are, not what we have, is the greatest treasure we can offer¹².

IV. THE CANTICLE

*Praise to you, my Lord, for those who forgive for love of you,
and bear infirmity and tribulation (CtC 10).*

45. How blessed are the moonlight and the sunlight. The *Canticle of the Creatures* is the background music that accompanied Francis throughout his life. Its light burst forth at the end of his days, in the darkest of nights. The poem is the symbolic expression of his profound experience of physical and spiritual suffering. In sacred language Francis expresses himself, while at the same time his words declare the harmony of the world. All is a hymn to the power, the beauty and the goodness of God. The world shows its beauty in its simplicity, creatures exist as gifts freely given, unaware of the desire to possess. Reconciliation of humanity with itself, with others, with the universe and with God: this is the Canticle, a joyful celebration of life, pardon and peace¹³.

Cf. CtC 1-14

IV.1. Blindness

46. Francis never saw the fulfilment of his dream for peace, conceived on his journey to Damietta. Crusades always end badly. On top of this sense of failure came an eye disease that finally left him completely blind: trachoma, or granular conjunctivitis,

Cf. 1Cel 98, 101;
LP 83

12 Cf. A. MAALOUF, *Disordered World: Setting a New Course for the Twenty-first Century*, Bloomsbury, New York 2011.

13 Cf. E. LECLERC, *The Canticle of Creatures: Symbols of Union; Un analysis of St. Francis of Assisi*, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1977.

which causes insufferable pain, making daylight unbearable.

Cf. 2Cel 166;
LMj 5,9; LP 86;
MO 89

To this suffering an even greater one was added: the increase in the number of brothers who were convinced that the Gospel was not enough to live by. They asked for practical guidelines for the details of their life, regulations and commentaries to cover the starkness of the Gospel.

Cf. LP 17

Francis, outwardly blind and inwardly full of shadows, finds himself subjected to a strong tension: caught between the demands of many brothers and the need to defend his original insight.

47. Despair and doubt weigh heavily on Francis' heart. He wants to see, but cannot. He does not feel strong enough, nor see clearly enough, to guide the brothers. Giving up his role as spiritual guide, he finally flees. He seeks refuge in a hermitage, far away from the brothers. Once more, as it had years before, an existential blindness overwhelms him, the shadows lengthen and the saddest thing happens: the sweetness of living in brotherhood is changed into bitterness.

Cf. 2Cel 133;
LP 11; MO 45

Cf. MO 1

48. When the temptation to turn back grows ever stronger and he feels he has lost sight of the Master's footprints, Francis returns to silence and, touched by it once more, listens to the gospel word as he had done at the beginning of his journey: Jesus invites him to divest himself totally, to trust, to be as brave as when he first began. At that moment in his life, he had one final battle to win: once more to give up his dreams of knighthood, to abandon all forms of dominion and power, and this time, for ever. The Gospel impels him to resume the only path, the only way: brotherhood¹⁴.

Cf. 1Cel 91;
LMj 13,1
Cf. 1Cel 92-92;
LMj 13,2

¹⁴ Cf. E. LECLERC, *The Wisdom of the Poor One of Assisi*, Hope Publishing, Chicago 1994.

IV.2. The wound

49. Francis does not forget that it all began with a kiss. The wounds of the lepers healed the wounds of his heart, and it was among them that he took the first steps in his vocation as a brother. Jesus too, the Master, became the disciple of a wounded woman, and learned from her the art of washing feet. This is how gratuity works: we learn to give without expecting a reward, to give for the sheer joy of giving, to give everything without reserve.

Cf. 1Cel 17;
2Cel 9; L3C 11;
LMj 2,6
Mk 14:3-9

When the tensions and conflicts among his brothers increased and his own wounds were reopened, Francis remembered the history of that kiss, and found healing there once more.

50. The wounds in the body of Francis are the marks of Jesus, the signs of his identity: love making him equal to his Beloved. The meaning is clear: when you touch people and love them, you touch and love Jesus. And He touches and loves you. Everything makes sense again. Everything – even the fragility of the brothers – is seen as grace. In his own body, wounded now like the body of Jesus, Francis puts his finger on one certain truth: one cannot live without brothers¹⁵.

Cf. 1Cel 94-96;
L3C 4;
L3C 69-709;
LMj 13,3

1Pt 2:24

IV.3. Joy

51. We are all looking for happiness: it's an inborn tendency; without it, it's impossible to live. However, there are plenty of cut-price, lightweight offers of instant happiness around. This is happiness devalued, a false joy that ends in disillusionment, frustration and sadness.

15 Cf. P. MARANESI, *La fragilità in Francesco d'Assisi. Quando lo scandalo della sofferenza diventa grazia*, Messaggero, Padova 2018.

52. In the account of *Perfect Joy*, Francis opens his heart and offers us his life's wisdom: *perfect joy does not lie in success*. It takes time to understand how profound this thought really is, because our experience seems to say the opposite: that only when we are applauded, recognised, and satisfied is it natural to feel joyful. Cf. TPJ 1-15

How should a lesser brother act when he does not feel valued by the brothers, when they consider him dispensable, when he does not feel loved by them? Francis answers with a reply that comes from the depths of his own experience. Here is true and perfect joy: if your heart is not troubled; if you persevere in your vocation to go on being a brother to all, without claiming anything as your own (even what you think you deserve), then you will have defeated the shadows of sadness, for ever¹⁶. Cf. TPJ 15

53. The origins and horizons of Franciscan joy are found in encountering Jesus. The Easter experience - the encounter with the Risen One - leads one to a life open to all. It gives us the strength not to give up on the dream of a fraternity of brothers who go about the world offering a style of relationship that is inclusive and free and is a source of freedom. In a special way, our relationship with the poor focuses us on the Gospel and lets us see that, in truth, *what we are before God, that we are, and no more*. His unconditional, faithful love is the reason for our true joy. Jn 14:6

Adm 19,2

IV.4. The Testament

54. As the end of life approaches, the awareness that God is Goodness grows: *God is Good, all Good, supremely Good, totally Good*. Even the wounds and limitations of life are part of our PrG 3

16 J.M. CHARRON, *De Narcisse à Jésus. La quête de l'identité chez François d'Assise*, Édition Paulines, Montréal 1992.

condition as creatures, and they do not obscure the awareness that everything we have lived was a free gift. Only with such trust can death become a sister.

55. Just before he dies, Francis asks for the gospel account of the washing of the feet to be read to him, and only then does he entrust his last will to his brothers: love freely given, fidelity to Poverty and obedience to the Church. He claims nothing for his own. Filled with gratitude, he gives back all he has received. There is nothing left for Sister Death to snatch away from him, since, when she goes to meet him, she finds only his body, naked on the bare earth, with the Canticle on his lips. So dies Francis: naked and singing.

Cf. 1Cel 110;
LMj 14,6

Cf. 1Cel 110;
LMj 14,6;
LP 99; MO 121

56. In the *Testament*, Francis hands on to us his memory and the most important elements of our identity. The first Capuchins tried to understand Saint Francis on the basis of that text. That was why they were called the *brothers of the Testament*. For us, the *Reform* constitutes one more element of our charism. Our fidelity consists in never growing tired of believing that the Gospel dream is possible. And in going back to the Portiuncula, together with Mary our Mother, Our Lady of the Angels, to the heart of our brotherhood, lest we ever forget that the meaning of our life is to sing as we walk. Brothers, let us begin.

Cf. 1Cel 103;
LMj 14,1



THE DIMENSIONS OF FORMATION FROM A CAPUCHIN FRANCISCAN PERSPECTIVE

Since formation tends towards the transformation of the whole person in Christ, it must be life-long, as regards both human values and the evangelical and consecrated life. Therefore, formation must involve both the actions and intentions of the whole person in its various dimensions—human, cultural, spiritual, pastoral, and professional—taking every care to foster the harmonious integration of the various aspects (Const 23,2).

RATIO
FORMATIONIS

INTRODUCTORY CONSIDERATIONS

57. The Capuchin reform dared to re-interpret the Franciscan form of life. The secret lies in going back, again and again, to Brother Francis, the *Forma Minorum*, not simply in order to repeat his experiences, but to recreate his genuine insights in new cultural contexts. Fidelity and creativity are key dispositions if we wish to follow Christ more nearly, and love Him more dearly. With the *Testament* of Francis in their memory, Capuchins set themselves the task of rediscovering a more simple, more fraternal lifestyle, in solitary places but not isolated from people, living in simple structures that do not compromise freedom, seeking silence whereby they can together listen to the Gospel Word and put it into practice at the service of the most humble¹⁷.

VC 37; PC 2

Cf. Const 5,1-5

58. Formation continues to be a priority in the Church and the Order. The post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis* (1992), in harmony with the basic areas of human growth, indicates the four dimensions which must always be present in any formation plan: the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral. Later on, another post-synodal document, *Vita consecrata* (1996), adds the charismatic, specific to formation for religious life.

PdV 43-59

VC 65

59. The charismatic dimension highlights what is specific to the form of life of each religious family, in other words, its own values, by whose diversity the Church herself is enriched. In their turn, the charismatic values, in a dynamically creative way, give their specific tone to the other dimensions. It is an ever-unfinished task, which ensures that our form of life and presence in the Church has meaning. Equally, the values of our charism are

17 Cf. A. FREGONA, *I frati cappuccini nel primo secolo 1525-1619. Approccio critico alle fonti storiche, giuridiche e letterarie più importanti*, Messaggero, Padova, 2006.

in close harmony with the great human values of love, liberty and justice, lived in a gospel perspective.

60. Bonum is the thread, drawn from our charism, that shows how all the dimensions are related. Franciscan anthropology, with its characteristic dynamism and optimism, opens the whole of the formation process, presenting a Way (*itinerarium*) in which the profound and sincere desire (*desiderium*) for goodness (*bonum*) occupies the heart's centre, inviting us to empty ourselves of everything (*paupertas*) that prevents or blocks the original goodness. Only non-appropriation can guarantee relationships that are both *free* and *freely given* (*gratis*)¹⁸.

61. The method of integration requires that all the dimensions, with their respective charismatic force, are present, in a step-by-step progression, in the different stages of the formation process. Formation for the consecrated life must always have priority, avoiding the danger that intellectual formation for ordained ministries may eventually alter the nature of our charismatic form of life.

Const 32,2

I. CHARISMATIC DIMENSION. THE GIFT OF BEING A LESSER BROTHER

*Let us refer all good to the Lord, God Almighty and Most High,
acknowledge that every good is His, and thank Him
from whom all good comes (ER 17,17).*

I.1. Our charism as gift

62. Gratuity is the very heart of what is Franciscan. We have received everything as a free gift, so that we can freely give it in

18 Cf. J. B. FREYER, *Homo viator. L'uomo alla luce della storia della salvezza. Un'antropologia teologica in prospettiva francescana*, EDB, Roma 2008.

return. The formation process helps us to recognise gratefully and to welcome responsibly the precious gift of our own life and vocation. These gifts are not given for our own benefit, but for others. Consecration calls for the gift of self, after the manner of Jesus, who gave up His life freely and generously for the good of humanity. The fraternity is the first place where we give ourselves, and where we also become responsible for the different gifts of the brothers.

Mt 10:8

Jn 10:18

FLC 54

63. The primacy of Goodness lies at the heart of the Franciscan vision of life. Our world, in God's eyes, is good. This optimism about man and creation, far from encouraging an ingenuous position in the face of the shadows and pains that humans cause and suffer, inserts us more fully into the very depths of everything that happens, and invites us to rediscover the goodness, buried by injustice, which belongs to every creature and especially to human beings. Our vocation to be brothers is realised by strengthening and spreading goodness.

Cf. Itinerarium, VI

64. To desire to live like Jesus, in a fraternity, in the midst of our world, in simplicity and joy, is to receive God's greatest gift. Brotherhood and minority are the marks of our identity: to be the brother of all without excluding anyone; to welcome as a matter of preference the smallest ones in our society; to be free in the face of all temptation to power; to be rich in emotions and sentiments; to live out a healthy tension between contemplation (the place where the desire for Goodness is forged) and mission (the place where we freely share the good things received, in solidarity). Our Capuchin form of life is a gift of God to the Church and the world.

FrCh 2

I.2. Brotherhood

65. God shows His identity in His way of relating. Goodness communicates itself through the free and freely given love between the divine persons. The Creator takes nothing to Himself as His own; on the contrary, He desires to share it with us. The Father, source of all good, offers us in His Son a model of humanity and a project for living it, and in the Holy Spirit gives us His strength and creativity by which to make it a reality. In the image and likeness of the Trinity, let us build our identity sharing the goodness we have received and establishing relationships based on love, liberty and justice.

FLC 21.25

66. Without relationships there is no brotherhood. Therefore, our first task and vocation is to become lesser brothers, in the style of Jesus, who did not cling to His condition as Son, but became the brother of all, without excluding anyone. Fraternal relationships offer us a space for human and spiritual growth, in which we learn, all together in brotherhood, to live, contemplate, study, reflect, discern and decide.

Phil 2:6

SAFC 33

I.3. Minority

67. Jesus presents us with a God who loves to make Himself small, and to reveal Himself to humble and simple folk. It is on the cross, in the mystery of God's smallness revealed, that love becomes real in an act of total expropriation and unconditional self-giving. This is the foundation of minority. This is something qualitative, not quantitative, which in turn shapes our own desires, unmasking the temptation to be great and do great things. Francis discovers in the poor and the crucified the art of building free relationships, and a new way of looking at the world

Mt 11:25

Cf. OFP 7,8-9;
ER 23,3;
Am 6,1-2

centred on what is fundamental. Moving in that same direction, the Capuchin reform managed to combine in a wonderful way simplicity in moderation with the the search for the essential.

Cf. L3C 6.8.
10; 2Cel 5.8;
LMj 1,2,6; 1,6

68. The essential always has to do with relationships. Welcome, dialogue and acceptance of diversity are indispensable if one wishes to build relationships that are transparent and inclusive in our fraternities. Minority is also openness of mind, and flexibility when faced with any cultural or religious ideology that would threaten our charismatic identity and prevents us from giving witness to our life of brotherhood and co-operation at various levels among ourselves¹⁹.

I.4. Contemplation

69. The contemplative gaze of God rests on the poor in heart, the afflicted, the dispossessed, those who hunger and thirst for justice, the merciful, the pure of heart, the peacemakers and those who suffer persecution in the cause of right. Contemplation means to desire to see things through the eyes of God, to see what others do not dare to look at. Whoever listens to God's voice prepares his ears to hear the cries of the poor. The Capuchin reform was born with a profound desire to return to the hermitages and lonely places, so favourable to an encounter with Christ poor and crucified, where silence is transformed into service and consolation for the victims of the plague, and contemplation becomes compassion.

Mt 5: 3-10

Const 15,4; 50,2

70. To contemplate together means sharing quality time and space to give thanks together for the gifts we have received. Prayer is grateful praise born of contemplation, when we discov-

19 Cf. *Addres of his Holiness Pope Francis to Franciscan of the First Order and of the Third Order Regular*, Clementine Hall, November 23, 2017.

er the goodness of God living in us. The practice of contemplation purifies and transforms our images of God until we reach the God of free self-giving, who in turn is the foundation for that gratuity with which we build our fraternal relationships. Without contemplation there is no brotherhood.

Cf. ExhP 1-17;
PrG 1-11

Mt 5:45

JöhriPreg 3

I.5. Mission

71. *Freely you have received, so give freely.* A genuinely lowly and contemplative brotherhood becomes aware of the needs and sufferings of others and opens up to search for new ways of justice, peace and care for creation. Our mission is to uncover all the good there is around us, to protect it and help it grow, and to share it, principally with those who are unjustly deprived of the goods of the earth which are common to all and meant for all.

Mt 10:8

ER 9,2

Cf. 2Cel 85-92;
LMj 8,5; 7,6;
LP 113-114; 31-34
Cf. LS 48-52

72. The life of brotherhood is the first way by which we evangelise; therefore, all that we do is an expression of the fraternity. As Capuchins we continue to be sent where no-one else wishes to go, to commit ourselves together to create oases of brotherhood in conflict zones and distant outposts: privileged spaces in which to live out the gift of gratuity.

MHO 1,7

I.6. Reform

73. The Capuchin reform is not a past historical event, it is an attitude to life that forms part of our charismatic identity. The desire to be constantly renewed invites us to look within, while avoiding nostalgia for the past, and to take on the risks involved in our journey towards an unwritten future. Faced with profound social change, the Christian response is not one of fear, enclosing us within the false security of traditionalism. On the

contrary, only faith and confidence can help us discern the road ahead. We must get up and walk, begin again, with the Gospel and the insights of Francis and Clare in our hearts.

II. THE HUMAN DIMENSION. LEARNING TO BE A BROTHER TO ALL

*What a person is before God,
that he is, and no more (Am 19, 2).*

74. Franciscan anthropology stresses the dynamic character of all creation. In its dynamism, every creature is called to attain its fullness. Identity is expressed in the act of being alive. From this fact arise the questions about who I wish to be, how do I wish to live and what values do I wish to hold. How we integrate into this world, and how we participate in the current structures of society, culture and the Church, depends on us. God creates us with the capacity and responsibility to build our own personal and institutional identity.

II.1. Positive anthropology. Human beings as *Imago Dei*

75. *Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves... God saw all He had made, and indeed it was very good.* Gn 1:26,31
Far from any kind of pessimism regarding human beings, Franciscan thought enthusiastically glimpses the goodness of every creature. We speak of original grace, meaning the goodness that God has placed in each one of us, the capacity to recognise God as the source of all Good, and in consequence, of the good that He accomplishes through each and every one of His creatures²⁰.

76. God, the Supreme Good, through the mystery of the Incarnation has made us sharers in His goodness, proposing to us

20 SAN BUENAVENTURA, *Quaest. disp. de Myst. Trinitatis*, 1, 2, concl.

His Son Jesus as our reference and model of all that is human, and as the source of all fullness: His freedom, His way of loving and His commitment to justice are for us ways to human and spiritual growth. Our formation, through a process of personalised accompaniment, provides the necessary tools by which we become men who are truly free, emotionally mature and compassionate.

77. In religious life, the way of maturation and purification of motives requires that we know ourselves, that we accept our own psycho-social reality, and requires, too, the capacity to give oneself. Jesus too, in a dynamic and free manner, built His own identity, choosing to make His fundamental choices coincide with the plan of God the Father for Him. It is a question of having the same mind as Jesus, of internalising His values). Assimilation and transformation are the final result of the formation process.

VC 65

Phil 2:4

II.2. The existential dimensions of the human person: solitude and relationship

78. One who is unable to be alone is unable to live with others. And vice-versa; because neither solitude nor brotherhood are a refuge for anyone who has difficulties with facing himself or encountering others. An inability to manage times of solitude and silence is often a source of conflicts, generally affective in nature. Interior silence and contemplative solitude make the encounter with self possible, and stimulate a capacity for critical reflection, a necessary condition for dialogue and communication with the brothers.

Cf. 1Cel
6,10,71,91;
LMj 5,6;
LP 56; MO 55

79. Individuality (*Ultimo solitudo*) and relationship constitute the foundation of Franciscan anthropology²¹. Brotherly relationships make us more human and protect us from individualism and self-sufficiency. Without liberty, there is no human dignity or healthy affective relationships. If we wish for a world of healthy affectivity, like that of Jesus, we must know our own capacities, so that we manage our feelings, emotions and desires more soundly, and direct our whole lives toward the Good.

80. Liberty frees us from everything that is an obstacle to the presence of goodness, and makes us capable of loving something other than ourselves. In the life of the fraternity, each one seeks as his priority the good of the other, since relationships are nourished by the good that God accomplishes through each brother. A critical conscience makes discernment between good and evil possible, because to refuse to take responsibility for one's own actions leads, on not a few occasions, to growth in evil and indifference²². Real goodness is shared, and is recognised by its inclusive character. We reach the point of doing good when we practice mercy and compassion. Cf. Am 8,3

81. The processes of formation for our life must give more attention to the psycho-affective and sexual dimensions. This is a rich and complex reality that permeates the whole of life and requires a multiple approach. Franciscan identity interpreted on the basis of the different cultural contexts is nourished by these elements: contemplative silence, brotherly relationships, encounters with the poor, manual work by which our bodies come into contact with the earth, a passion for the Kingdom, a commitment to

21 Cf. C. BIANCO, *Ultima solitudo. La nascita del concetto moderno di persona in Duns Scoto*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2017.

22 Cf. H. ARENDT, Eichman Eichman in Jerusalé: a Report on the Banality of Evil, Penguin Clasic, London 2006.

justice... These elements, potential areas of healthy gratification, are necessary if we are to be able to integrate positively all of our psycho-sexual energy. The cultivation of true friendship helps us to love and to freely allow ourselves to be loved.

IV CPO 52

82. A life without passion and without risk is a life that is sad and boring. Traditionally, eros translates as passion and creativity, while agape better expresses gratuity in relationships. Agape frees eros from the desire to possess and to have power, which turns persons into mere objects of pleasure in order to satisfy one's own needs. For its part, when eros is integrated and channelled, never denied or repressed, it allows agape to desire passionately: to seek God, to be like Jesus, to enjoy human relationships and friendships.

Cf ER 7,16
Cf. 2Cel 125;
LP 120f; MO 95

Cf. 1Cel 30;
L3C 41; LMj 3,7
DC 6-7

II.3. Every human being is a creature, unique and unrepeatable

83. Franciscan tradition rediscovers the value of the concrete individual. God has created us unique and unrepeatable, with different gifts and talents. Every brother is a work of art, who, exercising his personal freedom, has to discover his own capacities and the creative way in which he is to contribute them to the world.

Cf. Am 5,1-2

84. Francis presents himself as *Homo nudus*. Nudity is an image of creatureliness. To be a creature means accepting that one is poor, in order to be rich in sentiments and experiences. This requires that one lets go of one's fears and insecurities, and achieves a harmonious integration of the limitations proper to the human condition. Only when we are poor and naked, like Jesus on the cross and Francis at the hour of death, do we experience true freedom.

Cf. 1Cel 15;
2Cel 12;
LMj 2,4; L3C 20

Cf. 1Cel 110;
2Cel 214;
LMj 14, 3.6

85. *Praise to you, my Lord, for our sister bodily death.* In death, all becomes a definitive and accomplished experience. Francis accepted death with a song on his lips (*mortem cantando suscepit*, writes Celano). This is not a case of joy separated from pain. On the contrary, it is the moment in which everything becomes transparent. Life is a gift, and death is part of that immense gift. We could even call it God's last gift, because only the experience of death awakens us out of the dream of omnipotence to a life lived by someone who has emptied himself in order to be filled, once and for all, with love and liberty.

CtC 12

Cf. 1Cel 109;
LP 7; MO 123

Cf. LP 99;
MO 121

III. THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION. LEARNING TO DESIRE

Blessed is that religious who takes no pleasure and delight except in the most holy words and deeds of the Lord (Am 20, 1).

86. Human beings are constitutionally religious; the spiritual dimension opens and completes human formation. Amazement and surprise search for meaning. To be precise, the God of Christians, through His Word, comes to meet everyone who searches for Him. This Word has a real face: Jesus of Nazareth, in whom we see the true faces of God and of man.

87. The anxious need to satisfy every need immediately ends by annihilating them. To desire is an art. From the superficial we arrive at the essential, and there we find the true desires that are woven into the meaning of life. Jesus occupies the centre of our desires: to be a lesser brother consists precisely in having His sentiments and principles, His relational style, His way of understanding and living life, His capacity to direct His every desire, towards the Good.

VC 19

III.1. Francis, *Homo totus evangelicus*. The spirituality of listening

88. Francis, a living commentary on the Word of God, was never a deaf hearer of the Gospel. He resolved to follow Jesus more closely, and, through the Gospel, established a personal and affective relationship with Him that goes beyond merely intellectual knowledge or information about His words. Cf. 1Cel 22

89. Our charism is founded upon listening to the Gospel and putting it into practice. For every lesser brother, the Gospel thus becomes the *humus* of our formation: *This is the rule and life of the Lesser Brothers: to live in accordance with the form of the holy Gospel*. Francis is represented as the model of spiritual life (*forma minorum*), helping us to overcome fundamentalism on the one hand, and devotional sentimentality on the other, by placing the relational dimension at the heart of everything: a personal encounter with Jesus, alive and present in His Word. Without such an encounter there is no experience of life. LR 1,1
Cf. 2Cel 173;
LMj 9,4; LP 106
Cf. ER 22,41

90. In his Admonitions, Francis recalls that, regarding the Scriptures, there are two attitudes: *that of those who only wish to know the words and interpret them for others, and that of those who do not wish to own the word, but return it to the Most High Lord God, to Whom every Good belongs*. To appropriate the Word to ourselves and be content with mere analysis and academic knowledge prevents us from growing and opening up to the relational aspect. Conversely, the dynamic of “giving back” – giving and receiving – helps us to grow and to transform our own lives and those of our fraternities. Am 7,1-3

91. The Word of God has been entrusted to the People of God, the Church. We must insist on the centrality of the ecclesial LG 4

principle: it is the Christian community, not the individual person, which is the original setting where one *listens* to, *interprets* and *discerns* the Word. For us, the Christian community is the fraternity. Brotherly communion among those who share the dream of the Gospel is the space for discernment that best fosters human and spiritual growth. It helps each brother at the different stages of life to enter into dialogue with the surrounding world, and with his own inner world, in a dynamic process of personalisation that avoids all subjectivism.

III.2. Following Jesus: a journey of beauty and freedom

92. The religious life, like every Christian calling, is born of listening to the Word. Evangelical radicalism consists in making the Gospel one's own form of life. Only love, beauty and goodness can explain the mystery of our vocation. As followers of Christ, poor, obedient and chaste, we embark on a journey that moulds the core areas of our life, in which our identity and belonging are expressed. VC 22

93. The spirit of the Beatitudes is the natural framework for the symbolic interpretation of our consecration: blessed are those who desire and dream of having a heart that is pure (poverty), humble (obedience) and clear (chastity), because the grace of the Holy Spirit will turn obedience into a source of liberty and authenticity; will make poverty the source of justice and solidarity that gives and shares itself; and will make chastity a source of life that is fruitful, rich in affective relationships and tender sentiments. Mt 5:3-12

94. The Franciscan way of living the religious vows is an invitation to overcome any tendency to reduce poverty to materialistic considerations and the temptation to be indifferent. It opens

SAFC 24
Cf. ER 1,1;
LR 1,1;
RCI 1,1-2

up ways of seeking what is essential, and of preventing material things from becoming obstacles to our fraternal relationships. Equally, it protects us from reducing obedience to psychological considerations, and from the temptation to individualism, by creating fraternal spaces of interdependence. Finally, it alerts us to the danger of reducing chastity to biology, and to the temptation to be sad at heart, by putting forward the goal of an affective life that is open, capable of integrating solitude and bringing us closer to the poor and suffering.

Cf. FFCh 2.1

III.3. Contemplation: an invitation to discipleship

95. Formation processes that do not promote silence and interiority run the risk of underpinning a superficial spirituality. Silence enables us to hear the cries and lamentations of our world. Without silence there is no contemplative prayer. Those beginning formation for our life need to be capable of gradually giving up any images of God that prevent a truly searching and listening attitude.

96. Capuchin tradition has handed down to us various methods of mental and affective prayer. Among these the ones clearly inspired by the Bible stand out, helping one not to be a mere spectator but a true actor and protagonist living in the Word²³.

97. Franciscan contemplation has its own characteristics. As a fraternity we contemplate the poor and naked Christ, who identifies with the poor and the suffering. To contemplate, in this case, means to allow God's gaze to rest on us, to look, and allow

23 Cf. MARTIAL D'ÉTAMPES (Maître en oraison, 1575-1635), *Traité facile pour apprendre à faire l'oraison mental. Suivi de l'exercice du silence intérieur, Sources Mystiques*, Éditions du Carmel, Toulouse 2008; I. LARRAÑAGA, *Encounter. Prayer Handbook*, Médiapaul, Québec 1998.

ourselves to be looked at, to love, and let ourselves be loved, renouncing any effort to own what is contemplated. All our effort must consist in doing nothing. He is the protagonist, not us. Love is what will gradually transform us into that which we contemplate, introducing us to the pedagogy of self-donation, where all that we receive is given back to us. The fruits of contemplation are to be given back, without forgetting that in the Franciscan perspective the ultimate aim of every contemplative act is always compassion.

Cf. PrG 11

III.4. The sacramental life, devotions and holiness

98. The sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation occupy a fundamental place in our daily life. In the Eucharist, that mystery of love and justice, Jesus continues to become the Bread of Life, freely giving Himself up so as to feed our desire that we too will become bread that is given to others. At the same time, aware of the fragility of human relationships and of the tendency to appropriate, the sacrament of Reconciliation helps us to overcome all temptation to pessimism, and to place all our trust in the transforming power of love. So as not to fall into devotionism, let us avoid the individual celebration of the sacraments.

Jn 6:48-58

DC 13

Cf. 2Lf 22-24;
LOrd 30-33;
Am 1,1-22

99. Through the Liturgy of the Hours, as well as joining in the universal prayer of the Church, we are in some way united with the joys and sufferings of our world. The psalms bring together in a single voice the voices of all people: all human experiences, sentiments and emotions, from joy-filled praise to loud lament, sustained always by hope. Nothing that is human is foreign to us. The liturgical sensitivity and creativity of St Francis, along with the simple liturgical celebrations of the first Capuchins, should always be a source of inspiration and renewal.

Cf. ER 3,1-13;
LR 3,1-9;
REr 1-6

100. Holy Mary, *Daughter* of the Father, *Mother* of the Son and *Spouse* of the Holy Spirit, is the form of the Church and the model of all disciples, because she believed and put into practice the teachings of the one Master. Together with her, the spiritual wisdom of Clare and Francis is a fruitful reference point on our ongoing journey to Christ.

OfP antf 1-2

Lk 11:28

101. Even today, the ultimate purpose of our life is to become holy. The proposal to be a Capuchin, a missionary and a saint has brought many fruits of holiness to the Church. However, new sensitivities nowadays invite us to move beyond the model of the heroic sanctity of an individual, and to give greater attention to fraternal life as a source of holiness: communities made holy by their commitment to Christian discipleship and their creation of life-plans that bear fruit.

GEx 140-146

IV. THE INTELLECTUAL DIMENSION. LEARNING TO THINK WITH THE HEART

*Where there is charity and wisdom,
there is neither fear nor ignorance (Am 27,1).*

102. *Weakness of identity* is one of the characteristics of our culture. The different formation stages ought to help us build up a mindset (*forma mentis*) that feeds and sustains the different ways of giving meaning to reality (*forma vitae*): if you do not live as you think, you end up thinking about how you are living. To be precise, Franciscan thought presents a particular way of contemplating and living out the inexhaustible depths of the mystery of reality. Its starting point is philosophical and theological reflection on what Francis experienced in his own life.

103. For a Franciscan, the intellectual dimension cannot be reduced to study. On the contrary, it dynamically integrates the

other dimensions of life in a vision in which the intelligence directs the will towards love. In this process, priority is given to the affective way of coming to know reality: you only know well that which you love²⁴.

IV.1. Learning how to learn

104. For anyone choosing fraternal life, some elements are indispensable: a capacity for relationships, an open mind, tolerance and flexibility. The wisdom of life invites us to integrate our own abilities and limitations, and even to discover that mistakes are part of the way we learn. Life in brotherhood requires us to protect the gifts of the brothers, accepting the wealth of diversity and casting all fear aside.

Mt 25:25

105. Today's culture is full of anthropological challenges which call for great sensitivity in our formation, in that we must come close to the mystery of the human person, in a manner that is demanding, critical and humble at the same time. We are called to be *experts in humanity*, able to read and interpret the expectations and the fears of our contemporaries, understanding their motives, discerning their doubts, accompanying them in their sufferings, and, in a respectful dialogue, offering the wisdom of the Christian mystery.

106. The way we look at the world cannot be divorced from affectivity. Contemplation becomes a source of knowledge, bringing tenderness and hope. Only love can heal the world's wounds, while making us aware of its imbalances. It is the human being, and not human products, that must occupy centre stage, through the creation of a culture of real brotherhood, a

24 Cf. AAVV., *Teologia Francescana? Indagine storica e prospettive odierne su di una questione aperta*, Cittadella, Assisi 2010.

culture that recognizes that we need one another, and at the same trusts in the goodness of human beings and in their capacity for compassion.

EG 71

IV.2. Insight, experience, affectivity, relationship

107. The Franciscan tradition tries to overcome the duality of life and study. The mystery of the Trinity casts light on the human faculties, broadening our vision of humanity. Thus, in the memory, linked to the person of the Father, resides imagination and creativity; in the intelligence, linked to the Son, rests the capacity to reason and to search for meaning; and finally, in the will, associated with the person of the Holy Spirit, resides the capacity to desire, which is always expressed through love.

LtAnt 1-2

Itinerarium III, 5
VC 22b

108. In a dynamic and gradual way, human intelligence integrates the knowledge, abilities and aptitudes which give insight into the meaning of life, and directs the will so that desire finds that which is truly real, beautiful and just. Knowledge becomes wisdom, thanks to the senses, which introduce us into the world of experience and of the emotions: truth is only manifested in love. To live is to experience life, to construct our life, to reach fulfilment, to give of our best. We do not exist to fill ourselves with knowledge and to do many things²⁵.

109. For the Franciscan tradition, human beings are not only rational animals, they are also creatures of desire, always in contact with the God of desire. Showing someone how to think and desire correctly in a Franciscan way; knowing *what* one desires and loves, and *how* one desires. Purification of one's will and its

25 Cf. L. DE ROSA, *Della teologia della creazione all'antropologia della bellezza. Il linguaggio simbolico chiave interpretativa del pensiero di San Bonaventura da Bagnoregio*, Cittadella, Assisi 2011.

motives aims to foster lifestyles that are consistent with fraternal relationships, pastoral practices, with one's vision of the world, of the economy and of politics. All of this must be gradually incorporated into one's life, in a gradual way, in each stage of formation²⁶.

IV.3. Transforming the world together, on the basis of our poverty

110. The transforming power of reflection cannot be reduced to the sphere of individual thinking. It is the fraternity which feels, thinks, contemplates, and commits itself to action. From academic formation onwards, we must insist on the need for a methodology which favours group dynamics. In this way we learn to think together, and to overcome both a competitive or self-sufficient spirit and intellectual narcissism. At the same time, we set up interdisciplinary dialogue with other areas of knowledge. It is a matter of thinking and acting together, because knowledge is not simply intelligence, but experience and life, and life consists in relationships.

CVer 19

111. Before teaching, one must have the humility to learn. The poor became a source of wisdom for Francis. They are our teachers. If one wishes to have a real encounter between study and life, then the peripheries, those outer limits in geography or in life itself, are privileged places. Courage, passion and creativity, aided by intelligence and reason, team up with justice, solidarity, and fraternity. The biggest challenge in the contemporary world is that no human being should feel excluded.

EG 197-201

112. Intellectual formation takes as its starting point the cultural context in which one lives: family, school, rites, relationships,

26 Cf. C. E. SALTO., *La función del deseo en la vida espiritual según Buenaventura de Bagnoregio*, Antonianum, Roma 2014.

language, ways of understanding and expressing reality, etc. The first requirement is to know and love one's own culture, without turning it into an absolute or losing the ability to be critical in the face of its limitations. On the other hand, training in intercultural awareness is becoming more and more necessary. We all need to learn to accept differences, how to be in relationship with others, and to develop an affective capacity for dialogue. The task of interpreting Franciscan thought within the different cultures is a work in progress.

113. Saint Bonaventure, in the *Itinerarium*, indicates the attitudes that are necessary for anyone embarking on study and reflection in a Franciscan perspective: *Do not assume that mere reading will suffice without fervour, speculation without devotion, investigation without admiration, observation without exaltation, industry without piety, knowledge without love, understanding without humility, study without divine grace, the mirror without wisdom inspired by God.* These words are in perfect harmony with St Francis' recommendation to St Anthony, which remains valid today: *I am pleased that you teach sacred theology to the brothers, providing that, as the Rule says, you do not "extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion" during study of this kind.*

Itinerarium prolog, 4

V. THE MISSIONARY-PASTORAL DIMENSION. LEARNING TO PROCLAIM AND BUILD BROTHERHOOD

*Let them not engage in arguments or disputes,
but be subject to every human creature for God's sake,
and let them proclaim that they are Christians. (ER 16).*

114. *To live together as lesser brothers is a primary part of our Franciscan vocation,* which in turn becomes the first element of

Const 24,7

evangelisation. Brotherhood and mission are our reason to exist, and it is the quality of our relationships, not pastoral efficiency, that defines our charism and makes us genuine witnesses of the Gospel.

V.1. The Son's mission: to become our brother

115. In Jesus, the mystery of the Trinity is manifest as love and communion. God has wished, freely and gratuitously, to share His inmost life. He has chosen and predestined us to be members of His family. This is precisely what constitutes the Son's mission: to become our Brother, so that we could become sons and learn to be brothers. Eph 1:11

116. Baptism turns us into disciples and missionaries. Listening to the Word, breaking bread in the Eucharist, and contemplation of the face of Christ in the poor are the privileged places for intimacy with the Master. From this intimacy the desire for mission is born; the desire to build together the Kingdom of Heaven. EG 119-121
Cf. ER 14-16;
LR 12,1-4

V.2. Our vocation is ecclesial

117. Mission is the reason why the Church exists: it exists to evangelise. Jesus Himself, by washing the feet of the disciples, makes clear the meaning and mission of any ecclesial community: to love, wash and cure the wounds of our world. On the basis of its vocation to service, the Church is called to take flesh also in the "outer limits", creating oases of humanity and working for the common good, and to build peace. Jn 13:1-11
CVer 7

118. Saint Francis, *Vir Catholicus*²⁷, submits his life-plan to the discernment of the Church, which through its magisterium helps us to understand the beauty and the demands of the gospel life. The Church recognises that his project is not an impossible dream: to live as true brothers in the midst of the world is the most faith-filled and finest way to proclaim Jesus and His Gospel.

Test 14,15

Cf. 1Cel 33;
L3C 49;
LMj 3,9

119. The charismatic force of our Capuchin vocation, committed as it is to the mission of the Church, makes us experts in communion through the witness we give of the relationships. We are sent by the fraternity and our mission makes sense only if we remain in communion. The community aspect of pastoral work is the best antidote against activism and individualism. It also protects us from the temptation to “apostolic narcissism”, and from many other emotional pathologies, as well as the misuse of money.

VC 46

Cf. ER 16,1-4;
LR 12,1-2

V.3. Formed for Mission

120. Mission occupies a central place in the history of the Order. All the stages of formation must keep Mission in mind. A process of continuous and consistent initiation should help us to embody the values of our charism, overcome difficulties, and integrate cultural differences.

III CPO 34;
MHO 2,4

121. The formation plans of the different circumscriptions should foster the pastoral dimension, providing varied programs that take into account the gifts and talents of each brother. All the brothers must have the same rights and the same opportunities in formation. On the other hand, a balance must be sought between contents and experiences, in such a way that integral formation is assured. All pastoral experiences must be accompanied and evaluated.

²⁷ JulUff, Ant. Primi Vesperi, 1.

122. By the time they reach the end of initial formation, the brothers should have sufficient knowledge of the world, both locally and universally. They should also have acquired the necessary tools with which to discern the pastoral needs of different social and cultural environments. A lesser brother is known for his closeness and solidarity with the poor, for the appreciation and respect he has for different cultures, ethnic and religious groups; for his commitment to social justice, for the challenges of peace-building, and his support for policies that protect the ecology of the planet. LS 214-215

123. Our world is more and more multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. As a matter of urgency we need to learn our place in this new reality. It is our mission to make space for the kind of listening and dialogue that enable faith and reason to encounter one another; between believers and unbelievers, between the different Christian confessions and different religions. This calls for openness and flexibility, avoiding fundamentalism and any attitudes that prevent us from experiencing the fragment of truth present in the love that resides in others. VC 102

124. The means by which people relate and communicate are in a continuous process of transformation and change. Formation plans must give special attention to the question of how to integrate thought and action in the new digital languages. This must be done intelligently, critically and creatively. The mass media touch critical points in the world of our thoughts and feelings, helping us to share experiences, knowledge, work and entertainment. The correct use of these media according to gospel principles means that we must be alert to the risk of addiction, and to their impact on the use of free time, on fraternal relationships, on pastoral and intellectual work, etc. EG 62

125. Our life has an eschatological carácter. We are missionaries when we announce, as brothers, the Gospel of encounter and the joy of service; when we humanise the earth by creating bonds of brotherhood; when we contemplate the beauty of creation with gratitude and admiration; when we recognise the good that God continues to accomplish in every living creature; when we join in the song of Mary and proclaim the mighty deeds that the Lord is constantly performing in each one of us.

LG 46
Rv 21:4

Lk 1: 49



CHAPTER III

THE STAGES OF FORMATION IN THE CAPUCHIN FRANCISCAN PERSPECTIVE

Formation for the consecrated life is a journey of discipleship guided by the Holy Spirit leading one progressively to assimilate the sentiments of Christ, the Son of the Father, and to shape one's life according to His obedient, poor, and chaste life (Const 23,1).

RATIO
FORMATIONIS

I. OUR FORMATION: THE ART OF LEARNING TO BE LESSER BROTHERS

I.1. The new socio-cultural and ecclesial contexts

126. The fabric of the world is dynamic. Changes are ever more complex, rapid, and profound. New desires and needs, new sensibilities and new ways of relating appear at dizzying speed. The Church and the Order, in the area of formation, feel the urgency of participating in an active, critical, and creative way in this process of personal, social, cultural, and religious transformation. LS 18

Const 24,4

127. Today, more than ever, cultural is characterized by anthropological pluralism and by the challenges of technology and the digital world (*cyber-anthropology*). Being permanently connected to the internet influences our way of thinking, remembering, and communicating with one another, our way of understanding freedom, our capacity to reflect, our management of time, and the ways we express our intimacy (*liquid affective relationships*). Technology demands an attentive examination²⁸.

128. In this context of change the emotional aspect prevails over the rational; there is a subjectivism in the sense of belonging and a defense of the self over collective identity. At the same time certain values are also felt, such as respect for law, solidarity, social commitment, and the growing interest in the environment. We are in need of a new model of development that is more just and equitable, a world without borders, respectful of diversity, and able to respond to basic needs: health, education, dignified housing, drinking water, clean air, renewable energy, and a soci-

28 Cf. Z. BAUMANN, *Liquid Modernity. Living in an Age of Uncertainty*, Polity Press, Cambridge 2007.

ety that still believes that peace, the end of poverty, sustainable development, and the promotion of social justice are possible. LS 194

129. The Gospel shows us the value of the human person, of encounter, and of authentic relationships. It invites us to journey and dialogue with others. Surprise and admiration increase sensitivity towards religious experience and the transcendent. It is beautiful to believe; it generates hope and gives meaning to life. Lk 9:1-6

I.2. Constantly building our Capuchin Franciscan identity today

130. The identity of God lies in the relationship of unconstrained and freely given love between the divine persons. In Jesus we are called to form part of this Family, to be sons in the Son. The human vocation consists in recognizing the presence of this freely given love in our personal story, in taking on the responsibility of building our own identity in relationship with God and allowing ourselves to be drawn into this mystery of love. Eph 1:3-6

131. Christ, who is our anthropological model, progressively identified himself with the saving will of the Father. Together with his disciples, and by means of gestures and words, he proclaimed the Good News, the unconditional love of God, and inclusive and universal brotherhood. His dedication and faithfulness brought him to death on the Cross, from which he expressed his freely given love toward God and us. The Father raised him up, thus giving strength to the project of the Kingdom, which by means of the Holy Spirit continues to live in the Church and in the world. 1Tim 2:4
Acts 13:26-33

132. Among the lepers Francis had an experience of the mercy of God. It was a long journey—including also his conversion

at San Damiano—that was full of questioning, and that culminated with the reply that was the receiving of the stigmata on Mount La Verna. This was Christ’s confirmation of the journey that began with meeting him in the lepers.

Cf. 1Cel 17;
L3C 11;
2Cel 9;
LMj 2,6;
1Cel 94;
L3C 4; L3C 69;
LMj 13,13

133. In the light of our Capuchin tradition, of our Constitutions, and of the recent documents of the Order, we can present the central values of our charismatic identity: brotherhood lived in minority, contemplative prayer, the care and celebration of creation, attentive reading of the Word, and presence and service among the poor and those who suffer. The implications that flow from these values are: the search for essentials, simplicity of life, the cultivation of love, itinerancy, and total availability. We are called to a creative fidelity and to find, in many cultures, the way to witness to these values. To transmit these values integrally and with passion is one of our major challenges.

Const 4,2; 5,3-5;
FFCh 14-19

IV CPO 11;
JöhriIdent 1.2-4

I.3. Initiation: a gradual journey into Capuchin life, adapted to each person

134. Since 1968 our Constitutions have established that formation for our life is to be done as a process of initiation, by analogy with the Christian initiation of the first centuries. This important intuition of the Order needs to be understood well so that it can be put into practice faithfully and creatively.

FFCh 23

Const 26-32

135. 11. The process of initiation into our life is a dynamic, personalized, gradual, integral, and continual journey of growth. Even though it is more intense in the first years, it lasts for the whole of life. The objective is to accompany and assist the candidate so that he, beginning from his concrete circumstances and with appropriate formative means, can live an authentic journey of conversion, making of himself a disciple of Jesus according to

IV CPO 57

the style of Francis, with what is proper to the Capuchin tradition, such that, freely and radically, he might dedicate himself completely to the Kingdom of God.

136. Initiation into our life demands a gradual separation from all that is not in agreement with our values and the assimilation of new values together with insertion into our life. The focus is to be on the transmission and progressive learning of the values of Capuchin Franciscan life. FFCh 28
IV CPO 61

137. Initiation includes the anthropological, Christian, and Franciscan fundamentals of our charism. The process foresees the combination of daily life with other concrete experiences: different fraternal services, manual work, presence with the poor, missionary experiences, and longer periods of silence and contemplation. Const 26,1

138. A personalized accompaniment is absolutely necessary, especially one that keeps in mind formation for interpersonal relationships and the acquisition on the part of the brother of a capacity to progressively assimilate to a sharing in our fraternal life. The formative journey is personal, utterly individual, and original, and fosters the flourishing of the qualities that each brothers possesses, that which makes him unique and unrepeatable in the following of Jesus. EG 169-173
Const 18,2

II. THE PRINCIPLES OF FORMATION

II.1. Brotherhood at the heart of the formation process

139. The spaces provided for seeking, listening, dialogue, and discernment make the fraternity a privileged place for encounter with God and for the formation and accompaniment of the

brothers. The fraternity is also, by nature and mission, the place of transmission of our charism. To be formed means to go forward, acquiring the 'form' of a lesser brother, beginning from the brotherhood and in the brotherhood, learning how to establish horizontal relationships, living what is essential, discovering the deep joy of discipleship, and announcing the Gospel with the witness of one's own life.

IV CPO 13-22

140. *The Lord gave me brothers.* Brotherhood wasn't Francis's idea, but an initiative of God himself, such that we might follow the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ together as brothers. Nobody is formed alone. All are formed together in brotherhood.

Test 14

141. Religious life is born from the Mystery of the Trinity, and defines itself as a *confessio Trinitatis*. Present at the heart of the Universal Church, it is called to be a *signum fraternitatis* and an expert in communion. The Holy Spirit, the source of different charisms, has granted us the gift of *minority*, such that, as those who create and care for authentic human relationships, we might announce to all of humanity the fraternal dimension of all created being.

VC 16

VC 41

II.2. Franciscan Accompaniment

142. Jesus the Good Shepherd knows us by name, protects our freedom and offers us a life full of meaning. It is he who takes the initiative and invites us to follow him. Walking before us, he himself is both the way and our companion on the journey of life.

Jn 10:11-16

143. The Word of God is always the first point of reference in the process of accompaniment. Listening to the Word in brotherhood, we learn to read our dreams and desires, our failures and difficulties as the graces of our life. The life of Jesus is the interpretative key for our formation plan.

SAFC 24

144. *The Letter to Brother Leo* contains the essential elements of Franciscan accompaniment. Francis places himself on the same level as Leo and speaks of his own experience. Francis accompanies Leo with motherly tenderness, leaving him totally free and inviting him to discover, creatively and responsibly, his own path. Francis does not demand perfection, but encourages a shared responsibility and gives value to what is positive. Avoiding a sense of fault, Francis points out a direction and helps Leo in his constant desire to live the form of life of the Holy Gospel. Cf. LBL 1-4

145. For Francis the criterion of accompaniment consists in drawing the brother to the Lord by means of mercy and love. He welcomes the brother with respect and without fear of correction or admonishment; yet strongly refusing those brothers whose motivations have nothing to do with the spirit of the Gospel. Cf. Cf LMin 11

146. Formation is not commanding. Accompaniment has as a priority helping each brother to grow in freedom, respecting his uniqueness. Accompaniment means creating spaces that make responsibility, trust, and transparency possible in every area: the affective, in work, in the use of money and new technologies, etc²⁹.

147. The attitude of letting oneself be accompanied is a decisive criterion of discernment, also for formators, who must have the ability both to accompany and to be accompanied. Cf. RF2016 44-49

II.3. Franciscan Discernment

148. *Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.* The hidden presence of Jesus in Mt 25:40

29 Cf. ORDINE DEI FRATI MINORI, *Iesus ibat cum illis. L'accompagnamento francescano. Approccio formativo*, Assisi 8-22 settembre 2013.

the poor makes itself a central element of Christian discernment. The works of charity, also called works of justice and of solidarity, together with the Beatitudes establish the criterion for belonging to the Kingdom: poverty of spirit, joy, mercy, the building up of peace, authenticity of heart, and being misunderstood and persecuted. Mt 5:1-13

149. At the time of his conversion, Francis composed a prayer that would accompany him for the whole of life. From God, who is Light, he asks faith to guide him, hope so as to be supported in difficulty, and the love that excludes no one. God guided Francis personally to the ruins of the chapel of San Damiano, where Christ lives among the lepers. Francis found there the help he needed to continue the journey. Cf. PrCr 1-3

150. The fundamentals of discernment, beyond Sacred Scripture and the sources of our charism, are: fraternal life, in which the capacity to establish mature, freely given, human relationships makes itself evident; contemplation, in which our images of God are purified by experience of the God of Jesus; minority, in which we put to the test our capacity to commit our own life to those who suffer and those who are lesser in this world. 2Cel 193

151. 27. In his Letter to a Minister – the Franciscan gospel of mercy – Francis invites us to live always in a constant attitude of discernment. Radical love manifests itself when we consider every situation of difficulty as a grace, and make it a source of knowledge, when we renounce making over another according to our image and likeness, when we distinguish the hermitage as a place of escape that nourishes individualism and self-sufficiency from the hermitage as a place of the encounter with God in silence and which nourishes the sense of fraternal relationships³⁰. LMin 1-11

30 Cf. J. HERRANZ, *El discernimiento en Francisco de Asís: Oh Dios, concédenos querer siempre lo que te agrada*, Frontera/Hegian 66, Vitoria 2009.

III. THE ROLES IN FORMATION

III.1. The Holy Spirit

152. The Holy Spirit, General Minister of the Brotherhood, is the first formator. The Capuchin life consists in letting oneself be shaped and led by the Spirit, who instills in us the sentiments, emotions, affections, and the sensibility of Christ, as well as the desire to conform ourselves to him, poor and crucified. Brotherhood is born and grows under the merciful hand of the Spirit of the Lord, who stimulates us to seek and discern the paths that he wills for each of the brothers and for the whole brotherhood. IV CPO 78
Post2004 3,1

153. The formators are mediators along the formative process, keeping in mind that formative action is the task of the Holy Spirit, who is always revealing the beautiful and exciting horizon of the Gospel. Const 40,1

III.2. The candidate, the fundamental subject of formation

154. Each brother, under the action of the Holy Spirit, is the protagonist and the author of his own formation. The process of initiation begins with working on oneself, and this demands openness, effort, sincere dialogue, recognition of one's limits, the capacity to accept advice, and creative development. IV CPO 79
Const 24,5

III.3. The formation fraternity

155. The fraternity is the indispensable location for the process of initiation into our life. This is where we experience the demands of the values we have received, and deepen and strengthen our personal commitment. Const 24,7
IV CPO 80

156. The province is the first instance of formation. Beginning with the general minister and the provincial minister or custos,

all the brothers are responsible for formation. Both the province as a whole and each individual fraternity are formators and are responsible for welcome to and formation for our way of life for new members, because the *responsibility for initiation involves the entire brotherhood since the candidates are part of it.*

Const 28,2

157. The particular formation fraternities are formed according to the stage of formation that they are to welcome. Brothers called to make up these fraternities must endorse the formation plan, radiate the Capuchin charism and live each day the values and essential elements set out by formation. The presence of a senior brother, as a significant point of reference endowed with moral authority and consistent in the example of his life, is desirable.

158. The fraternity will periodically evaluate each of the candidates by means of life reviews, local chapters, and assessments, which should take place at least each semester, to provide the director and the candidates themselves with the elements they need to work on.

159. Each circumscription should decide responsibly the maximum and minimum number of brothers it will have in a formation fraternity. We suggest a minimum of between three and five formators and a maximum of between twelve and fifteen in formation. Only in this way will it be possible for personalized accompaniment that is healthy and brotherly. Openness to collaboration between different circumscriptions and conferences of the Order is the only way to enable the necessary implementation in the area of formation.

III.4. The formation team

160. The formators have as their primary task the accompaniment of the brothers in formation in the discernment of the

authenticity of the call to our life, and to help the fraternity, especially the provincial minister, to evaluate their capacity for the same.

161. Formation is an open horizon, demanding respect for the mystery of God which inhabits the uniqueness of each person. The formation team specifies what is required of each candidate once the journey of formation has begun and clarifies the objectives and the means to achieve them. Taking as a starting point what has already been achieved in the previous stage of formation, they prepare the brothers for the next stage. In this way the necessary step-by-step nature of the process is respected.

162. The formation team shares the same criteria, avoiding any divergence in the actions of the formators who make up the team. None of them acts individually, but all work in a co-ordinated way and in harmony with the different formation instances of the circumscription: the Secretary and Council for Formation, the director of ongoing formation and the director of vocations promotion.

163. 39. It is desirable that the formation teams be composed of formators who are conscious of our shared vocation to be brothers, living it in its different expressions: lay or clerical.

164. The training of formators is one of the Order's priorities. The criteria for the selection of formation personnel need to be updated, providing the necessary means to improve and enrich their training/formation in every dimension of their personality. The quality of formation depends on them to a large extent, since they are charged with passing on the elements of our charism, and it is with them that the brothers in formation build their own identity as lesser brothers.

III.5. The spiritual, charismatic, and psychological profile of the Capuchin formator

165. The Capuchin formator is a brother who is convinced of the beauty of our form of life, lives his own vocation joyously, shares his experience of his search for God, is free and docile to the Spirit, avoids the extremes of psychologism and devotionism, and is open to the Word.

Cf. TestCI 1-4

166. Called to exercise a true spiritual fatherhood, he does not supplant the brother in formation but accompanies him in the processes of learning to be free and authentic in life. He is able to foster the growth of God's gifts in him, so as to promote sincerity, creativity and responsibility.

167. The Capuchin formator is aware of his limitations and difficulties but is nonetheless endowed with human and Christian maturity. He demonstrates an ability to achieve positive personal integration; has a realistic self-image, good self-esteem and is emotionally balanced; he accepts calmly that he does not have all the answers or all the skills; he is open to working with others and allows the other brothers' qualities to complement his own; he is always ready to continue learning how to be an authentic lesser brother.

IV CPO 81

168. The Capuchin formator creates spaces for listening and dialogue with the brothers of the formation fraternity and with those in formation. He does not take on formation as an individual job, but is able to work as a member of a team and to ask for help; he has the skills to initiate and accompany processes; he offers the necessary tools by which his charges are able to undertake the Franciscan way and understand our identity and our charism; he has a strong sense of belonging and is sensitive to situations of poverty and marginalization.

III.6. The poor

169. The poor are our teachers. Thanks to them, we are able to understand the Gospel and live it more effectively. When we touch the body of Christ in the wounded body of a poor person, we confirm the sacramental communion we receive in the Eucharist. His presence fills our lives with meaning and joy. V CPO 91

170. The Lord led Francis among the lepers. The primitive brotherhood used this experience as a school of mercy and freely given service, where bitterness is turned into spiritual and bodily sweetness, and where the eyes of those who gaze on Christ the Teacher are able to recognize and serve him in the poor.

171. The poor truly become our formators when we take the risk of viewing reality from their point of view and make their priorities our own. The fruits of this are immediately obvious: we focus our gaze on essentials; we live better with less; times of need and social injustice help us to live our faith with greater consistency; trust and abandonment to providence become real as we realize we are in the Father's hands and the concrete life choices we make become ever clearer.

IV.THE STAGES OF FORMATION FROM A CAPU-CHIN-FRANCISCAN PERSPECTIVE

172. Now we present some guidelines for the stages of our formation process. What is necessary is to move from an activity-based formation to one that promotes gospel attitudes. Underlying the formulation of the nature, objectives, dimensions and criteria for each stage is the intention to think of the formation journey in terms of an initiation. The assimilation of the theoretical aspects will have an effect on how deeply experiences are lived, and the achievement of the aims we set ourselves will

depend on how genuine those experiences are. All the elements are intrinsically linked.

173. This is the objective of the formation journey: Let all the brothers, with the help of God the Father and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, following in the footsteps of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the style of Francis and Clare, be truly free, living a life full of mature affective relationships and committed to building a more just world.

Cf. ER 1,1

Const 23,1

174. Since we know that the initiation of the new candidates is the mission of the fraternity as a whole, it is necessary to guarantee that this fraternity is in a state of continuous formation, renewing itself especially in the values of our charism, and that it feels profoundly motivated to ensure the continuity of our form of life.

1. Ongoing formation

175. The gospel icon of Emmaus presents two companions who, after the death of Jesus, go on their way from Jerusalem. From their uncertainty and upset they move to an encounter with the Risen Lord who puts Bread and the Word at the center of their lives. He transforms their sadness into joy and continues to do so for his disciples and those who announce his Kingdom.

Lk 24:13-35

176. From the disciples of Emmaus we learn how to always begin anew and to never consider our formation finished. The whole person is subject to renewal in every stage of life. This is why ongoing formation, as a continual process, is a necessary and intrinsic part of our vocation.

1.1 Nature

177. Ongoing formation is a process of personal and community renewal and of harmonious adaptation of structures and

activities, by which we are enabled to live our gospel vocation in actual everyday situations.

Const 41,2;
Cf. CIC 661

178. One can speak of two kinds of ongoing formation: the ordinary kind focuses on everyday living. Through this we assess the quality of our life. The extraordinary kind aims to accompany and cast light on our daily experiences at various levels: individual, local and provincial.

VC 71

1.2 Objectives

179. To create and protect spaces of freedom in the following of Jesus, which allow us to continue to learn from experience and which strengthen personal responsibility.

180. To care for the affective life by building authentic, free, and deep interpersonal relationships which grow in the sentiments of Christ himself. This is what guarantees a life full of meaning.

181. To foster, according to the example of Jesus, a greater sensitivity in the area of solidarity and a more active commitment in the building up of justice and the seeking of initiatives for peace and respect for creation.

1.3 Dimensions

182. The spiritual dimension

- To maintain an intimate relationship with God in daily life, such that our way of thinking and living according to the form of the Holy Gospel is encouraged.
- To cultivate a spirituality that, by means of interior silence and listening to the Word, brings one to the discovery of God in the realities of daily life.
- To keep reading our Franciscan charism with the needs and

challenges of our time in mind, in order to welcome the newness of the Spirit and to collaborate in the transforming of our circumstances with the strength of the Gospel.

183. The human dimension

- To take care of one's vocation, managing time and personal and common formation responsibly.
- To face the challenges of life with creativity, staying aware of one's limits and gifts received in each moment.
- To strengthen the sentiments of esteem and communion, giving value to our brothers and making spaces for encounter and communication.

184. The intellectual dimension

- To establish a Franciscan style of studying, sharing experiences and the knowledge acquired as something that helps us to grow in brotherhood.
- To place the dimensions of the pastoral-biblical and of the Franciscan charism at the center of ongoing formation.
- To open and renew one's vision of the world, enriching it with fraternal dialogue and various new perspectives.

185. The missionary-pastoral dimension

- To evangelize with one's life and the Word by means of the witness of fraternal relationships. To collaborate in the pastoral commitments of the Church, responding to the most urgent needs.
- To recognize the importance of accompanying spiritually the men and women of today.

186. The charismatic dimension

- To intensify the fraternal life such that it fosters a greater realization of our plan of life.

- To privilege active and affective listening as one of the strongest elements of our charism's style of relating.
- To recover the spirit of the Capuchin reform in order to discover the beauty of simplicity.

1.4 Means

187. The ordinary means offered by the local fraternity:

- The liturgical life, which is the school of Christian and Franciscan values.
- The local chapters, the review of life and fraternal correction, the sharing of meals, and recreation are all spaces that help to create healthy and open relationships.
- Reading and reflection are indispensable for human and spiritual growth.
- The appropriate use of the means of communication as tools for updating.

188. The ordinary means offered by the provincial fraternity: retreats, weeks of formation, meetings, seminars, and celebrations.

189. The extraordinary means: periods of study, courses in biblical and Franciscan spirituality, sabbaticals, etc.

1.5 Times

190. Formation must keep in mind the various stages of life. The following schema is suggested³¹:

- First adult stage. A time typically marked by enthusiasm and full activity. A time to learn new ways of living our charism in the taking on of responsibilities and allowing

31 Cf. A. CENCINI, *La formazione permanente nel vita quotidiana*, EDB, Bologna 2017.

oneself to be guided by the brotherhood.

- Middle adult years. Life gradually concentrates around the search for essentials and interior growth. Here there is always the risk of disappointment and individualism.
- Advanced age. The time of fullness and of passing on experiences to the next generation. The time to welcome Sister Death with hope.

1.6. Other themes of formation

191. Work is a grace that allows us to feel fulfilled, humanly and professionally. The friars are true witnesses and formators when they live a healthy balance between activity and fraternal life.

VIII CPO 9

192. Economy. All the friars must be aware of the economic realities of the province and their administration, which are exercised according to the criteria of solidarity.

Economy 97;
VI CPO 29

193. Justice, peace, and ecology. Promoting a style of life attentive to socially responsible consumption and the needs of others is a task of ongoing formation. It is possible to live better with less. Furthermore, in all ministerial services it is necessary to set up policies and practices for the protection of minors and vulnerable adults.

Justice 50-53

194. Means of communication and new technologies. Ongoing formation must help the friars to be conscious of the existence and consequences of virtual reality. In the service of evangelization these digital media foster a more human and inclusive society. On the other hand, neurotic dependence on technology is a risk not to be underestimated.

VIII CPO 70

1.7 A culture of evaluation

195. The time for evaluation must assess the values that we proclaim, the choices made, and the reality of our personal and fraternal life.

196. It pertains to the local chapter to evaluate the plan of the fraternity. A periodic evaluation of the journey being made is recommended.

197. It is suggested that in the canonical visitations the provincial minister or custos accompany and evaluate the FP with each friar.

198. It could also be good to develop norms at the level of the circumscription for the promotion of updating formation for specific pastoral ministries (reconciliation, preaching, catechesis...). The FP is a right and duty for all.

1.8 Other indications

199. Each circumscription must have a program of ongoing formation that responds to its own circumstances. To this end, collaboration between circumscriptions is also promoted.

200. Particular care for friars in their first years of ongoing formation (after five and ten years since perpetual profession) is important.

201. *All the ministers and guardians shall regard it as the primary ordinary duty of their pastoral service to promote the ongoing formation of the brothers entrusted to them.*

Const 42,2

202. Each circumscription or group of circumscriptions is to have a friar or a team of friars responsible for the FP.

203. The General Secretary of Formation shall collaborate with the FP, offering activities, courses, and initiatives to the circumscriptions that are not able to make them happen on their own. Const 25,7

INITIATION INTO OUR LIFE

204. Initial formation lays the foundations for dynamic growth in the identity of the consecrated person, and the process continues to strengthen throughout the whole of life.

2. The vocational stage

205. Abraham is the icon of the human person in openness to God. The account of his call emphasizes the key elements in every vocation. First of all, the human person is invited to go out of the closed circle of what is already known and to challenge himself with trust in God. Secondly, the vocation is a dynamic process that puts all the dimensions of the person in play, and in a particular way the relational capacity and the quest for the good. Gen 12:1-9

206. The image of Abraham reminds us that every human person has the responsibility of responding to God's call. God has a plan for each person and invites us to journey with confidence and to seek with courage. Each vocation is a gift of the Holy Spirit for the building up of the Church and service in the world. We all need to promote the creation of a cultural of vocation.

2.1 Nature

207. *In His goodness God calls all Christian faithful in the Church to the perfection of love through different states of life, so that the salvation of the world may be advanced by means of personal holiness.* Const 16,1

208. *Concern for vocations arises above all from the awareness that we ourselves are living and offering to others a way of life rich in human and gospel values, which, while offering genuine service to God and people, fosters personal growth.*

Const 17,1

2.2 Objectives

209. To create space for discernment that allow a free and responsible vocational decision.

210. To propose paths of affective growth in the relational style of Jesus, with the invitation to live the logic of self-gift.

211. To present a vision of a world founded on the coordinates of Franciscan spirituality.

2.3 The dimensions

212. The spiritual dimension

- To offer the necessary help so that the process of vocational discernment is followed by a personal choice of faith.
- To encourage prayer, sacramental life, and daily reading of the Word of God.
- To discover, by means of an interior gaze, a journey of openness to the transcendent and the beauty of creation.

213. The human dimension

- To express an age appropriate level of self-awareness.
- To let oneself be accompanied in the journey of vocational discernment.
- To show the desire to belong to a group and the ability to make relationships.

214. The intellectual dimension

- To present the principles and fundamentals of the experience of Christian life.
- To offer a first critical approach to the Mystery of Christ.
- To begin a first contact with the lives of St. Francis and St. Clare, presenting the values of the Franciscan charism in a simple way.

215. The missionary-pastoral dimension

- If the candidate is already participating in some pastoral activity, this is to be maintained. If not, some pastoral commitment is to be suggested.
- To get to know, in a general way, the pastoral services and apostolates of the Order in the province or custody.
- To begin a reading of the Gospel, with emphasis on those texts that present most clearly the pastoral pedagogy of Jesus in the proclamation of the Kingdom of God.

216. The charismatic dimension

- To assist in the listening to the deep desires of the heart and the motivations for the choice of our form of life.
- To make prayer the basic space for vocational discernment.
- To present the Capuchin life within a solid ecclesiology and theology of the religious life that values the vocations of all the people of God.

2.4 Times

217. The time for discernment before entering the Order is variable, but must allow both that the candidate be able to know our life and that those responsible for accompanying him can perceive in him solid vocational signs.

2.5 *Criteria of discernment*

218. The criteria that we present here refer to the whole of the person seen through the lens of faith:

Const 18,3

- Physical and mental health;
- Adequate maturity, especially in the affective and relational aspects;
- Suitability for fraternal life in common;
- Ability to reconcile the ideal and the concrete;
- Relational flexibility;
- Willingness to change;
- Trust in the formators;
- Adherence to the values of the faith.

219. Socially, those people between sixteen and twenty-nine years inclusive are considered young. Experience in pastoral work suggests that after the age of thirty-five or forty it becomes difficult to learn the new, particular habits – especially in the sense of openness – demanded by religious life³².

2.6 *Other indications*

220. Ensure that the candidate knows, even if only in broad outline, our specific identity within the Church, so that we avoid admitting candidates who only want to be priests.

IV CPO 21

221. Establish guidelines and specific criteria for accompanying teenagers, young people, or adults who are considering a vocation, in accordance with their culture and with the real possibilities that are available to receive them. Where they exist in the

32 Cf. XV Ordinary General Assembly, Young People, the faith and Vocational Discernment, I, 1 (Preparatory Document).

Order, minor seminaries and centers of vocational guidance, as well as the experience of volunteer work, are good opportunities to experience our life.

OG 2,2

222. Each fraternity should have a brother in charge of youth work and vocations promotion, duly trained to provide the systematic accompaniment of the candidates. In addition to this obvious way of promoting vocations, each circumscription should have a secretariat for Vocations Promotion.

Const 17,4

THE STAGES OF INITIAL FORMATION

3. The postulancy

223. The gospel icon of Baptism presents us with Jesus as he in whom God is well pleased. Though he is the Son, he makes himself our brother so that as brothers we might learn to be sons of God. Brotherhood is the great school in which God reveals to us our identity: the gift of being sons and brothers.

Mk 1:9-11

224. The Baptism of Jesus shows us that God sets his Spirit on each of us and marks us with his love. In postulancy, through a commitment to a vocational discernment process in our religious family, the personal relationship with God is deepened and a great knowledge of what following Jesus means is acquired.

3.1 Nature

225. *The postulancy is the first period of initiation when one makes the choice to adopt our life.*

Const 30,1

226. *During this period, the postulant comes to know our life and makes a further and more careful discernment of his vocation. For its part, the fraternity comes to know the postulant better and as-*

certain the growth of his human maturity, especially affective maturity, and his ability to discern his life and the signs of the times according to the Gospel.

Const 30,2

3.2 Objectives

227. To help the postulant acquire the necessary self-knowledge and autonomy to enable him to integrate in a mature way his own history and personal reality, with all its lights and shadows.

228. To deepen his relationship with Jesus Christ, contemplating his attitude of love for life, his goodness, mercy, and compassion.

229. To awaken interest in social issues relating to injustice, violence, poverty and the violation of human rights.

3.3 The dimensions

230. The spiritual dimension

- To produce, with the help of accompaniment, an autobiographical narrative from a spiritual point of view, in order to become aware of God's call.
- To be progressively introduced to the mystery of the Eucharist and the sacrament of Reconciliation.
- To begin to learn contemplative prayer and the liturgical prayer of the Church.

231. The human dimension

- To understand and manage one's own emotions, with particular attention to the affective aspect.
- To practice physical and psychological self-care in order to have a healthy self-esteem.

- To offer the elements for the drafting of a personal life plan, beginning from the autobiography.

232. The intellectual dimension

- To present the Catechism of the Catholic Church.
- To know the person of Jesus by means of a program of systematic reading of the Gospel.
- To read classic hagiography as well as a modern biography of St. Francis and of St. Clare.

233. The missionary-pastoral dimension

- To offer, through accompaniment, criteria of faith for apostolic life.
- To make possible a first experience of apostolic work and service to the poor.
- To encourage a missionary and social sensitivity, attentive to read the signs of the times.

234. The charismatic dimension

- In silence and beauty, Francis seeks the meaning of life, always in the hope of finding something greater than himself.
- Docile to the Spirit, he is guided to San Damiano, where he would later discover that the secret lay in making oneself poor and little, giving up any kind of power.
- Only by staking one's own life can one read and understand the Gospel, and come to believe that it contains all the answers.

3.4 Times

235. The time is variable, depending on the needs of the candidates. In recent years, because of socio-cultural and ecclesial

changes, as well as those in the family, there exists a tendency to prolong the time of the postulancy, with the desire to assist discernment and to allow a greater human and Christian maturity. Our legislation indicates a minimum time of a year. Nevertheless, in most of the geographic areas of the Order the time is two years.

FFCh 31

236. The postulancy begins with the candidate is admitted by the provincial minister.

Const 29,2

3.5. Other themes of formation

237. *Work.* During the postulancy it is important to help the postulants to discover work as grace and opportunity. Simple and domestic work is to be encouraged.

VIII CPO 7

238. *Economy.* The postulants are to be introduced to the principles of Franciscan spirituality in economic practices: giving freely and the logic of gift that demands that we leave behind the culture of consumption and exclusion.

Economy 16

239. *Justice, peace, and ecology.* Those who choose our form of life commit themselves to protecting the environment and to creative collaboration for the resolution of problems that regard our planet earth.

Justice 56-58

240. *Communications media and new technologies.* It is necessary to form the candidates to a conscious, useful, and safe use of digital media. It is opportune that the postulants not curate their own social profiles apart from the fraternity³³.

33 Cf. Cf. XV Ordinary General Assembly, *Young People, the faith and Vocational Discernment*, I, 1 (Preparatory Document) 38.

3.6 Criteria for discernment

241. In order to assess the suitability of a candidate the following criteria are to be kept in mind:

CIC 597,1-2

- Mental-physical equilibrium (physical examination and psychological assessment);
- Capacity for initiative and co-responsibility;
- Right use of freedom and of time;
- Willingness for service and for work;
- Capacity for responsible, free choices;
- Knowledge and practice of Christian life;
- Sufficient clarity with regard to motivations;
- Openness to formation accompaniment;
- Aptitude for community life;
- Readiness to follow Christ in poverty, obedience, and chastity.

3.7 Other indications

242. It is preferable that during postulancy there should be no academic studies, precisely so that priority is given to other studies, courses, or workshops that are in harmony with the aims of this stage of formation.

243. The place should foster integration into the fraternity, recollection and meditation; it should be simple and offer possibilities for manual work and contact with the poor. It is important that the candidate is not removed from his cultural context.

244. In order to make their personal accompaniment more profound and effective, it is advisable that the postulants live in the same fraternity and with the same director.

245. The postulancy marks the beginning of the journey of incorporation into the Order. It is also the moment when the question of belonging to other possible groups – family, groups of friends, ecclesial movements, political parties, ethnic groups, etc. – is clarified, so that the new identity acquired in our Capuchin family can become established. JöhrIdent 2.3.3

246. At the end of the postulancy, a meeting between the postulant director and the novice-master is arranged: a detailed report on each of the postulants is presented, with special reference to the five dimensions.

4. The novitiate

247. The gospel icon of Bethany introduces us to a house with open doors. Here we learn to listen like Mary and serve like Martha. They are not different things. Listening always bears fruit in service, and there is no service unless it is born of listening. The point is, a long journey of apprenticeship is involved, in which Christ the Teacher continues to invite us to listen to His Word, alive in the Gospel, and to serve Him in our brothers and sisters, especially those in need. Lk 10:38-42

248. As in Bethany, in the novitiate one learns to orient his life toward Jesus in listening to his words and learning from him who made himself the servant of all – the wonderful art that is service.

4.1 Nature

249. The novitiate is a period of more intense initiation and more profound experience of the Capuchin Franciscan gospel life in its fundamental demands. It requires a free and mature decision to try out our form of religious life.

Const 31,1
Cf CIC 646

4.2 Objectives

250. To review one's own story in the light of grace and as an instance of salvation, given the freely-given love and compassion of God.

251. To strengthen the conviction, ever more clear, of the centrality of Christ in one's life, together with the commitment to make incarnate his sentiments and attitudes and in contemplation of the mystery of his divine humanity.

252. To understand more deeply the consequences of following Jesus, willingly going against the consumerist world that is always generating more exclusion. To educate oneself in community dialogue in order to accept diversity as richness and the different ways that others think, act, and see things.

4.3 The dimensions

253. The spiritual dimension

- To take up as one's own the spirituality of the Capuchin tradition, centered in the liturgy and especially in mental prayer, with the assistance of lectio divina and the healthy traditions of the Order.
- To educate oneself in the habit of interior silence and contemplation, in order to solidify the consecration to God through a continuous process of purification of the vocational motivations.
- To deepen the study of the theology of the vows through contemplation of the person of Jesus, poor, obedient and chaste, seeking always a greater conformity with him.

254. The human dimension

- To be in relationship with the brothers, learning to share more deeply one's own personal story.
- To integrate affective-sexual development in the vocational journey, learning to make healthy and mature relationships, full of self-gift.
- To practice personal and community discernment as a means of being in harmony with the will of God, both in important moments as in the ordinary circumstances of life.

255. The intellectual dimension

- To complete the study of the Catechism together with the theology of religious life and that of the values proper to our life.
- To present a general and systematic introduction to the Bible and the liturgy.
- To study deeply the content and spirituality of the Rule, the Testament, the Constitutions of the Capuchin Friars Minor, the Plenary Councils, and other documents of the Order.

256. The missionary-pastoral dimension

- To discover in our charismatic mission a way to work together in the building up of a more evangelical and fraternal world.
- To plan meetings with the more significant brothers of the circumscription who embody in their own lives the mission of Jesus, from the perspective of our charism.
- To accompany the novices in some form of service among the poor and needy, to ensure that they have a genuine experience of our Capuchin charism.

257. The charismatic dimension

- Brotherhood is not a theory. Only by being among brothers can one learn to be a brother.
- To discover that being a Capuchin lesser brother is our particular way of being Church, by building environments of welcome, encounter and tender-hearted love.
- To preserve and pass on with creative fidelity the values of the charism we have received: making brotherhood the environment where we experience the beauty of belonging to Christ.

4.4. Time

258. The Code of Canon Law establishes that, for the novitiate to be valid, it must last for an uninterrupted period of twelve months spent in the novitiate house, and may not last longer than two years. Any absence of more than fifteen days must be made good, while an absence of more than three months invalidates the novitiate.

CIC

Const 31,6;
CIC 647,3;
648,1; 653,2

4.5 Other themes of formation

259. **Work.** The experience of manual work is one of the values of our charism and is part of our spirituality. God places the work of creation in our hands, inviting us to take care of it and complete it. At the same time, work makes us feel the strong bond of interdependence among ourselves, through our freely chosen poverty.

VIII CPO 10

260. **Economy.** Starting from the novitiate, living a life of simplicity, we place everything in common and use material goods in a manner inspired by the gospel: everything we receive belongs

to the fraternity. As from this moment, a friar must be trained to be detached from money and material goods, remembering that one must become poor to enter the Kingdom of heaven.

Economy 18

261. *Justice, peace and ecology.* The novitiate is also a time to become aware of the reality of the world we live in, and of the consequences of radical discipleship. Subjects such as human rights, climate change and human trafficking require a response – mystical, prophetic, and in solidarity - from those whose lives give witness to the good news of the Kingdom.

Justice 60-62

262. *Communications media and new technologies.* The novitiate period requires particular distance from some realities, in order to create an atmosphere of reflection in which personal decisions can mature. The communal use of mobile phones and computers is recommended, and these should be in a public room. The life of a lesser brother, centred on essentials, protects us from being enslaved to the latest fashion or the last word in technological novelty.

LS 47

4.6 Criteria for discernment

263. We offer a few criteria for discerning the suitability of a novice for first profession:

CIC 642

- A proportionate level of human and affective maturity and a capacity to form good interpersonal relationships;
- A spirit of initiative, together with active and responsible participation in his own formation;
- The capacity to accept differences in others and to live in brotherhood;
- An evident sense of responsibility in responding to the grace of work;

- The capacity to question and assess oneself in the light of the Word of God;
- The ability to live a life of prayer and contemplation;
- Flexibility and dialogue with formators;
- A sense of belonging to the brotherhood and the Order;
- Capacity to serve the least ones and those on the margins of society;
- An understanding of the vows and a serious desire to live them with joy and serenity;
- Sufficient knowledge of the contents of formation, formation, especially of the Capuchin Franciscan charism and of the Sacred Scripture.

4.7 Other indications

264. The ideal number for a group of novices is at least four and no more than ten.

265. At the end of the novitiate there must be a handover between the novice-master and the post-novitiate director concerning the situation of each brother, the goals achieved and the main challenges he will have to face in the post-novitiate.

5. The post-novitiate

266. The death of Jesus on the Cross teaches us that he who empties himself totally is able to love until the very end. The Cross is the icon of freely-given love, willingness, and offering of self. It is the school of the meaning of life, where we learn that *a grain of wheat that falls into the earth and dies produces much fruit.* Jn 19:30 Jn 12:24

267. In the Cross Francis discovered the poverty and nudity of Jesus and conceived in himself a life that sought to live ever

more poor and denuded. The post-novitiate, the last phase of initial formation, must serve the brothers such that they conform their lives to the form of life of the Master.

5.1. Nature

268. The post-novitiate, which begins with temporary profession and concludes with perpetual profession, is the third stage of initiation. During this period the brothers progress further in maturity and prepare themselves to make a definitive choice of the gospel life in our Order.

Const 32,1

269. Because of its essential reference to religious consecration and to perpetual profession, the journey of formation undertaken in the post-novitiate must be the same for all the brothers. Since the gospel life in brotherhood holds the primary place in our vocation, it must also be given priority during this period.

Const 32,2

5.2 Objectives

270. To promote personal responsibility in all dimensions of life. Religious consecration acquires profound significance as an act of free, generous, and disinterested offering of one's own life for the Kingdom.

271. To build up a style of affective relationships based on communication, mutual recognition, transparency and sharing in decision-making in all that affects the fraternity.

272. To stand side by side with those who are suffering, giving witness to solidarity, justice and truth based on our experience of God's goodness, and committing ourselves to live the values of freedom, equality and participation.

5.3 The dimensions

273. The spiritual dimension

- Reinforce the centrality of the consecration of one's life through deeper study of Sacred Scripture and the celebration of the liturgy.
- Revitalize the life of prayer through awareness of the presence of God and of the constant action of the Spirit in one's own life and that of the fraternity.
- To learn to live the balance between action and contemplation in daily life in a healthy tension both realistic and spiritual.

274. The human dimension

- Create affective structures which, by means of in-depth listening and communication, foster interdependence and help to overcome individualistic tendencies, so that the brother recognizes himself as a valued gift to the fraternity.
- Achieve harmonious integration of spiritual, physical and affective needs, through accompaniment and honest facing of issues.
- Learn to plan one's time so that there is a healthy balance between service and personal and community needs.

275. The intellectual dimension

- Learning to reflect critically, and acquiring the capacity to evaluate, discern, and plan for the future.
- A deeper study of Sacred Scripture, theology, liturgy, the history and spirituality of the Order, providing all the brothers with a sufficient foundation for their life as consecrated men, whether cleric or lay, and to equip them to serve the Church.

- Sufficient knowledge of the history of the Order and of their own Province or Custody.

276. The missionary-pastoral dimension

- Learning to communicate, reflect on and evaluate pastoral experiences as a fraternity, with a view to strengthening our identity and charism.
- Arrange extended periods of missionary experience, in frontier situations, to enable us to live the Capuchin Franciscan ideal more intensely.
- Plan pastoral activities as a fraternity, seeking a balance between action, the spiritual life, the needs of fraternity life, and study.

277. Charismatic dimension

- To become aware that discipleship is not without difficulties. The cross is our shared horizon: learning to love as God loves us, freely and without counting the cost.
- To construct an undivided identity, bearing in ourselves the marks of Jesus, being and acting like him.
- To dare to interpret all reality in the light of the mystery of the cross, where love takes concrete form in dispossession, self-giving and freedom.

5.4 Times

278. The post-novitiate lasts for at least three years, and can be extended by three more years. If a brother or those in charge of formation think it appropriate, and by way of exception, it can be extended up to a maximum of nine years.

Const 34,2;
CIC 655; 657,2

279. The integration and consolidation of the values of our charism requires a patient, long, and progressive journey. This

implies abandoning the idea of having set times, pre-established and the same for all, or for blocks of brothers making their profession together. Here the principle of personalized formation applies.

5.5 Other themes of Formation

280. Work. The post-novitiate is the right time to know and have experiences of different forms of work that are possible in the Order. The ultimate criterion of discernment can be neither the self-realization of the individual nor institutional needs, but the will of God the Father.

FFCh 9
VIII CPO 11

281. Economy. In this stage of formation, transparent, unified and ethical criteria for the use of our economic resources should be reinforced. This is the time to experience that work is our main source of support, living in solidarity with one another and with the poor. The brothers are to be involved in the process of drawing up, using and evaluating the fraternity budget.

Economy 19

282. Justice, peace, and ecology. The experience of having been captivated by Christ leads the post-novice to embrace the cause of the Kingdom on behalf of the poorest and most vulnerable in society, as Jesus himself did. Living a simple, plain lifestyle marked by solidarity, we must practice dialogue and respect and learn to value diversity, as a way of working together to build peace in the world.

Justice 63-66

283. Communications media and new technologies. Conscious of the cultural challenges provoked by the digital world and technological innovations, in this stage it is necessary to develop a critical and positive sense in the face of the news and other content broadcast by the social communications media, especially the Internet. To foster the correct use of the media it

is appropriate to organize specific courses and seminars on the subject of internet safety and security, how to draw up culturally appropriate norms and the possibility of creating and handling resources for pastoral work and evangelization using the new technology.

V CPO 58;
RF2016 182

5.6 Criteria for discernment

284. When assessing the suitability of a brother for perpetual profession, some of the criteria to be kept in mind are:

CIC 656

- Affective maturity;
- Obvious signs of a proper personal relationship with God in prayer;
- Personal initiative and responsibility for one's own religious life;
- Ability to live and work with the fraternity;
- Ability to adapt to the service of others, especially of the poorest;
- A sense of justice, peace and respect for creation;
- Capacity to make a final commitment and to live the evangelical counsels;
- Sufficient interior freedom and practice of poverty;
- A sense of belonging to the brotherhood, the Order and the Church.

5.7 Other indications

285. It is fitting that the first three years of the post-novitiate should be lived in the same fraternity and with the same director, in order to foster accompaniment and the effective strengthening of our life.

286. Formation fraternities that are too large are to be avoided. As a general rule, large numbers hinder a truly personalized accompaniment. To consolidate the values of our life, the need is for real experiences of brotherhood that strengthen identity and the sense of belonging.

287. The process of initiation into our life culminates in perpetual profession. The serene and profound desire to feel that one is a Capuchin lesser brother must last throughout life. Once a brother has reached this point, he should be ready to continue his growth, in the conviction that formation is never finished.

6. Specific initial formation

288. The Constitutions divide our formation into two phases: initial and ongoing. The first phase, which concludes with perpetual profession, includes initiation into religious consecration and offers the possibility of beginning, in this period, preparation for work and ministry.

Const 23,4;
FFCh 23

289. For their part, the Constitutions establish two unmistakable principles: First, the life of gospel brotherhood and formation for consecration have priority during the time of initiation. Second, initial formation is equal for all. Therefore, initiation into consecrated life and specific formation for candidacy for Holy Orders must not be confounded; they are not comparable.

Const 32,2
CIC 659
Const 32,2

290. Within the various sensibilities and models of organization of the post-novitiate that exist in the Order, there is a certain tension between the charismatic and clerical dimensions. Reflection and dialogue, according to PCO IV and the document Formation for the Capuchin Franciscan Life in Post-Novitiate (Assisi, 2004), the Constitutions, and the reflections of the recent general ministers, will help us to find the right balance between the two dimensions.

291. The state of consecrated life by its very nature is neither clerical nor lay. Hence it has its own value, independent of sacred ministry. The identity of the Franciscan Order brings us back to our form of evangelical life, defining ourselves as an Order of brothers and not as a clerical congregation. Therefore the single vocation of the lesser brother, lived in its lay or clerical expressions (without prejudice to the guarantee of a common formative path for all) opens up to the itineraries of specific formation: one for those who have received the gift of living the religious vocation in its presbyteral expression, another for those who have received the gift of living it in its lay dimension.

CIC 588.1
VC, 60

VIII CPO 42

292. On the one hand we must deepen how priestly spirituality is lived beginning from the demands of our charismatic identity, “taking into account the character of our brotherhood.” On the other hand, we must bring to greater life the lay option, enriching the formative opportunities for lay brothers and to helping “every brother to develop his own ‘grace of working.’”

Const 39,4

Const 37,4

293. The formation fraternity, together with the brother in formation, by means of a personalized accompaniment, must discern and assess the motivations in the decision to live the vocation, orienting the brother toward the gift of ordained ministry or the gift of fraternal ministry.

294. The common, basic formation for all the friars must include an introductory study of Sacred Scripture, theology, liturgy, and Franciscan spiritual and history. Academic recognition of the study done by those who continue toward Holy Orders is desirable.

Const 32,3

7. Collaborative formation

295. Our common vocation goes beyond every barrier and as it welcomes the richness and originality of each culture, it

transforms it by creating spaces for communion. Our Order is a universal brotherhood established by a network of provincial and local fraternities. Therefore, if we do not wish to be victims of provincialism, we must create more flexible and dynamic structures that foster integration between circumscriptions and a greater openness, toward a sense of belonging to the Order. If we do not move in this direction, the Order will not have real renewal.

296. It is important that provincialism be overcome also at the level of formation, fostering dialogue, mutual awareness, and collaboration. The principles that are to guide collaborative formation within the Order are the following:

- The conviction that we do not collaborate because we are forced by necessity, but because it is something that brotherhood itself demands;
- The priority of the good of the brother in formation;
- The better use of the personal abilities of formators;
- A more reasonable use of material structures and economic resources.

297. To strengthen collaborative formation, we recommend the creation of formation structures dependent not on provinces but on a conference, which will be in charge of setting up the formation fraternity and managing its spaces and structures. The fittingness of applying this principle to collaboration even between the different conferences is to be evaluated.

298. **Conclusion.** Mary, our Mother and Teacher, at each and every stage of her life, welcomed the Word, pondered it, kept it and put it into practice. She was the first disciple to follow the Way of her Son Jesus, and told us always to listen to the Master, to live by faith and transform love into service. The Almighty

continues to do great things in each one of us. Today also, pupils in the school of Nazareth, we are still learning how to live in brotherhood, with joy and simplicity, in order to be untiring witnesses of the tender love and presence of God in our world.



APPENDICES

RATIO
FORMATIONIS



THIS IS OUR CLOISTER: THE WHOLE WORLD.

ScEx 63

In order that the Rule and intentions of our Father and lawgiver may be faithfully observed throughout the world, let the ministers make sure to seek the most suitable ways for the brothers to live their lives and conduct their apostolates. This may be done in a variety of forms, in accordance with different regions and cultures and the needs of times and places.

Const 7, 4

I. ONE CHARISM IN A DIVERSITY OF CULTURES

1. Some general considerations

1. The world grows ever more diverse. In the Southern Hemisphere the population is very young and growing quickly, while in the North there is a progressive ageing and demographic diminishment. 60% of the world's population lives in Asia (4,400 million), 16% in Africa (1,200 million), 10% in Europe (738 million), 9% in Latin America and the Caribbean (634 million). The remaining 5% are in North America (358 million) and Oceania (39 million). Currently more than half of the population of the world lives in an urban area¹. Among the more urgent issues to be faced today there arises a double challenge: to address the

¹ UNITED NATIONS, *State of the world population 2017*. New York 2018 (www.unfpa.org).

growing flow of migrants according to human and Christian criteria and to create spaces of integration and diversity that favor coexistence and cohesion among different peoples.

2. Our Order is no stranger to these demographic changes. Africa and Asia grow while Eastern Europe and Latin American remain stable and Western Europe and North America suffer from a diminishment in the number of friars. In the Capuchin world there does not exist a cultural, geographic, or cultural hegemony (in the past it was Europe). To keep the identity of the charism and the unity of the Order alive demands that friars belonging to different cultures learn to encounter one another. Authentic dialogue encourages a plurality of interpretations of the one charism that is communicated and understood in different languages and through diverse worldviews.

Const 100,5

3. Collaboration is a sign of unity and of communion in a world ever more globalized but which at the same time demands greater attention and sensitivity to the different ethnicities. True collaboration is understood only by beginning from a fraternal mysticism that is able to accept differences, integrating them into a harmonious synthesis that leads to a greater sense of belonging. By overcoming provincialism and ethnocentrism, formation for inter-culturality makes real, effective, and lasting collaboration possible.

Const 100,6

2. From multiculturalism to inter-culturality

4. Culture is a totality made up of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and affective strands that together characterize a social group. It surrounds the manner of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, the system of values, traditions, and beliefs. By means of culture we discern values, make choices, ex-

press ourselves, come to know ourselves, recognize ourselves as unfinished projects, and tirelessly seek the meaning of existence. A culture as a whole seeks to satisfy fundamental needs, at least under three aspects: the material (housing, food), the relational (family, friends, companions), and the symbolic (art, beauty, spirituality). Cf. GS 53

5. Our world is characterized by mutual interdependence, and from this follows that relationship is the fundamental element that characterizes the human being: the relationship with oneself, with others, with the environment, and with God. It is precisely in this relational area that we make and understand our identity: the ways of acting and thinking, feelings, values, rules, and signs of belonging that are transmitted from one generation to the next in every culture.

6. There are different models of relationship between cultures². A first model was the colonial, in which one culture imposed itself on another, demanding the other's rejection of its own roots. This produces a lack of fidelity to one's own culture, motivated by the desire for acceptance in a new group of belonging. In this model difference is a threat. A second model is the multicultural, where different cultures coexist in the same geographic space but reject a cultural exchange. Here we speak of cultural pluralism in which there is tolerance, though not integration. In the third place there is the intercultural model in which cultures meet without losing their own identity. Differences are integrated as a richness and generate new kinds of relationship. This begins from knowing and loving one's own culture so as to be able recognize the differences of others. This model is connatural with the mission of the Church and the way of life of our Order.

2 CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love*.

3. Bringing the Gospel to the heart of every culture

7. Creation is full of goodness and beauty. God has taken creation so seriously that each creature is unique and an expression of a multiform variety. The biodiversity of the planet is the greatest reflection of his creativity. God does not create serially; within his paternity is the origin of all diversity. The ideal of love does not consist in the fusion of difference but in the fertile relationship between differences. Alterity, the challenge of encounter with the other, in the recognition of other ways of being and living, is what makes brotherhood possible .

Gen 1:31

8. The incarnation of Jesus is not something abstract; it is an event that occurred in a concrete time and place. The critical position of Jesus within the thought and behavior world of religious authority made him a 'marginal Jew.'³ For Jesus salvation was offered to all, not only for the Jewish people; it is freely given and cannot be bought. Jesus questions certain sacred institutions such as the Temple and, breaking the ideas of belonging based on flesh and blood, so broadens relational horizons. The parable of the Good Samaritan, the meeting with the centurion, the water shared at the well of Sichem, the dialogue with the Syro-Phoenician woman, together with other encounters and miracles experienced and worked beyond the borders of Jesus' own land, culminate with the most difficult of all Christian teachings to practice: the love of enemy.

Gen 4

Lk 14:16-28

Lk 18:10-14

Mt 21:13

Mt 8:5-11

Lk 10: 25-37

Jn 4:9

Mk 7:42-30

9. Pentecost symbolizes the opening of the Gospel to the cultures. The Holy Spirit, source of freedom and unity, in order to communicate the living memory of Jesus, destroys all the borders imposed by race, by discriminatory laws, and by the sepa-

Acts 2:1-4

3 Cf. J. P. MEIER, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 3, *Companions and Competitors*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.

ratist norms of the Hebrew tradition. Through sincere dialogue and by a discernment of the signs of the times, the Holy Spirit continues to guide the Church, that in its assimilation of different cultures, it might learn to live the Good News in plurality.

Cf. Gal 2:1-10,
Acts 15: 1-34

4. The Church, school of inter-culturality

10. The Church, beginning with the celebration of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, expressed the firm will to open itself to dialogue with the contemporary world. Since then and now with the recent apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, the Church continues to commit itself to the task of evangelizing cultures so as to inculturate the Gospel and continue to announce the Kingdom of God and its justice.

11. The catholicity of the Church depends on its real openness to cultures. We need to go out towards encounter with others without losing ourselves, but always open to welcoming diversity. Christianity does not have a single cultural model; it brings with itself the face of all the different cultures in which it has been accepted and where it has left its mark. Among the different peoples that experience the gift of God in their own culture, the Church manifests its catholicity and displays the beauty of this pluriform face. The image that best represents the Church is not a center with an immobile sphere, but a polyhedron that reflects the confluence of all the parts and preserves in itself their originality.

NMI 40

Cf. EG 236

12. Consumerism, narcissism, and individualism are expressions of the tendency of a dominant culture that does not always understand someone who renounces a comfortable and self-sufficient life or builds relationships of inclusive intimacy not centered exclusively on the biological-genital dimension. A religious

VC 87

life that is attentive and sensitive to the way one expresses oneself in the culture where it finds itself is always a fertile life, able to propose alternative ways to share work and resources (poverty), to love and let oneself be loved (chastity), and to participate in projects developed in common (obedience).

NewWine 38-40

5. “Let the brothers not make anything their own, neither house, nor place, nor anything at all.”

LR 6,1

13. The Franciscan movement played an important part of the transformation of feudal society to an urban one, participating in a critical and active way in the construction of more free and fraternal society, with equality before the law for all. The meeting of the sultan Al-Kamil and St. Francis reminds us that dialogue and encounter, if authentic, are able to overcome every barrier and border, interior or exterior, that impedes the culture of peace. The Rule insists on the importance of the relational dimension that lets one see the other as brother: *“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.”*

ER 16

14. To live **without anything of one’s own** and to have recourse to the **table of the Lord** are the same thing, not possessing anything (expropriation) and accepting freely what is given (mendicancy). These essential elements for understanding Franciscan poverty also make it possible to live inter-culturality. To expropriate ourselves of our own thoughts and desires allows encounter with other ways of thinking. The mysticism of Franciscan itinerancy, with the move from one cultural environment to another and learning to let oneself be taught, is made out of renunciation and freedom, of lightness and sobriety, of commitment and openness⁴.

LR 1:2

Test 22

4 Cf. L.C. SUSIN, *Vida religiosa consagrada en proceso de transformação*,

6. The Capuchins and the continual return to St. Francis

15. Memory, tradition, history, transmission, symbols, dreams, and promises make up the soul and language of Capuchin culture. We share a vision of the world that expresses itself by means of material elements, relationship styles, and symbolic aspects that make us different and help to us to keep our identity alive: the desire to return to St. Francis, simplicity and poverty, a way of sharing what we have together in the common use of things, the practice of authority and power, the way in which we are among the people, our habit and simple way of clothing ourselves, where we live and simplicity in construction and our use of the means of transportation, healthy relationships with the communications media and new technologies, etc.⁵ Our Capuchin saints are the best expressions of our identity.

16. Capuchin culture in the present is marked by the different cultures that make it possible and condition it in various ways. The transmission of the essential and common elements from one culture to another demands a good knowledge of both local and Capuchin culture. Only what is loved and lived with passion is transmitted. Not all values are understood in the same way in all cultures. Therefore, in order to guarantee the transmission of the charism, our styles of presence have as their starting point and horizon the life of evangelical brotherhood.

17. Reflection on inter-culturality has been and remains one of the greatest challenges that we will have for the future. In PCO III on *Missionary Life and Activity* (Matli, Switzerland 1978), in PCO V on *Our Prophetic Presence in the World* (Garibaldi, Brazil

Paulinas, São Paulo 2015

5 Cf. G. POZZI, *Devota sobrietà. L'identità cappuccina e i suoi simboli*, EDB, Roma 2018.

1987), in the Lublin assembly on the theme of *Capuchin Identity and Culture* (Lublin, Poland 1992)⁶ and in the international meeting on *Evangelical Brotherhood in a Multi-ethnic World* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 2004)⁷. we find guidelines for reflection and practical suggestions that help us to understand the new aspects of our identity present in different cultures.

18. The establishment of inter-cultural fraternities demands discernment and attentive accompaniment; it is not enough to put friars from different cultures under the same roof. Certain personal attitudes and a solid spirituality are necessary for an inter-cultural fraternal life. These prerequisites for living in an inter-cultural fraternity demand a good and solid particular formation⁸.

II. FROM THE RATIO FORMATIONIS TO THE LOCAL FORMATION PROGRAMME. INITIAL ORIENTATIONS

19. In the drafting of Formation projects and programmes, certain rules and common criteria will need to be followed, albeit with some flexibility, that can help us to share the successes and limits in the implementation of the *Ratio Formationis*.

20. The Capuchin culture is able to think, feel and dialogue with other cultures and to be respectful of various ways of expressing emotions, feelings, the perception of time and space, aesthetics,

6 *Analecta Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum* 108 (1992) 401-614.

7 *Analecta Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum* 120 (2004) 1095-1101.

8 Cf. P. MARTINELLI, *Interculturalità e formazione alla vita consacrata*, en UNIONE SUPERIORI GENERALI, 73° conventus semestralis. *Nella istoria verso il futuro. Cambiamenti geografici culturali nella vita consacrata. Sfide e prospettive*, Litos 2009, 77-105.

gastronomy, hygiene, forms of organization and other social and ethnic values.

1. Methodology

21. The process of intercultural formation takes as its starting point the spirituality of kenosis, which requires recognising and respecting differences; listening and dialogue; openness and interaction with other cultures.

22. There needs to be a clear and critical awareness of the non-negotiable charismatic values that must be communicated to each culture.

23. On the one hand, see that the contents and experiences of initiation are introduced gradually. On the other hand, ensure that all the dimensions are integrated in a charismatic perspective, while varying the emphasis given to these dimensions at each stage of formation.

2. Key roles

24. The secretariat of formation in each circumscription is responsible for applying the general principles of the *RF* to the concrete reality of its context, and for reflecting upon, checking and evaluating the projects of the various formation houses.

25. Every brother and every formation fraternity must be informed about and actively participate in the preparation and revision of the formation plan of the circumscription or the conference. Primarily responsibility for encouraging, preparing and implementing the formation programme rests with the Provincial Minister or Custos with his Councils.

26. The General Minister and his Council, through the General Secretariat for Formation and the International Formation Council, have the task of evaluating and certifying the suitability of formation programmes and their alignment with the general principles of the *RF*.

3. Content

27. The content of formation is not transmitted in abstract ways, but by means of cultural categories that enable it to be understood, as well as by appropriate structures that create meaningful experiences. Images and experiences of God, Christ, the human being, the Church, the world, society, St. Francis and St. Clare, shape our personal and communal vision of spiritual life and the world. Creative fidelity requires that these images and experiences be periodically reviewed at a personal and community level from a cultural point of view.

28. The charismatic values presented throughout the *RF* can be integrated in different ways and can be weighted differently than the criteria used in the report. Here below, we indicate the essential elements required in every culture.

A) The centrality of fraternal life

- The size of the fraternity, of the formation team and the number of friars being formed;
- The equality of all the brothers, regardless of their choice for the lay or clerical state;
- Fraternal ways of relating and exercising the service of authority.

B) Contemplative life and prayer

- Personal, community and liturgical times of prayer;
- Formation in the capacity for silence and listening to God and the world (different methods);
- Centrality of the Biblical spirituality: use of the Word of God in prayer.

C) Life in Minority (both qualitative and quantitative)

- Humble acceptance of the personal limitations of brothers and sisters in fraternal relationships;
- Principle of simplicity: to have the minimum necessary not the maximum allowed;
- Formation houses must be located in poor areas that foster contact with simple people.

D) Mission

- Pastoral experiences, guided by and done together with other brothers, must be expressions of the whole fraternity, thus avoiding individualism;
- Missionary activity is an outgrowth of an intimate and affective relationship with the Master lived in fraternity, which avoids attention-seeking and pastoral narcissism;
- Pastoral activities must be in line with our vocation as minors, and train us to be willing to go where no one else wants to go.

29. Accompaniment (i.e. guidance, direction)

- Define the boundaries of accompaniment, and distinguish between accompaniment, spiritual direction and psycho-

logical counselling. Fundamentally, formation is concerned with personal growth and understanding of our charism;

- Although the whole fraternity fosters the charism, we cannot forget that the quality of their service will depend on the specific formation that the formators have received;
- Relationships are especially complex in certain cultures. Values such as respect and tradition should not become obstacles to the trust and sincerity necessary for effective accompaniment.

30. *Discernment*

- In addition to the Church's and the Order's criteria for discernment, each culture must incorporate its own criteria, especially concerning discernment and vocational motivations;
- To ensure valid results when applying the criteria for discernment, it is essential to have a love for and knowledge of both the local culture and the Capuchin culture;
- Charismatic discernment applies not only to the content, but also to methodology and formative structures.

31. *The Formation of Formators*

- Formators should be able to work as a team, especially in the areas of accompaniment and discernment;
- They must have a solid charismatic formation in the areas of theology, religious life and Franciscanism;
- They must have experience in the area of human formation: techniques and strategies for discernment and human-spiritual accompaniment.

32. *Collaboration (among circumscriptions and conferences)*

- Respect the tension between identity and the sense of belonging to a circumscription and the new structures of collaboration in the Order;
- Ensure that the collaboration process is the result of the reflection and participation of all interested parties;
- Allow brothers and organizations that do not participate in the collaboration to guide and evaluate the processes.

4. Time Frame

33. The current text of the *RF* is only a working document. During the coming year, a new commission will incorporate the General Chapter's observations and corrections with the goal of having the text approved *ad experimentum*. After being implemented and evaluated, the document will be definitively ratified in the General Chapter of 2024.

34. In order for the implementation of the *RF* to be effective, a protocol must be drawn up for educating friars about it, promoting it, providing guidance concerning it, and evaluating it. Primary responsibility for creating this protocol rests with the members of the International Formation Council and the formation delegates of the circumscriptions.

35. We strongly recommend that a Plenary Council of the Order on the topic of *Formation and Transmission of the Charism in the local cultural context* be held in the middle of the sexennium, in view of developing local formation programmes.



APPENDIX II

WHERE THERE IS CHARITY AND WISDOM, THERE IS NEITHER FEAR NOR IGNORANCE

Adm 27,1

While engaged in studies, therefore, let the brothers develop their hearts and minds in such a way that, in keeping with the intention of Saint Francis, they grow in their vocation. In fact, formation for any type of work is an integral part of our religious life.

Const 38,5

I. RATIO STUDIORUM

1. Preliminary considerations

1. The heart of study according to our charism is the desire to learn and the will to transform what is learned into service. Franciscan study is a way of understanding life. It has a sturdy past which is full of valid intuitions for the present and the future, and is furnished with its own methodologies.

2. Ways of learning are in constant transformation. The generalized access to new technologies offers us new parameters of understanding, new possibilities for relationship, and new styles of transmission for our values, rooted in the tradition of Franciscan thought. We can respond in a more adequate way to the challenges of the future by strengthening intellectual formation in the Order.

3. Our *Ratio studiorum* has a sapiential character. The ultimate goal of study is life, the concrete goal of orienting life toward seeking the good. It is the whole person who both learns and teaches. Reflection and study are fundamental for anyone who wants to learn to live both from and toward the good.

2. Paradigm shifts in study

4. The traditional system of teaching has long been based on the understanding and repetition of the ideas of the teacher; the best student was the one who repeated with greater precision what he had read and heard. This vertical and repetition-based system has given way to other methods that empower participation, creativity, critical ability, and collaboration among students themselves.

5. The following are some of the positive characteristics of the *Bologna Process*¹, which all the study centers of our Order must gradually make their own:

- To introduce more active teaching methodologies as a function of the content, and of the competencies and abilities that the student must acquire in realizing his academic-formative path.
- To renew academic programs, structures, and systems of evaluation.

1 The *Bologna Declaration* is an education agreement signed in 1999 by the greater part of European governments, joined also by the Holy See in 2003. The Congregation for Catholic Education, through AVEPRO (Agency of the Holy See for the Evaluation and Promotion of the Quality of Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties: www.avepro.glauco.it) proposes the development of a culture of quality with academic institutions directly dependent on the Holy See. The quality of study program must be considered an intrinsic and necessary value of a university.)

- To foster both personalized accompaniment and the ability for team work.
- To establish channels of communication and the transmission of knowledge, thanks to the sharing of spaces for reflection and the results of research.
- To promote the mobility of students and teachers.
- To promote team work among teachers by means of departments.
- To activate checks on quality by means of various systems of evaluation, as well as through development of an academic memory that reflects the work of teachers and publications.
- To make uniform the recognition of titles and credits (*ECTS – European Credit Transfer System*).

6. The Church, for its part, through the new apostolic exhortation *Veritatis gaudium* (VG) on ecclesiastical universities and faculties, proposes:

- A unitive vision of the world that overcomes the fragmentation of knowledge.
- An integral, relational anthropology with persons at the center, so as to offer an alternative to competitive individualism.
- A joint and interdisciplinary understanding of knowledge in order to face utilitarianism and pragmatism.

7. Universities are not deposits of a knowledge that must be transmitted by professors to students, but are cultural laboratories meant to transform situations through the creation of and experimentation with new ideas and projects. This paradigm shift must be guided by four fundamental criteria:

VG 1-6

- **Contemplation**, which draws us into the spiritual, intellectual, and existential point of view at the heart of the keryg-

ma and allows us to live both risk and faithfulness, even in difficult existential and pastoral situations.

- **Dialogue**, which demands communion and communication in order to create a true culture of encounter.
- An **inter-disciplinary** approach as an intellectual principle, reflecting the unity of knowledge in its diversity and respect for its many expressions.
- **Working in a network** of the different ecclesiastical institutions at the international level.

3. Jesus, the Teacher

8. Truth is not an abstract idea but a person: Jesus the Word of God, he who makes his life into a teaching. Jesus observes the realities around him and then, beginning with silence and solitude, contemplates with his heart what he has seen with his eyes. From contemplation comes the will to transform situations by announcing the values of the Kingdom: love, goodness, truth, justice, freedom, and reconciliation.

Mt 5: 3-12

9. Jesus chooses his disciples and forms with them a community in which one teaches and learns in a personal and deep way by sharing experiences in brotherhood. His style is itinerant and open to all, including women. Through a dialogical and existential method he helps the people he encounters on the way to integrate their own limits, always offering a horizon of growth and self-overcoming.

Lk 6:12-16

10. Jesus' teaching is found in concentric circles: the Twelve, the seventy-two, the multitude, and still others besides. Thanks to the creative vitality of the Spirit, the Christian community that prays, reflects, announces the good news, and takes care of the

Mt 10:1-20
Lk 10:1-12
Lk 5:3

poor and the sick keeps alive the presence of Jesus in history and in society.

4. Study in the Franciscan tradition

11. St. Francis, in his brief letter to St. Anthony, offers a valuable frame for locating study in terms of our charism: the spirit of prayer and devotion. The fruits of study, as with those of prayer, must be made available to the brothers and put into service in the construction of a more fraternal and just society. LtAnt

12. *Paris has destroyed Assisi*: This phrase of Jacopone da Todi illustrates how many times study has been seen as the enemy of humility². At the same time one finds accounts that tell of the poor and simple life of the first friars who went to Paris. Their way of life prompted the interest of various masters in the university who then joined the Order, and thus their chairs moved to the peripheries and came to remain in our friaries³.

13. In the collective testimony of the *Greccio Letter* which precedes the hagiographical account of the *Legend of the Three Companions*, all the way to the *Summa Fratris Alexandri* as a collected work of theological thought and point of reference for Franciscan thought, the predisposition of the charism for shared intellectual work is manifested. Humility, the evangelical virtue par excellence in our spirituality, continues to be the foundation of fraternal life and intellectual work in common. In this sense, the presence of the first friars on the peripheries of Paris, living L3C 3

2 JACOPONE DA TODI, *Le poesie spirituali del B. Jacopone da Todi, con le scolie e annotatione di Fra Francesco Tessati da Lugnano* 1.1 Sat 10 (Venetis 1617), 431.

3 THOMAS OF ECCLESTON, *De Adventu Fratrum Minorum in Angliam*, n. 31.

among the simple people and having experiences of the problems of daily life, imprinted a proper character on the Franciscan way of thinking⁴.

14. From its beginnings the Capuchin reform also knew the tension between the virtue of humility and the task of study. Nevertheless, already in chapter IX of the Constitutions of 1536 we find the essential lines of a new vision of study with a strong Christocentric and sapiential focus, in which contemplation of the life of Christ, mirror of humility and poverty, is compatible with study⁵.

15. Following the strong eremitical inspiration of the first years, the demands of preaching moved the first Capuchins to establish programs of study. The objective was to preach to every creature the love of God as it is based in the Scriptures, above all in the law of love contained in the Gospel. The Capuchin friars had a clear sense that the study of Scripture should transform our images of God and help us to let of the spirituality of fear⁶.

5. Study according to our charism

16. Intuition, relationship, experience, and affectivity are the pillars that support the vitality of Franciscan thought. Faced

4 Cf. M. BARTOLI, *Una università francescana? Riflessioni sull'incontro tra minorità evangelica e sapienza accademica*, in A. SCHMUCKI – L. BIANCHI (Ed.), *La ricerca della verità in un'apertura alla comunione. Spiritualità francescana e vita universitaria*, EDB, Roma 2018, 43-57.

5 Cap IX, 121-125: books and libraries (121); devout and holy study (122); exhortation to students that they might study in poverty and humility (124); the prayer before lessons (125). Article one of these Constitutions provides that the four gospels are to be read three times a year, that is to say one each month.

6 Cf. F. ACCROCCA, *L'ombra di Ochino. I Cappuccini, la predicazione e lo studio agli inizi della nuova riforma* in F. ACCROCCA, *Francesco e i suoi frati. Dalle origine ai Cappuccini*, Roma 2017, 399-424.

with a culture of *groupthink* (marked strongly by ideology)⁷ and *weak thought* (fed by relativism)⁸ our alternative is *humble thought*, which offers itself without imposing and has roots in the good and the logic of free gift⁹. The idea of our charism is a culture of collaboration, agreement, encounter, and service to the poorest and the marginalized.

Thinking together: building an evangelical brotherhood

17. Study is not an isolated exercise of individuals competing to be the best. As brothers we study together within the framework of the brotherhood. Spaces for community reflection do not annul the richness of each one's individuality but protect us from self-sufficiency and individualism. We are called to join study with life, to learn and to think, to decide and to evaluate together. It is necessary to begin to do this from the first stages of formation, in order to work effectively at the various levels of responsibility: provincial councils, formation and pastoral teams, academic councils, etc. Participation in decisions is the means that fosters the realization of plans of a fraternity.

Honing our listening: hearing the Word of God

18. Contemplation nourishes study and study feeds contemplation. The Franciscan school speaks of contemplative study, or, in other words, of the capacity to approach realities beginning

7 The original term is 'pensée unique,' a pejorative expression for ideological conformism coined by French journalist Jean-François Kahn. – trans.

8 A term from the critique of postmodernism of the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo. – trans.

9 Cf. O. TODISCO, *Il dono di essere. Sentieri inesplorati del medioevo francescano*, Messaggero, Padova, 2006.

from the world of the affect. The intellectual and spiritual dimensions complete one another. Listening to the Word of God in fraternity makes us more sensitive and allows us to understand people's concerns, anxieties, and dreams with the heart. Study helps us to respond to concrete issues, beginning from the Franciscan hermeneutic that discovers the presence of the Trinitarian God in the beauty of creation and in the drama of human relationships.

Opening our eyes: compassion for the suffering of the world

19. The poor are our teachers. Study too helps us to change our outlook. Minority is not just a quality of life, but above all a point of view – a way to observe matters – as we try to see the world from the peripheries and with the eyes of the poor. Responding to the social dimension of evangelization is an integral part of the mission of the Church, which makes choices for the sake of the least and those marginalized by society. Study makes us responsible and helps us to acquire the necessary competencies to build up peace, mediate conflicts, and fight against poverty and inequality.

VG 37

20. From the perspective of the Franciscan charism, study – just as much as in its content and methodology – must respond to our desire to *contemplate, together as lesser brothers, the mystery of reality from the point of view of the poor and the periphery*.

II. THE STUDY PROGRAMME: THEMATIC ESSENTIALS FOR EVERY STAGE

21. The nuclei indicated below has to be gradually, organically and systematically incorporated in the formation programme of every circumscription.

22. To strengthen our Charismatic identity, all the brothers, independent of their lay or clerical options, have to know fundamental contents of the subjects of biblical, theological and Franciscan thoughts, progressively distributed in the different stages of formation.

23. The Franciscan methodology is active, creative and participatory while promoting the values of effort, discipline, perseverance and responsibility. The critical and shared reading of the texts is recommended to stimulate the reflection of the community. Annual planning must include several evaluation sessions.

1. The Ongoing Formation

24. Each brother, through a *continuous deepening* of the proposed nucleus, must make a *vital synthesis* on a personal and community level.

1.1. Christian Formation

- The following of Jesus according to the different methods of biblical reading. Integration of the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith in everyday life;
- Moral & Pastoral theology from the point of view of the signs of times;
- Reflection on the challenges of evangelization, inculturation and putting into practice the social doctrine of the Church
- How to form and accompany those responsible for catechesis, apostolic movements and those who collaborate in our pastoral tasks;
- Use of the media in new evangelization contexts;

- Management and administration of social, economic and cultural assets.

1.2. Franciscan Formation

- Reading and critical interpretation of the life of St. Francis and St. Clare;
- Personal synthesis of the vision of God, of Christ, of creation, of man, of the Church and of society in the light of Franciscan thought;
- Reading the Bible, the principles of law, art, literature and the economy from the Franciscan point of view;
- Implication and integration of the laity in our life and mission;
- The spirit of Assisi and current challenges: the ecological crisis, the construction of peace processes, the right to life, social inequalities and exclusion.

2. Postulancy

25. The Candidate through an *initial knowledge* of the Charism is *introduced* to our Franciscan form of life.

2.1. Christian Formation

- The person of Jesus and his message;
- Systematic catechumenate on the symbol of faith and the sacraments;
- Synthetic presentation of Christian spirituality;
- Foundations of Christian morality;

- General notions of liturgy (without neglecting the rite itself);
- Introduction to the faith filled reading of the Holy Scriptures;
- Introduction to the meaning of prayer and presentation of the various methods.

2.2. Franciscan Formation

- The Religious Vocation in the Church;
- Introduction to the life of St. Francis & St. Clare;
- Synthesis of the principal elements of the Franciscan Spirituality & Charism;
- Presentation of the Franciscan Family in general and of the Capuchin family in particular.

3. The Novitiate

26. The novice must *know* the Christian and Franciscan life in the light of what the Constitutions prescribe.

3.1. Christian Formation

- The figure of Jesus in the Gospels;
- Ways of life in the Church: the various charisms and ministries;
- Anthropological, biblical and theological aspects of the vocation;
- Psychopedagogy of vocation: motivations and attitudes;
- Mary, Mother of the believers and model of every disciple.

3.2. Formation for the Religious life

- Biblical foundations of religious life;
- Brief history of the way of religious life;

- Essential elements of religious life from a theological perspective;
- Introduction to spiritual life.

3.3. Franciscan Formation

- Critical study of the life of St. Francis and St. Clare;
- Writings of St. Francis and St. Clare;
- Franciscan hagiographic sources;
- Systematic study of the Franciscan charism and spirituality;
- Constitutions, Ordinances and Plenary Councils of the Order;
- History of the Order and of the Province itself;
- Figures of holiness of the Order.

3.4. To deepen the study of the Constitutions

- The Constitutions of St Euphemia and its historical evolution;
- The renewal of the Constitutions after Vatican Council II;
- Interdisciplinary analysis of our Constitutions;
- Inculturation of the Constitutions.

3.5. Introduction to Prayer and Liturgical life

- Biblical and theological bases of prayer;
- Prayer and contemplation in the Franciscan-Clarian Charism;
- Personal prayer and community prayer;
- Methods and techniques of prayer and meditation (prayer with the Word of God);

- The liturgical year, the Eucharistic liturgy and the liturgy of the Hours;
- Practical questions about participation in the liturgy.

4. The postnovitiate

27. The temporary professed, in view of the perpetual profession, should *deepen and strengthen* the knowledge of the Charism:

4.1. Formation for Religious life

- The personal vocation: origin and itinerary of one's own vocation;
- Personal experience and assimilation of the project of Franciscan life;
- Following and radical configuration with Christ;
- Religious vows, fraternity and mission;
- The Order today: priorities and charismatic challenges.

4.2. Franciscan Formation

- The Franciscan Question;
- Franciscan history in its different periods;
- The philosophical-theological thought of the Franciscan masters (St. Bonaventure, Blessed John Duns Scotus, Roger Bacon, William of Ockam, Peter G. Olivi, St. Lawrence of Brindisi);
- Franciscanism and our time: justice, peace and protection of creation; Missionary dimension and inculturation of the charism in different cultures.

5. Other elements that must be taken into consideration at different stages

- Technical preparation: crafts, practical crafts and domestic services;
- Economics and administration studies: prerequisites and budgets;
- Real-world analysis techniques;
- Literary artistic training, musical preparation and plastic arts;
- Study of modern languages;
- Audio-visual techniques, computer science and communication sciences;
- Studies on one's own culture in relation to the mission.



LET US LOVE WITH OUR WHOLE HEART

ER 23

Since chastity flows from love for Christ, may we bind our hearts inseparably to Him Who chose us first and loved us to the ultimate gift of Himself, making it our concern to belong totally to Him.

Const 170,1

I. AFFECTIVE AND PSYCHOSEXUAL MATURITY

1. Preliminary considerations

1. How human relationships are arranged and the understanding of different identities are undergoing profound transformations. Within contemporary culture, marked as it is by a strong hedonistic accent which tends to reduce sexuality to something solely biological, we must reaffirm that it is within the relational and affective world that maturity is built and reached. Our formation plans, beginning from a positive understanding of sexuality, must overcome certain departures from this such as, on the one hand, the spiritualizing tendency which, dis-incarnating the feelings, impoverishes and falsifies our humanity, or, on the other hand, a psychologizing tendency, which reduces the whole mystery of love to simple psychological theories which obscure the beauty of the varied, gospel ways of living sexuality.

AL 151

2. Certain socio-cultural principles that regulate the sense of belonging to or exclusion from a group are determinative in the construction of the affective-sexual structure of the person. Each culture offers different ways of understanding and expressing our humanity. Sexual identity contributes to giving meaning and providing an answer to experiences and needs, helping us to understand who we are. Nevertheless, while there are societies in which the themes of sexuality are discussed openly, in others they continue to be taboo and, in not a few cases, subject to restrictive religious imagination.

3. To define the psycho-affective profile of the Capuchin lesser brother has as its objective to offer tools for living religious consecration positively and authentically. We are called to a formation that helps us to conform our feelings to those of Christ. This demands an entrusting of oneself to the transformative power of love; to be able to channel sexual energy by means of positive satisfactions, to know how to recognize and model our emotions and impulses, to accept and understand the limits and wounds of our style of life. In following Jesus, especially in his humanity, we find the key for interpreting the mystery of our humanity.

Phil 2:5
VC 65

Postn2004 5.2

2. God is a mystery of Love

4. *“He who does not love does not know God; for God is love.”* The Divine Persons express the intimate identity of God, loving one another in a freely-given way, transforming the love received into gift without appropriation. This expansive character becomes historical in the incarnation; by means of the Son, the world is filled with God. The Creator, in making himself creature, transforms history into love. The Trinity and the incarnation are the

1 Jn 4:8

model and path that allow us to convert our possessive love into a love that is oblation.

DC 7

5. In Jesus God takes on our human nature, including our affective-sexual reality. His affectivity is rooted in a deep intimacy with God the Father. In his living among us, Jesus loved us with a human heart. The gospels illustrate the feelings and emotions of Jesus: his marveling at creation, his compassion for the weak, his preference for the littlest, his respect for women, and his passion for friendship. His giving of himself for the plan of the Kingdom brings Jesus to choose a life of chastity, such that he could orient all his energy to discovering and fulfilling the will of God. The Cross reveals and embraces the axes of Jesus' heart: the vertical axis that expresses his absolute love of God and the horizontal axis that transforms this unconditional love into commitment for the people in his concrete circumstances.

GS 22
Lk 12:27
Mk 1:40-45
Mt 19:14
Jn 4:4-43
Lk 10:38-42

6. In the Eucharist, the sacrament of love and center of our life, in remembering the gestures and words of Jesus, we find ourselves with him and with those for whom he handed himself over. This is the mystical and prophetic dimension of the Lord's Supper: to offer our lives in a total and freely-given way.

DC 14

7. The Holy Spirit, the creative manifestation of the love of God, by his gifts keeps the desire of God alight in us, and makes us able to be free, authentic, responsible, and simple. The Spirit nourishes and strengthens both the desire to love and to be loved and so orients us toward seeking the good.

Postn2004 5,3

3. Capable of an ever greater love

8. The rich and complex reality of our sexual nature manifests itself in the desires for intimacy and relationship, in the needs for

solitude and encounter, in the longing to be known completely and loved unconditionally, in the integration of the affections, and in living our bodiliness.

9. The gift of sexuality fosters our ability to love, to be in relationship, to create spaces for empathy, tenderness, and altruism – experiences without which we cannot arrive at spiritual maturity and a harmonious affective life. The integration of the many facets of sexuality in the complex fabric of life allows us to live our vocation by means of a gradual journey of conversion from a selfish and possessive love to another kind of love that is of altruism and renunciation, able to give itself for one's neighbor. PCO IV,52

10. A greater attention to the psychosomatic dimension assists in the development of self-esteem. The body has its own language that we must learn and hear: pleasure, pain, loneliness, company, fear, anger, and joy are all part of our spiritual life. There follows from this the importance of caring for our senses. Touch is an essential element in the building of human relationships; thanks to touch we are able to express ourselves¹. By means of touch Jesus himself entered into contact with all kinds of people and healed them. Francis, thanks to physical contact with the lepers, cured their spiritual wounds. Mt 7:31-37
L3C 11

11. Our memory keeps the memories of feeling from the past: moments in which we received healthy affection but also negative experiences that arouse injuries as well as make difficult the harmonious integration of relationships in normal affective development. It is necessary to distinguish between temporary problems, often linked to a growth process, that can be overcome with new experiences or relationships, and deeper prob-

1 Cf. D. J. LINDEN, *Touch. The Science of the Sense that makes us Humans*, Penguin Books, London 2015.

lems that demand attention and watchfulness for the whole of life if they are to be accepted and integrated. Most people tend to repeat behavior according to their own models and the same thing happens, with greater intensity in those with serious affective and emotional problems. In these cases they tend to repeat the negative emotional situations and self-damaging behaviors that can provoke frustration, sadness, fear, anxiety, shame, and feelings of guilt and failure. On the other hand, when such energy is channeled positively it opens spaces for a life of fecundity and of authentic relationships².

12. Nor is the journey of seeking an ever-greater love without renunciations. In the affective life of consecrated persons it is always necessary to take on and integrate a certain wound through a positive lens. Love, even more than creativity, needs discipline and purification. If these renunciations are lacking, a fertile spiritual life becomes impossible. There are affective spaces that only God can fill. The human heart is never fully satisfied³.

4. Like Francis, lover of the Creator and all creatures

13. Love transformed Francis into the image of the Beloved. It was a journey of transformation that lasted the whole of his life. His personal relationship with Jesus helped him to know his own narcissistic tendencies and to integrate his own limits. Contemplation, the encounter with the lepers, penance, and the gradual mortification of his body and mind all formed part of the process of the purification of his motives. Francis was

LM 13,3

2 Cf. D. GOLEMAN - R. DAVIDSON, *The Science of Meditation: How to Change your Brain, Mind and Body*, Penguin Life, London 2017

3 P. GAMBINI- M. O. LLANOS- G. M. ROGGIA (Ed.), *Formazione affettivo-sessuale. Itinerario per seminaristi e giovani consacrati e consacrate*, EDB, Roma 2017.

probably the most human of the saints, able to integrate all the dimensions of his personality in a harmonious and creative way.

14. A universal love for humanity and for the world, without excluding anything or anybody, is the most exalted sentiment that the human being can lift up. Francis was in love with God and with creatures. Recognition of and openness to their otherness allowed him to enter into affective and fraternal relationships with all of creation. Water is a humble sister, useful and pure, as well as a Franciscan symbol of chastity, for in its free gift of self it embraces without appropriation and without limiting the freedom of the one embraced.

Cant 7

15. The brotherhood is the place of our human and affective growth; therefore we entrust ourselves to it freely and with all our heart. To mature is a fraternal journey; it is only by growing together that we arrive at a true and harmonious integration of all the dimensions that make up our life. Authentic brotherhood helps us to live quality relationships, to create spaces for intimate sharing, and to manage our feelings and affections in a constructive way.

Const 21,4

PCO IV 55;
Const 172,6

16. Friendship is a gift that makes human and spiritual growth possible. Francis, friend and brother to all, is characterized by both the richness of his feelings and desires and his ability to express them. Authentic relationships generate spaces for freedom and avoid situations of dependence and manipulation. To share one's friendships with the brothers of the fraternity as well as the rapport with one's own family fosters the creation of a healthy environment in our communities – without forgetting, however, that the brotherhood is our family.

Const 173,4

Const 173,5

Const 173,6

17. Our collective imagination and the socio-politico-religious

organization of society are marked by masculine stereotypes that impede the recognition of the gift of feminine genius. At times, even our language and our behavior, reflecting our male chauvinist and clerical universe, communicate feminine images that are not emotionally healthy. For Franciscan spirituality, the affectionate relationship between St. Francis and St. Clare is a model of true integration and reciprocal complementarity. Clare, as a faithful interpreter of the gospel intuitions of Francis, represents the feminine vision of our charism. From both we learn that our behavior with everyone, including women, must distinguish itself by its respect and sense of justice, promoting their dignity and mission in society and in the Church.

NewWine 17

VC 58

Const 173,4

5. Certain current difficulties

18. The paradoxical tendency toward individualism and the inability to live personal intimacy or manage creatively one's own **solitude** that goes with it explain the better part of our the difficulties in our affective life. Affective emptiness tends to feed on extreme activism, possession of unnecessary things, undeserved compensations, inappropriate relationships, or excessive or improper use of the mass media. The result is always the same: existential boredom, a loss of the sense of consecration, and, insofar as something becomes pathological, emotional and affective imbalances.

Walk 18; PI 43

Const 171,3

19. Without losing view of the complex interdisciplinary relation between the socio-cultural, psychological, and biological areas, **sexual orientation** must always be compatible with the form of life that we have freely chosen. The formation process must assess relational maturity and the healthy understanding and accepting of the sexual identity of each friar. The sexual

Const 172,3

identity of a person is one of the aspects of the person that most distinguishes his individuality. As there is no generic love, nor does there exist a generic sexual identity. Formation accompaniment must avoid the temptation to pigeon-hole the friars in formation into pre-conceived sexual typologies.

Postn2004 5,2

It is necessary to distinguish between those who have a recognized and affirmed homosexual psycho-affective structure (experience and certain knowledge of one's own homosexual identity along with, in some cases, demands for institutional recognition) and those who, not being affectively mature, are unsure about their sexual orientation and looking for their identity. These, because of fear and inability to recognize their own feelings, often deny and do not share their confusion in the affective-sexual area with formators. In this case the indications of the Church are to be followed⁴. It is also fitting to protect our environment from certain ideas and proposals characterized by forms of recognition and ways of living relationships that generate tension and exclusion in the dynamics of the fraternal life. Soon we will also have to face the question of 'gender ideology' with greater attention.

20. The use of the mass media, of new information and communication technologies is also something on which we put our personal stamp. These media can help us to established enriching relationships and great flows of communication – or do exactly the opposite. Access to information content that is nearly unlimited but also without sufficient formative criteria has consequences in our ability to concentrate. Furthermore, the abuse

4 CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders*, 2005. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*, 2016 (nn. 199-200).

of these media, above all the Internet, leads to a lack of care for fraternal relationships, a loss of motivation, and even depression. Urgent and special attention is necessary for cases of online pornography and gambling addiction.

21. The Order, in the 84th General Chapter, recognized that the **abuse of minors and vulnerable adults** is a crime against justice and a sin against chastity. Abuse has grave and enduring effects on a great many people and communities, especially on the victims themselves. The abuse of power, whether physical or psychological, has consequences beyond those that are visible and external. There are wounds also at the psychological and emotional levels; these are deeper and more difficult to care for and heal. Passive participation, complicit silence, and the acceptance of violence are also grave. Each circumscription of the Order, keeping civil law in mind and with the explicit approval of the General Curia, must have its own norms for the prevention of abuse. We strongly recommend specific days of formation on these norms that they might be known, accepted, and put into practice by all the friars.

PCOI VII,22

22. May the Virgin Mary, model of docile consecration to the Father's plan, always open to the creative love of the Holy Spirit, she who walks with us, help us to make our affections that of her Son, that our life may be emotionally fruitful and a prophetic and eschatological sign for the People of God.

II. AFFECTIVE FORMATION

23. Affectivity and sexuality are pervasive realities in the dynamic process of formation. As a result, formation must begin with a healthy understanding of the body, taking the advancements of human sciences into account.

24. Both human and intellectual formation is very important in the process of integrating the values of our charisms. Progress in integral growth must be bolstered by the use of practical methodologies and concrete subject matters.

25. The principle aim of formation is to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, starting from our affectivity. What is affective is effective; therefore, formation must really touch the heart. What made St. Francis so effective was his ability to make people feel, taste and experience the sweetness, joy and goodness of love that is God.

26. The primary and original place where we are to grow in our relationships with others is the fraternity. Here we are called to live our affectivity with spontaneity and normality. It is everyone's responsibility to create healthy environments for religious and emotional life, which in turn allow new ways of living the charism and experiences of faith.

27. A formator must have a solid spiritual and psychological formation that allows him to know, identify and interpret the various affective problems that may occur in our particular style of life, as well as to follow up and offer practical guidance for resolving them.

28. *General Objectives:*

- To be conscious of the way affectivity and sexuality function, as viewed from biological, psychological, socio-cultural and spiritual perspectives, in order to identify and manage our emotions, feelings and attitudes;
- To learn to live our sexuality and affectivity by establishing responsible relationships and facing the real, concrete challenges of daily life, both in our fraternities and outside of them;

- To be aware of how our personal history hinders or enables a positive experience of religious consecration. Most conflicts and difficulties in relating to others are largely explained by negative experiences that have not been healed.

29. *Youth and Vocation Ministry:*

Specific Objective: that the candidate be able to identify the different ways of living affectivity and sexuality in the socio-cultural context from which he comes.

- Learning to share and accept emotional experiences;
- Becoming aware of affectivity and sexuality as resources;
- Being comfortable with one's own body and being able to properly organize one's time.

30. *Postulancy*

Specific Objective: that the candidate *begin to deepen his understanding of his affectivity and sexuality.*

- Learning to understand and manage emotions;
- Increasing awareness regarding one's sexuality;
- Learning to identify stress;
- We recommend that a medical examination and a psychological evaluation of the candidate be done during this formative period.

31. *Novitiate*

Specific Objective: that the novice learn to read and interpret his own psycho-affective history through a faith perspective.

- Deepening knowledge of oneself and of one's own vocational history;
- Integrating sexual development into one's vocational process;
- Learning to take care of oneself, on human, psychological and spiritual levels.

32. *Post-novitiate*

Specific Objective: that the post-novice learn to establish free and responsible relationships, starting from the transparent experience of his life as a consecrated person.

- Learning to listen and communicate in a deeper way;
- Ascertaining the ability to choose a life of chastity;
- Learning to set limits on oneself and others regarding relationships.

33. *Lifelong Learning*

Specific Objective: that all the friars be able to manage positively the normal difficulties that arise in the areas of affectivity and sexuality.

- Deepening the ability to talk about pastoral experiences;
- Being able to manage affective conflicts inside and outside the fraternity;
- Learning to reflect upon the consequences of one's behaviour.

34. *Tools:*

- Periodic formational, spiritual and, when necessary, psychological support;
- Reading the Word of God as an opportunity for an emotional and personal encounter with Christ;
- Recounting one's past, including its sexual dimension, as a personal history of salvation;
- Reflecting together as brothers about our inner selves and our feelings, where we can clarify doubts and fears. Personal care: physical exercise, healthy eating habits, leisure time, personal hobbies, etc.

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