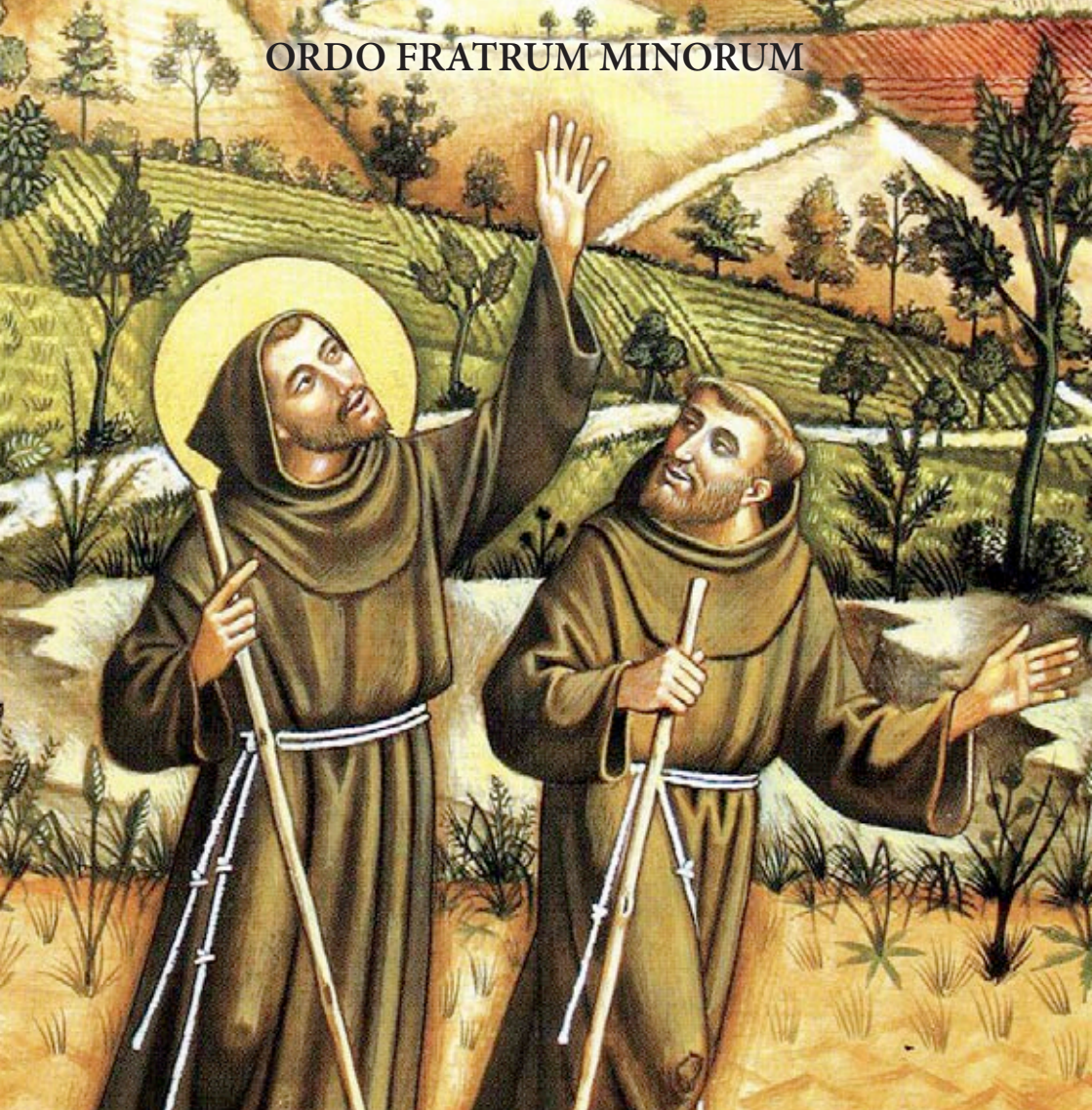


ORDO FRATRUM MINORUM



Ite, nuntiate...

GUIDELINES FOR THE NEW FORMS OF LIFE
AND MISSION IN THE ORDER

REVISED 2017

ORDO FRATRUM MINORUM

Ite, nuntiate ...

GUIDELINES FOR NEW FORMS OF LIFE AND MISSION
IN THE ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR

ROME
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*“Therefore, all my brothers,
let us be very much on our guard that,
under the guise of some reward or assistance,
we do not lose or take our mind away from God.
But, in the holy love which is God,
I beg all my brothers, both the ministers and the others,
after overcoming every impediment
and putting aside every care and anxiety,
to serve, love, honor and adore the Lord God
with a clean heart and a pure mind
in whatever way they are best able to do so,
for that is what He wants above all else.*

*Let us always make a home
and a dwelling place there for Him
Who is the Lord God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”*

(Saint Francis, Earlier Rule 22, 25-27)

Foreword

Dearest Brothers,
May the Lord give you his peace!

“*Ite, nuntiate...*”: these words, addressed by the Risen Lord Jesus to Mary Magdalen and the other Mary, and handed on to us by St. Matthew in his Gospel account, continue to echo today from the empty tomb. They are a forceful call to us, as Friars and “Lesser Ones”, to respond with renewed conviction to the Gospel call that we have received. The consequence of the Lord’s invitation to “go and proclaim – *ite, nuntiate*” is that we rise with him, and are filled with dynamism, energy, commitment and creativity.

In that spirit of joy and holy newness, I would like to present this resource which the General Secretariat for Missions and Evangelization has drawn up, in which they offer Guidelines for *New Forms of Life and Mission*. These New Forms demonstrate a living desire to return the gift of our vocation to the Lord—by discerning the signs of the times and, through praxis, expressing the Order’s commitment to a revitalization of its presence in the world of today.

The purpose of this booklet is to highlight these *New Forms*, and to make them better known to all the Friars, but particularly to the Provincial Ministers and Custodes who have the task of discernment about the friars who have been entrusted to them, who are called to encourage these brothers, and to closely accompany the setting up of new Fraternities. The Guidelines are addressed in particular to you, dear Brothers who are inspired to live *New Forms of Life and Mission*, so as to provide you with support, solidarity and a solid set of criteria, as you make what burns inside you a reality.

I wish to sincerely thank the General Secretariat for Missions and Evangelization and the members of the Commission that prepared this resource — Brs. Massimo Tedoldi, Arturo Rios Lara,

Adriano Busatto, Mario Vaccari, Jacopo Pozzerle and Jacques Jouët — as well as all those who have contributed to its drafting and completion. Thanks to our translators, this booklet will be published not only in the three official languages of the Order, but also in French, Portuguese, German, Polish and Croatian.

The various *New Forms of Life and Mission* within the Order have covered considerable ground in terms of preparation and life experience; this is a clear and well-established matter of fact. The General Constitutions (115§2) express a wish for them, and they were strongly encouraged by the General Chapter of 2009 (*Bearers of the gift of the Gospel*, Mandate 20), which sought to embody the identity and newness of our charism.

As I entrust these Guidelines to you, I invite you all, dear friars, to look to our Holy Father, Pope Francis, with energy and fervor. Inspired by him, a true New Evangelizer, we will be able to discover ways of living our Gospel life and mission within the Church and in the world that are in constant renewal, as we serve the poorest and those living on the ‘peripheries’ of humanity.

May the Blessed and Poor Mother of Jesus our Lord, and our seraphic father Saint Francis, accompany, support and intercede for us on this path, as we follow “Him who is, was and will be, the Almighty” (Rev. 1:8).

Rome, 20th April, 2014
Easter Sunday, Resurrection Day

Fraternally,

Br. Michael Anthony Perry, OFM
Minister General

Prot. 104706

Introduction

This is a booklet born in the streets — one could say written with feet rather than by hand... written by the feet of those who walk outwards, the feet of those who have heeded the command from the Crucifix: “*Francis, Go!*”, as well as the call of the leper: “*Francis, come!*” It has been written by the feet of many authors — friars who have been attempting to bring to life the orthodoxy of our so many beautiful, perfect, yet too often forgotten documents ... These feet have made the transition from theory to practice, from a paper-based approach to one which deals with concrete realities. They have dared. They have become dirty on the dusty roads of our world in order to spread the message of peace and all good. These brothers, whose feet walk forth, present each of us with a fascinating vision: how wonderful it is to stride out of the little friary cloister and go walking in the larger cloister of the world! To meet, to learn, to proclaim, and first and foremost to spend time with people ... and, with hands that are unarmed and minor, to touch the flesh of the people who live in our cities, on the peripheries, people who are in search of meaning, in search of life. To share the conviction of Pope Francis: “*To go out of ourselves and to join others is healthy for us.*” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 87), knowing that it does us good because going out to others means heading in the direction of Christ, who is goodness in the form of a person.

The guidelines you are reading have been written by brothers such as these, with two aims: to call the entire world-wide Fraternity to drink from the ever-new sources of the charism with which we have been gifted, so as to shake us out of the lethargy that results from prosperity that is deadening and imprisoning; and to portray in a kind of photographic way the progress we have made to this point, including the joys and struggles, failed attempts and good outcomes, all made possible by the strength of the Spirit.

These guidelines aim to simply present:

- A brief history of the New Forms of Life and Mission; a story in which the interplay between the Lord's inspiration, the response of the individual brother, and the discernment of the Ministers can be perceived,
- Some suggestions arising from the experience of those who are trying to live out the beauty of the Franciscan charism with a deep desire and commitment to the renewal of personal and community life, and to an effort to translate the charism into a language spoken by people,
- A proposed synthesis of the elements which are the foundation of a New Form of Life and Mission, a synthesis which has its origin in the conflicting and sometimes combative dynamic between ad intra and ad extra, between the daily ascent towards God and the descent towards our brothers and sisters,
- A realistic representation of the numerous expressions of the New Forms in disparate world contexts; diverse manifestations of the features of the Lord, who loves all creatures and the world that he made with his own hands.
- Some humble and fraternal suggestions as to how to build constructive relationships between the New Forms and the life of the Province, particularly in relation to the formation phase, which requires accompaniment and evaluation.

We are grateful to the Brothers who, faced with the frequent risk of simply talking about the Incarnation, instead believe in the reality of the Word made Flesh, of the Word that is constantly becoming Flesh today, in the historical time and geographical location in which Providence has placed us.

To us, the appeal of a new life is magnetically powerful. It reminds us that the *Identity* of the Order of Friars Minor itself is *Newness*. In fact, we are most ourselves when the Newness of the Holy Spirit of God erupts within us.

Together we entrust the progress of these New Forms to the new life of the Risen Lord, so that the music of the “Alleluia!” of new life may resound within us and all our Fraternities!

We now have two new Saints, Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul II: may their company help us to *build a home and a permanent dwelling for the Lord almighty within us* (Saint Francis): a home that everyone can enter and encounter there His merciful face, which is always marvelously new!

Rome, 27th April 2014
2nd Sunday of Easter
or Divine Mercy Sunday

Br. Massimo Tedoldi
Secretary general for
Missions and Evangelization

1.
New wine in new
wineskins

*“Let us all remember this:
one cannot proclaim the Gospel of Jesus
without the tangible witness of one’s life.*

*Those who listen to us and observe us
must be able to see in our actions
what they hear from our lips,
and so give glory to God!*

*I am thinking now of some advice
that Saint Francis of Assisi gave his brothers:
preach the Gospel and, if necessary, use words.
Preaching with your life, with your witness.*

*Inconsistency on the part of pastors
and the faithful between what they say and what they do,
between word and manner of life,
is undermining the Church’s credibility.”*

(Pope Francis, *Homily*, Basilica of Saint Paul Outside-the-Walls
Third Sunday of Easter, 14 April 2013)

1.1. An overview of our most recent history

“Modern men and women listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if they do listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”

(Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 41)

The period of renewal following the Council has seen the birth of new Fraternities within our Order which are new in their composition, their location, their style of life, and their aims. Motivated by a desire to be more faithful to our origins, and to respond to what the Church and the world expects of us, the call to a more authentic Gospel life was strongly felt. It was in these circumstances that the movement of “Small Fraternities” emerged between 1960 and 1980¹. The choice of a life plan based on Gospel values led to an exodus from conventual structures towards working for one’s living and sharing a life in common with all men and women, beginning with the poorest and most marginalized. This movement gave birth to a variety of experiences almost all of which, however, ended a few years later. In practical terms, many obstacles prevented these projects from reaching complete fulfillment: the motivation behind them was perhaps too idealistic or ideological; there were difficulties in maintaining a healthy tension between on the one hand attending to daily life and the life of prayer in fraternity, and on the other hand responding to the demands of external commitments, principally those related to work (which was often salaried).

In the last twenty years, this search has continued and has been fruitful. Now the process is less concerned with sociological imperatives, and is less likely to slip into ideology; its focus is on a radically evangelical life that has the potential to be a sign and witness of the Kingdom to our contemporaries. The influence of documents from the Church and the Order has led to the central motivation

¹ Cf. Report by Br. Thaddée Matura at a seminar in Assisi (20-24 March 2006): *From the Portiuncula to Europe: new Franciscan prospectives*.

of the projects moving in the direction of Evangelization, without however forgetting that fraternal life in minority is the source of any true mission. We came to the realization that we are faced with totally new questions and changed understandings because of the fact that, particularly within the European Continent, post-modernity has profoundly altered so many cultural paradigms. In addition, there was a clear perception that the language, symbols, locations, and the ways in which we had tried to express our form of life until then, were no longer adequate. The responsibility was felt of making the charism more and more meaningful, so that our lifestyle could regain qualities such as transparency, testimony, and evangelical power, in order to become both prophecy and sign.

During that time, many friars had experiences which made them aware that the Spirit of the Lord was guiding them to new ways of perceiving, thinking, and daring. Moreover, a number of friars found that the New Forms were a concrete expression of their desire for renewal and revitalization of their Consecrated Life. This came about in the context of the difficulties they experienced at the spiritual, personal, and community levels because of the influence that our “historical” structures have on the way we follow Our Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the experiences which has had a great impact on the search for New Forms is that of itinerancy. The Itinerant Fraternity is a concrete way of radically living the Gospel, of being a sign and a witness to the values of the Kingdom for our contemporaries. It is a missionary fraternity which “makes one of the aspects of the Franciscan life once again become real, by living alternate periods in prayer, with no money, in homelessness, or begging in order to witness to the *Christi vivendi forma*”².

In fact, it was during an evaluation meeting following an itinerant mission through the streets of Rome (February 2005), to which the Secretary General for Evangelization had been invited, that the idea emerged of a European gathering with the specific

² From the Project of the Itinerant Fraternity, cf. *From the Signs of the Times to the Time of Signs. Testimonies*. OFM General Curia, 2002, 30-34.

aim of sharing experiences, and of stimulating a search for possible new avenues for the future. Other gatherings were subsequently held, all of which have contributed greatly to the thinking about the New Forms³. One of the principal benefits of those seminar-style meetings was the sharing of different experiences, including those from outside the Order of Friars Minor. When the various lived experiences were compared, common factors could be identified, characteristics that constituted the “newness” to be found in the different fraternities. It was also important to make the distinctiveness of these experiences a starting point, so as to compare practical responses to the inevitable tensions between fraternal and personal life plans; between a life *ad intra* and *ad extra*; between the new ways of life and traditional fraternities; as well as those between an individual friar’s duties at Provincial level and the fraternal project. One of the positive experiences arising from the meetings was a synergy between the grassroots and the government of the Order. In fact, the meetings, which were organized by the Secretary General for Missions and Evangelization (SGME) were always attended by the Minister General, Br. José R. Carballo, and by several Definitor General, as well as by friars coming from very different experiences. The various seminars produced several modest resources which were extremely useful in allowing the friars of the whole Order to grasp and understand the spirit and significance of the New Forms⁴. In their concluding messages, the meetings always took into account different levels of the Order — Provincial and Inter-Provincial (co-operation between neighboring Provinces), Conferences of Provincial Ministers — and also had a particular focus on Europe (something which needs further development, in particular regarding praxis). We see one of the positive outcomes

3 1st Seminar: Assisi, 20-24 March 2006; 2nd Seminar: Frascati (Rome), 7-10 January 2009; 3rd Seminar: Sassone (Rome), 2-6 May 2011; 4th Seminar: Greccio, 4-8 March 2013.

4 1st handbook: *From the Portiuncula to Europe (2006) and New Avenues for Franciscans in Europe (2009)*; cf. also the final Paper of the 3rd European Meeting on New Forms of Evangelisation and the new fraternities, Sassone (2011).

of the seminars as being the birth of the European missionary Fraternity of Palestrina, under obedience to the Minister General. This particular project aims to live in “newness” and, together with friars belonging to different Provinces, wishes to welcome, facilitate and help direct the plans and “dreams” of those friars who would like to be part of the New Forms.

Along the way it became progressively clearer that our vocation is a gift, and not a right that we succeed in attaining, or need to demand from anyone. It is a gift that can flourish well within the ordinary circumstances and fraternities of our Provinces. We welcome this gift as a call to greater coherence of life, and we recognize that it is the “the Spirit of the Lord and his holy operation”⁵ acting within us which makes this come about.

Recently the Magisterium of the Church also seems to be encouraging us to continue to follow the path towards renewal of our lives that we have undertaken up to now: “*while the family is the custodian of the sacredness of life at its origins, Consecrated Life, because it is called to conform itself to Christ, is the custodian of the ultimate, full and radical meaning of life*”⁶. The one thing necessary for those who have professed to live *sine proprio* is to actually live the Gospel. This gift is always shown to be greater than our personal desires and projects.

5 Cf. Saint Francis, *Later Rule*, Chapter V.

6 “*The testimony of Consecrated people, as the Synod recognizes, has an intrinsic eschatological significance. You Consecrated persons are witnesses to the “the meaning of the human existence seen from a post-earthly perspective”, and your life, because it is “totally consecrated to him [to the Lord], in the exercise of poverty, chastity and obedience, is a sign of a future world which makes every good in this world become relative”.* Cf. *Message of the Italian Bishops for the 17th World Day of Consecrated Life (2nd February 2013)*, where the *Message to the People of God from the Synod on the New Evangelization* is quoted (26th October 2012, n. 7).

1.2. “New”... in what sense and why?

“A new evangelization is needed! New in its ardor, in its methods, in its expressions”.

(St. John Paul II, *Speech to XIX Assembly of CELAM*, 9 March 1983,3)

In the course of these last decades, the word “new” has frequently appeared, both in addresses and in ordinary discourse. In its ardent search for a new relationship between the Church and the modern world, Vatican II resolved to give “new answers to new problems”, to “have recourse to a new way of presenting things”⁷, with the goal of thereby arriving at a “new Christian humanism”⁸, and it indicated that the two-fold movement of spiritual renewal and adaptation to the modern world is the model for renewal in the Church⁹. The subsequent writings of the Magisterium proceed along the same lines of “newness”¹⁰, leading to the famous statement of John Paul II, according to whom, evangelization today must be “new in its ardor, in its methods, in its expressions”¹¹. More recently, Benedict XVI, further to setting up a new Dicastery¹² for this purpose, wished to dedicate an Assembly of the Synod of Bishops to the theme of the New Evangelization. The concluding message from the Assembly presents two components: spiritual renewal *ad*

7 John XXIII, *Gaudet mater ecclesia*, opening speech of the Council, 11 October 1963. This speech was defined as the “Manifesto of the new times”.

8 Paul VI, *Concluding speech to the Council*, 7 December 1965.

9 As *Perfectae Caritatis* (PC), 2 clearly expresses: “The adaptation and renewal of the religious life includes both the constant return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original spirit of the Institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time.”

10 John Paul II, *Vita consecrata* (VC), 1996 speaking of “New responses for the new problems of today’s world” (VC 73) and of “New projects of evangelization for the situations of today” (73).

11 John Paul II, *Speech to the XIX Assembly of Celam*, Port-au-Prince, 9 March 1983, n.3.

12 Benedict XVI, *Motu proprio Ubicumque et semper*, by which he established the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, 21 September 2010.

intra, and preaching *ad extra*, as the necessary guidelines for all evangelization¹³.

Actually, the “newness” so widely spoken of in recent decades is a feature of any Christian life: it is the fruit of a continuous conversion that makes us new — both in our hearts and in our relationships — leading to a greater acceptance of the Lord, and of the brothers and sisters who walk with us in time and space. The ‘new’ is faithful discipleship in the school of the Master who affirms that he will make “all things new”¹⁴; it is that dynamism which transforms “*you heard it was said...*” into “*...but I tell you*”¹⁵. The inner and outer aspects of the ‘new’ are as inseparable as the root and its fruit. Thus, the heart’s transformation encompasses all the relationships and activities which make up our life with others, both within our fraternities and in our pastoral work.

To be authentic, the “new” always requires an interaction between the past, with its rich heritage, and the future which brings many changes that can be felt even in the present. Consequently, the ‘new’ unites memory and prophecy, and combines a return to the sources with a longing for the future and a desire for the ultimate goal (which is why our tradition uses the word *Novissimi* in speaking of the realities which await us). The dangers attached to a tendency to emphasize one aspect to the detriment of the other has been evident in the years since the Council. On the one hand, there is the risk of a kind of archaeological and self-referential return to the past and its customs, and, on the other, an ill-considered break with the past that has the potential to destroy the roots of Christian life. The Lord himself indicates the balance to be struck when he says of himself: “I am the Alpha and the

13 “*Changed social, cultural, economic, political and religious circumstances call us to something new: living our experience of faith in community, as well as preaching in a renewed way*”, 12th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 7-28 October 2012, *Message to the people of God*, 2.

14 “*See, I make all things new*” Rev 21:5.

15 Mt 5:21-22; 27-28; 33-34; 38-39; 43-44.

Omega, the One who is, who was and who will be, the Almighty” (Rev 1:8). We must put on Christ, “putting on the new person” (Eph 4:24; cf. Col 3:10). In this way, the coming of the New is a harmonious dynamic between the Alpha and the Omega, between the beginning and the end, between memory and prophecy.

The path taken by the Church in its search for the ‘new’ is clearly observable in our General Constitutions and in the documents of the Order¹⁶. In our Fraternity, the expression *New Forms of Life and Mission*¹⁷ always means ensuring that inner renewal, daily conversion, and fraternal life ad intra, are never separated from our evangelizing mission, which is “embodied” and “inserted” in the today of history. In the life of Saint Francis, “doing penance”¹⁸ always gave him new eyes to see to whom his preaching should be addressed, as well giving him a new heart to accept everyone, beginning with the lepers and the poor of his day, all those who experience poverty in relation to God and to material things. The ‘New Forms’ particularly highlight fraternal life, which is “the principal and clearest witness to the Gospel”¹⁹, and is therefore the “primary form of evangelization”²⁰. In order to express Gospel transparency, they wish to maintain a spirit of prayer and devotion within the fraternity, and hope to build true and deep fraternal bonds, living in minority and with a passion for the preaching of

16 CCGG. 115 § 2: “*In order that our fraternity may be prophetic in fulfilling its duty to evangelize, the friars are to be eager to live the Franciscan charism (novis formis charisma franciscanum vivere) according to the mind of the Church and in union with the life of the fraternity.*” Cf. General Chapter Final Document, 2009, *Bearers of the Gift of the Gospel (BGG)*, in which number 20 encourages “New Initiatives.”

17 In speaking of these Fraternities the following expressions are commonly used: *New Forms, New forms of Life and Mission, New Forms of Fraternal Life and of Evangelisation, New Missionary Fraternities, Inserted Fraternities.*

18 *Testament*, 1.

19 CCGG 87 § 2; cf. CCGG 84.

20 CCGG 89 §1. Cf. also BGG 27: “*It is always the Fraternity which evangelizes*” (cf. also number 28).

the Gospel. The evangelizing mission of the ‘New Forms’ can only find a solid basis for renewal if it proclaims externally what it lives internally. Ongoing Formation is particularly important in this process of renewal — it should be valued as a continuous call, and a stimulus towards the newness of Gospel life.

In their *ad extra* features, the various new forms of mission represent a multiform array of responses to the urgent need of meeting the men and women of our time where they are; of moving closer to all people, particularly to the neglected; of putting into action that “*Francis, go!*” which the Crucifix constantly repeats to us today, at the same time sharpening our hearing so as to hear the cry of our brothers and sisters, saying “*Francis, come!*”; of sowing hope and longing for the new heavens and the new earth²¹. This involves an evangelical sensitivity in presenting the Gospel in the language of our day; it requires the courage to rethink structures which often hamper our progress; it includes the daring that is characteristic of those who live in the newness of the Spirit.

The word *new* is not set in opposition to traditional forms of evangelization; instead, it is seen as complementary to them, in the sense of “both/and”²² — although the new has to be given a special place in today’s changed social and ecclesial circumstances²³, where the *signs of the times* have become evident. The two-thousand-year history of the Church shows that the mission of evangelization has always “taken on new forms and employed new strategies according to different places, situations, and historical periods.”²⁴.

21 “*New heavens and earth*” 2 Pt 3:13; “*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth*” Rev 21:1.

22 BGG 17: “*One of the inter gentes forms of evangelization, in which many brothers are involved, is that called “traditional” evangelization, which continues to be respected and in no way negates or opposes new forms of evangelization*”.

23 BGG 20: “*Without neglecting the activities of ordinary evangelization, preference should be given to new initiatives*”.

24 Benedict XVI, *Ubicumque et semper* — the *Motu Proprio* establishing the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization.

This statement gives us additional motivation for continuous renewal²⁵.

The *New Forms of Life and Mission* want to revisit the Franciscan Sources, which are perennially fresh and new, so as to imbibe the original charism of Saint Francis, the “new man”²⁶, the man of the future. The sources will lead us to be inspired and energized, so we can develop new ways of doing things, new models and styles of evangelization, new missionary strategies.

In this moment in history, when the Order is coping with restructuring and its difficulties, we should always remember that “reorganization will be creative and a source of prophetic signs if it takes care to announce new ways of being present—even if only in small numbers—in order to respond to new needs, especially those of the most abandoned and forgotten areas.”²⁷

25 As indicated in n. 13 of the same council Decree *Perfectae caritatis*, whereby the wish is expressed that the vow of poverty be testified in new forms: “novis formis exprimatur”.

26 3*Cel.* 1,1; *Leg.M* 12,8.

27 *Fraternal Life in Community*, CICLSAL 1994, 67. Cf. Benedict XVI, *Audience of the 13 January 2010*: “Today too, although we live in a society in which “having” often prevails over “being”, we are very sensitive to the examples of poverty and solidarity that believers offer by their courageous decisions. Today too, similar projects are not lacking: the movements, which truly stem from the newness of the Gospel and live it with radicalism in this day and age, placing themselves in God’s hands to serve their neighbor. As Paul VI recalled in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, the world listens willingly to teachers when they are also witnesses. This is a lesson never to be forgotten in the task of spreading the Gospel: to be a mirror reflecting divine love, one must first live what one proclaims.”

2. New Forms of life and mission

*“May the Lord give us this freedom
to enter that sanctuary
where He is the priest who intercedes for us,
and anything we shall ask the Father
in his name, He will grant us.*

*But may He also give us the courage
to go into that other “sanctuary”
where are found
the wounds of our needy brothers and sisters who suffer,
who still carry the cross,
and have not yet won, as Jesus has”.*

(Pope Francis, *Homily at Santa Marta*, May 11th, 2013)

2.1. Towards a common identity. Guidelines

“Making my own the concerns of my venerable Predecessors, I consider it opportune to offer appropriate responses so that the entire Church, allowing herself to be regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit, may present herself to the contemporary world with a missionary impulse in order to promote the new evangelization.”

(Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter in the form of “Motu Proprio” Ubiicumque et semper, establishing the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, 21st September 2010).

During the course of the meetings and seminars the key elements of the ‘New Forms’ became clearer, as well as the order of priority of those elements, and the need for a harmonious relationship between them. During the 2009 Frascati Seminar, the friars agreed on seven criteria which are essential for the establishment of a New Form of evangelizing presence. In the years that followed, those criteria were not only confirmed as having validity, but were also constantly deepened within each individual fraternity, as well as in the meetings and the series of seminars we mentioned above.

The General Chapter of 2009 (in mandate 13), wished to promote a Franciscan approach to the evangelizing mission of the friars and, to an extent, took up and used the criteria which had emerged from the preceding seminars. A significant area of agreement was also found in the results of the Interdisciplinary Study on the State of the Order, in which most the friars surveyed asked for a greater focus on the spiritual life; fraternal communion; openness to people; cooperation with the local Church; and sharing our mission with lay people, and the Franciscan family²⁸.

28 The survey was conducted in 2012-2013 by Fr. Renato Mion SDB, with a sample of about 1,400 friars. An in-depth analysis of the results of this survey

Finally, the 2013 Greccio Seminar emphasized that any ‘New Form’ must value the pastoral care of vocations and formation, as well as cherishing relationships with the Franciscan family and with lay people.

In its final message, the Seminar held in 2011 at ‘The Carmel’, Sassone (Rome), asked that some guidelines for the *New Forms of Life and Mission be drawn up*, with a view to determining their essential features, and subsequently informing the Entities of the Order of them, thus encouraging the promotion and establishment of ‘New’ Fraternities. The following, in summary, is a list of the essential features:

1. *The primacy of our life of prayer, and of active listening to the Word* (daily or weekly “Lectio Divina”; one hour a day of personal prayer; ‘contemplative’ recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours);
2. *The promotion of deep, authentic fraternal relationships that will give clear witness to life in brotherhood* (frequent fraternity Chapters; daily opportunities for dialogue, which needs to be safeguarded through discipline in the use of communications technology — such as the internet, cellphones, and television);
3. *A lifestyle characterized by moderation and simplicity, minority and witness* (made evident in concrete options such as: fidelity to manual work, as St. Francis wished; involvement in domestic tasks and the running of the house, if possible without employing staff; a commitment to financial self-reliance);
4. *Welcoming people, and sharing our lives with them; above all with the poor* (being open to people);
5. *Ensuring that our Evangelizing Mission retains characteristics such as: openness to mission inter gentes; itinerancy; being*

was then carried out by the General Definitory and the administration of the Curia, as well as by the Committee set up to make an Interdisciplinary Study of the Situation of the Order, as requested by the General Chapter of 2009 (BGG, mandate 14).

present in unknown, difficult and risky locations; being close to those who are most poor, suffering, and excluded; having a pioneering approach to new forms of evangelization; being involved in “inserted”²⁹ Fraternities (leaving the friary cloister for the cloister of the world);

6. *Being in communion with the local Church (principally in our witness of fraternity and minority);*
7. *Having a willingness to actively collaborate with lay people and with the Franciscan Family (both at the Inter-Provincial and International level, as well as among the various Fraternities, while also networking with the Palestrina European Missionary Fraternity and with the General Secretariat for Missions and Evangelization).*

29 Cf. BGG, Mandate 20: *“Without neglecting the activities of ordinary evangelization, preference should be given to new initiatives. In order to privilege the missionary and evangelizing dimension, with special attention to new horizons and forms of itinerant evangelization and “inserted” fraternities, the General Definitory, with the participation of the respective Conferences, should promote typically Franciscan formative programs for friars and lay people together”.*

2.2. A harmonious life

“A renewal of preaching can offer believers, as well as the lukewarm and the non-practicing, new joy in the faith and fruitfulness in the work of evangelization. The heart of its message will always be the same: The God who revealed his immense love in the crucified and risen Christ. Whenever we make the effort to return to the source and to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today’s world. Every form of authentic evangelization is always “new”.

(Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, 11).

The fact that the friars identify basic criteria for starting upon a New Form of Life and Ministry does not mean that they thereby avoid the daily challenges involved in harmonizing these fundamental elements. It is clear that the criteria are interdependent and will need to interrelate in a harmonious synergy, which results from the activity of the Holy Spirit within us. Obviously, different kinds of “new Forms” will emphasize one or other of these elements, depending on the inspiration behind that particular “New Form”.

We can see, therefore, something of the challenges of having to put into practice a range of elements, some of which can appear to be contradictory. But the struggle to overcome these contradictions is actually the ongoing search for the will of God, and it is precisely that which will bring about personal and community conversion. The first mandate of the 2009 General Chapter throws light on this process. This mandate urges us to live out the five Priorities of the Order (life with God; fraternity; minority; evangelization; formation) in terms of our mission. This leads to a dynamic interplay, in which each of the Priorities is clarified through its relationship with the others — while, in combination, they form

the basis for proclaiming the Gospel, “*ad intra and in the perspective of openness to the world*”³⁰.

- The first criterion, that of the primacy of God, unequivocally affirms that a living connection with the Lord, through personal and community prayer, and daily communication with the Word, lies at the heart of any ‘New Form’. That founding principle means that before any apostolic activity, the disciple needs to have taken time to pause. Contemplation and Mission must be in harmony, in accordance with Pope Francis’ principle of our always being missionary disciples³¹.
- *The promotion of deep, authentic fraternal relationships demands that time must be freely given to building fraternity*, which is the preeminent setting for our growth as brothers, Christians and Friars Minor³². The following need to be kept in balance: fraternal relationships ⇔ personal relationship with the Lord; life in fraternity ⇔ apostolic life; *ad intra* relationships between the friars ⇔ *ad extra* contacts. Indeed, other issues to be addressed include: finding a fruitful balance between the exercise of authority and fraternal dialogue; between our own personal plans and those of the Fraternity; between the projects of the Fraternity and the needs of the local Church. In Fraternities with an international component, different languages and cultures must also be considered, since these have a great impact on fraternal relationships.
- *A lifestyle characterized by moderation and simplicity* allows us to live our profession as ‘lesser ones’ in a way that identifies

30 BGG, 1: [They should] “*propose afresh the Priorities from a perspective of evangelizing mission and openness to the world, so that they might continue to be the fundamental values of reference in the animation of our life and mission*”.

31 Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), Apostolic Exhortation, 2013, 120: “*we no longer say that we are ‘disciples’ and ‘missionaries’, but rather that we are always ‘missionary disciples’*”.

32 Cf. CCGG 39.

us as sons of St. Francis. Our witness of life becomes evident, even before we proclaim it in words. The deep conviction that we must first be evangelized before being evangelizers³³, means that we constantly have the heart of a disciple, living in freedom and humility, with a deep-rooted awareness of our need for permanent conversion. Every single day, our living as ‘lesser ones’ challenges us to deepen aspects of our lives: how to ensure a balance, in terms of time and energy, between manual work, friary duties, and the commitment to missionary preaching; how to combine the desire to live a poor life with the need to earn money so as to be self-reliant; how to deal with the conflict between a simple lifestyle and living in large buildings which need maintenance and employees — while also being convinced that our structures should demonstrate Gospel values rather than obscure them, and that they need conversion as much as our lives do;³⁴ between the life of itinerancy, which by its nature is uncertain, and the comfortable life which awaits us when we return to the friary; between the radical call of our Franciscan vocation while being financially dependent on the Province³⁵.

- The Fraternities should also be alerted to the necessity of achieving a balance between the hospitality offered in our houses and the requirements of fraternity life — and also of being able to leave the house to be itinerant.
- In addition, any collaboration with the local Church needs to be carefully monitored so that it truly expresses our charism

33 *“in evangelizing, the Church begins by evangelizing herself”* (Paul VI, *EN 15*).

34 Cf. *Consilium Plenarium Ordinis Fratrum Minorum*, Guadalajara (Mexico) 29: *“Uniformity, and the excessive stability of certain structures in time and space, indicate an absence of Gospel character.”*

35 Always bearing in mind that *“the culture of prosperity deadens us”* (Pope Francis, *EG 54*).

as Friars Minor, and makes the Pope's call for "a poor Church for poor people" our own³⁶.

- Finally, while agreeing that the use of communications media can be good and worthwhile, we are also aware of the need for careful discipline in this area, so we can truly live in brotherhood within the Church, and with the entire world.

36 Pope Francis, *EG* 198.

2.3. The many faces of one way of life; Varieties of ‘New Forms’

“The Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life have always been a prophetic voice and living witness to the newness which is Christ, of conformation to the One who made himself poor so that we might become rich by his poverty. This loving poverty is solidarity, sharing and charity and is expressed in moderation, in the quest for justice and in taking joy in the essential, so as to guard against the material idols which blur the authentic meaning of life. Theoretical poverty is not needed, but rather the poverty that we learn by touching the flesh of the poor Christ, in the humble, in the poor, in the sick, in children.

Still, today may you be for the Church and for the world, the outposts of care for all of the poor and for all material, moral and spiritual poverty, and examples in overcoming every form of egoism through the logic of the Gospel which teaches us to trust in the Providence of God.”

(Pope Francis, *Message of the Holy Father to participants in the International Symposium on the theme: “The management of the ecclesiastical goods of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, for the service of humanity and for the mission of the Church”*, organized by CICLSAL, 8-9 March, 2014, Pontifical University, Antonianum).

In a response both to the call of God and the needs of the Church and society, the New Fraternities have taken on different features. They all have their origin in God, working in the hearts of the friars of various times and places, and they can be categorized as follows:

- *Fraternities based in a traditional friary.* This is an effective model for communicating the characteristic values of the ‘New Forms’ to a large number of friars in the Order. Although these Fraternities are not very unlike in regard to living a simple and sober life, and in providing a place of fraternal welcome, they are distinguished by specific characteristics:
 - A simple, basic lifestyle, with an emphasis on witnessing to minority

- Particular attention being given to the use of contemporary approaches and language
 - Openness to and collaboration with Religious and lay people
 - A place of welcome for priests and Religious needing spiritual accompaniment
 - A place of welcome for people in difficulty, whether spiritual or material
 - Hospitable to *migrants*
 - Attempting new ways of being “missionary”
- *Inserted Fraternities* — in marginalized areas of cities.
 - *Fraternities living in ordinary houses* (not friaries) located in rural areas: simple structures, manual work, strong connection with nature.
 - *Itinerant Fraternities* (some on an occasional basis): the friars live in a friary or house and are involved in evangelization activities, but also engage in itinerant evangelization from time to time³⁷.
 - *Hermitage Fraternities – itinerant evangelization* (these have periods of contemplation³⁸ alternating with periods of itinerant evangelization).

Each of these new forms of life constantly seeks a deeper response to God’s will through living a common commitment as ‘lesser ones’. By means of their faithfulness to Ongoing Formation, the Fraternity attempts to marry the seven essential features (listed above) to their own particular inspiration. This process involves a daily encounter with God and with the brothers, and it is precisely in this joyful struggle of entrusting oneself to Divine Providence that newness and fruitfulness emerge.

³⁷ *From the Signs of the Times to the Time of Signs. Testimonies*, 30.

³⁸ Living St. Francis’ *Rule for Hermitages*.

3.
**A life-giving relationship
with the Fraternities of
the Province**

*“The absolute priority of “going forth from ourselves
towards our brothers and sisters”*

(Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 179)

3.1. Towards a renewal of life and mission in the Fraternities of the Province

“All of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone and have the courage to reach all the ‘peripheries.’”

(Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 20)

The Fraternities committed to *New Forms of life and Mission* can truly be a haven for the Entities to which they belong, bringing an “evangelical freshness,” which can add savor and meaning to following the Lord within the contemporary Church. Their strong desire to live out our charism in greater authenticity becomes an example for the entire Provincial Fraternity, which is then drawn back to the very essence of Religious life, centered around three pillars: life with God; fraternal communion; and evangelizing mission. The “new” Fraternities thus become a stimulus for all the friars, as lesser ones, to daily live out those three elements that are at the heart of our charism — elements that are inseparable, and must be kept so.

Life with God.

Our life with God is the foundation for everything; it is the heart of our lives as Friars Minor, it is the nourishment that gives us strength for our everyday relationships in fraternity, and it is the energy that kindles the fire of mission. Being in a living relationship with God means that we will have:

- a generous, tender, open, and willing heart, which allows itself be transfixed by the Love of Christ, and by that of the brothers, especially in its dealings with those who suffer. It means a loving relationship with the God of mercy, which becomes apparent in the friar, at peace with himself and with his brothers. The true Peace that comes from God

alone can be communicated only by a friar who is himself already reconciled. Promoting a culture according to the “Spirit of Assisi” then becomes possible — a culture of non-violence, of goodwill, of tenderness in fraternal relationships, of forgiveness, and respect for creation — we become peacemakers, sowing peace in our world.

- the ability to let go of our own certainties, and instead entrust ourselves to the Lord as master of our lives. For several years now, itinerant friars have had some experience of this, leaving home with no money and without knowing in advance where they will spend the night, in total reliance on the Providence of God. In each of their missions they have seen how the Lord goes before them on every step of the way, watching over them with great goodness.
- a capacity to be able to ‘get out of the way’ and to allow room for Christ, recognizing that it is He who is the leader of the mission, not the individual friar. Although each friar’s skills are very useful, and are often well employed, it is crucial that we be vigilant lest they be thought of as separate from Him who is the author and giver of such talents. This means a profound recognition, both at the personal and community levels, that Christ is the protagonist of our lives, and that we are given life by the breath of his Spirit. Christ is the primary foundation of the life of the individual friar and of the fraternity. The source of strength and cohesion is not found in the personal gifts of any of the friars, but in Christ.
- a regular, sincere, and renewed commitment to pondering the Word of God; silence; periods of adoration; prayerful reading of the Word; and having an intense experience of the Liturgy, a most profound source of evangelization.
- a love for the Church, the saints, and particularly for the Virgin Mary.

Life in Fraternity.

The gift of brotherhood involves:

- humble relationships with others, without always wanting to be right, no matter how good our ideas are, and never imposing those ideas on our brothers. A fraternal spirit presupposes mutual acceptance, which is impossible when one brother dominates another. Humility in relationships allows the self to step aside in order to leave more room for the Lord, and results in an increased capacity to accept brothers who differ from me;
- having a preference for mutual listening, for sharing our lives, and for communication within the fraternity, practices which nurture the growth of the fraternity and each of the brothers. The desire to work in cooperation with others in seeking the Kingdom of God, which is a gift to be discovered every day. Joy — expressed by living simply in right and healthy relationship with oneself and with others, as well as with the poor. Experiencing with joy the beauty of pardon (given and received) through simple and direct fraternal correction;
- a sense of communion with the brothers of one's Fraternity, of the Province and of the Order, as well as with the Church in general. A healthy and well-balanced relationship with Authority, both in the exercise of it, as well as when being called to obedience;
- ensuring that at the times when he is outside the Fraternity, the friar can continue to live his Religious life without the loss of any of its central features — such as periods of prayer, of silence, of conviviality, and of activity.

The Evangelizing Mission.

The evangelizing mission, which is always carried out as a Fraternity, and arises from an inner drive to go and preach to others what the Lord has given to us, involves:

- a burning desire to give witness to our brothers and sisters in

- the world to what gives us life, so that they too can drink from the same source; a genuine availability for mission; a deep desire to preach the Gospel and put it into practice. Gospel boldness impels us to set out on this venture, following Christ;
- adequate preparation prior to setting out on the mission, and constructive cooperation with the various people involved; a living relationship with Christ who becomes incarnate in fraternal support that is mutual and caring;
 - ensuring that how we spend our days is subject to accountability and transparency, before God and under the compassionate gaze of our brothers. Gospel sharing after a period of intense activity is a wonderful tool for such a process; it allows us to take a step back from what we have experienced and fosters a common re-centering around the Word of God, welcoming what the Lord is saying to us;
 - the importance of kindness in mutual relationships, as well as the God-given peace and joy that dwells within the friar on mission;
 - time management; achieving a healthy balance between contemplation, community life, activities, studies and human relationships. On the one hand, the friar should not be “eaten up” by activity to the extent that he is no longer available to anyone and, on the other hand, he must avoid time-wasting and laziness.

3.2. Formation — rooted in life.

“The Church does not grow through proselytism but “through attraction””
(Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 14)

The goal of the *New Forms of Life and Mission* and their way of life is profound spiritual renewal. Ongoing Formation is seen as ongoing conversion³⁹, and this process includes the search for new means of evangelization. Through being attentive to the Word of God and the Signs of the Times, the ‘New Forms’ wish to establish new ways of living as communities of ‘lesser ones’, engaging in pastoral activity in a manner that makes sense to people of today.

The features evident in the ‘New Forms’ have a special connection with Formation (both Ongoing and Initial), since these fraternities attempt to take the “Ratio” taught in our houses of Initial Formation and make it a daily reality. It could be said that they put the “Ratio” into practice in a concrete “operatio”.

In recent years many candidates and friars in Initial Formation have had experiences of brotherhood and evangelization in fraternities that are considered ‘New Forms’. They have been able to spend time in simpler Franciscan fraternities, having direct contact with people — especially those on the “peripheries of humanity”.

In several Entities the ‘New Forms’ have welcomed Temporary Professed friars, particularly during the important period of preparation for Solemn Profession. This period of insertion has

39 Cf. VC 69: *“The formation process is not limited to the initial phase. Due to human limitations, the consecrated person can never claim to have completely brought to life the “new creature” who, in every circumstance of life, reflects the very mind of Christ. Initial Formation, then, should be closely connected with Ongoing Formation, thereby creating a readiness on everyone’s part to let themselves be formed every day of their lives”.*

helped the friars in Initial Formation to allow the Lord's call to emerge in their life and mission, and has assisted them in addressing the difficulties that often arise at that stage of their journey. The fraternity's Plan of Life and Mission is key in this; through an authentic process of Ongoing Formation, it strengthens fraternal bonds, deepens the Spirit of Prayer and Devotion, and fosters simple forms of minority.

Due to the close connection between the 'New Forms' and Formation, it is essential that the 'New Forms' and the Provincial Secretariat for Formation and Studies have a relationship that involves mature and trustful dialogue. If this is the case, then many beneficial effects for the life of the Province accrue:

- firstly, the impact on the 'New Forms'; they will see themselves as being genuinely "integrated" within the larger Fraternity in the Ongoing Formation program, while also having their distinctive place and function⁴⁰.
- in addition, the friars in houses of Initial Formation will see something of their future in the 'New Forms', and possible ways of putting into practice what they are learning during Formation.
- a positive model for the brothers of the Province, who will see a well worked-out balance between life *ad intra* and life

40 Cf. *You have been Called to Freedom. Ongoing Formation in the Order of Friars Minor*, no. 25, SGFS, Roma 2008: "The context of Ongoing Formation is that of ordinary life in the local fraternity, inserted into the cultural, social and political world, which remains the first and most important milieu in which the person learns to become formed by the multiple situations in which he finds himself. The local fraternity itself lives, in turn, within a network of wider relationships constituted by the Province or Custody, by the Conferences and by the Order itself. It is there that the invitation to engage in faith sharing according to the spirit of the methodology of Emmaus is situated..... It is not enough to draw up calendars and carry out formation initiatives if the capacity to share our lives is not present. Personal and community activities are useful in the measure that they support a process of fraternal relationship and participation."

ad extra; between the intellectual and the practical; between fraternal life and apostolic zeal;

- the availability of new, lively, dynamic, flexible, and reality-based experiences of Ongoing Formation;
- the possibility of welcoming young men who are attracted by the life of those new Fraternities, and who wish to have an experience of accompaniment and of vocational discernment.

More specifically, in relation to *Initial Formation*, the ‘New Forms’ aim to provide:

- periodic participation in Franciscan experiences during the various stages of Formation,
- welcome and guidance for the “Franciscan year”, and for placements, as appropriate,
- additional support in assessing the suitability of the young friars, and in the discernment of their specific call, through appropriate experiences of life and mission⁴¹.
- Provided the necessary conditions are met, the ‘New Fraternity’ itself could well be the House of Initial Formation.

The New Forms can assist the *Ongoing Formation* program with:

- Ongoing Formation that is truly living, starting from life and leading to life. They can facilitate a process that goes beyond aspects related to updating and training for pastoral work (important though those aspects remain);
- leading retreat and study days for the friars;
- providing welcome and guidance for periods of moratorium (time out) and for sabbaticals;
- specific experiences; at the Inter-Provincial and International levels, depending on how they are set up, the ‘New Forms’ can be a destination for friars who wish to share some of the

41 In line with the indications of the *Ratio Formationis Franciscanae OFM*.

values of our life in a more intense way, or for those friars who need to rediscover their motivation (or some other aspect of Franciscan life and mission).

3.3. Establishing ‘New Forms’: guidelines for a fraternal process of accompaniment and evaluation.

“Those who do not journey in order to avoid making mistakes make a bigger mistake!”

(Pope Francis, *Homily at Santa Marta*, 8 May 2013)

The starting point: the project.

It is not possible to begin to create something new without first having a vision of the endeavor that is real, attractive, and achievable — in this case, a project whose nucleus is solely the *vita Evangelii Iesu Christi*. This is the “heart” that will determine the direction of the process; it must be at the center of everything, and those involved must be agreement about it. Of course, questions such as the location of the project, and how it operates, are important. Nonetheless, they are secondary to this central issue and, indeed, sometimes it is people like diocesan Bishops who end up playing a major role in decisions regarding location and other practicalities. In certain cases, the discernment process can seem quite long and complicated, with the need for lots of discussion, both within the Provincial Fraternity and with the Diocese. But what is crucial is that the project is understood as a Provincial Project, which means that the Province is called to support and evaluate it as it develops, and that it conducts periodic reviews, especially during Provincial Chapters.

The brothers who belong to the ‘New Forms’.

For something like this to take off, the friars involved must be convinced, decisive, and clear-thinking. Three or four independent and mature friars will be needed; they should be men who complement each other, since this is not an individual project, but

is a Fraternity within which the charism of each member is valued. The initiative must be developed in an open and close dialogue with the government of the Province, and come to fruition through shared experiences, reflection and discussion.

The Life Plan.

The concrete Life Plan must ensure that the three fundamental values of our vocation are kept in proper balance: life with God; fraternal communion; and evangelizing mission. An authentic framework of liturgical and personal prayer will entail time and fidelity, as well as tranquility and a focus on the inner life; truly fraternal relationships will require the brothers to be habitually present; our Mission is preeminently expressed through our way of living, and the open welcome given to whoever comes to us, or whoever we encounter. In order to maintain a balance between these three fundamental elements of our charism, frequent and regular fraternal evaluation will be necessary.

The Role of Authority.

Provincial Chapters and Ministers Provincial have a responsibility to stimulate, encourage and discern. The relevant authority can, and must, stir up and awaken interest. They should seek out suitable friars, and be available to give help in times of discouragement, doubt or misunderstanding. The Ministers Provincial should regularly visit the brothers involved in 'New Forms', giving close accompaniment, and being attentive to the growth of the Project. Furthermore, they should ensure that there is good contact between the 'traditional' and the 'new' Fraternities, so that both can be a help to the other, especially by fostering a close relationship between Ongoing Formation and Initial Formation. Opportunities for an evaluation of the Project are particularly important during Provincial Chapters, and also during the first years of its life.

Relationship with the Church.

Authentic communion with the bishop and the presbyterate, with Religious and laity is to be an important goal. The friars live within the local Church and should feel part of it, offering our witness as friars and 'lesser ones', accepting everyone in a warm Franciscan way.

Conclusion

Sent out to the whole world

The Spirit calls on those in Consecrated Life to “develop and put into effect new evangelization initiatives for contemporary situations” (VC 73). This clearly means that new ways, new symbols, and new methods must be found that will allow the people of our time to come into relationship with the Gospel, something which is essential if we are not to be left out of the march of history and culture, both of which are in a continual process of change. Fraternities that are “short-term” and experimental are needed — ways of being present that are strongly theocentric, yet lovingly connected to the deep needs of the human person. The lifestyle of our fraternities must once again demonstrate the power of witness, and proclaim a clear message.

Many Friars within the Order are ready to risk entering into real dialogue with our society, ready to be itinerant in the cause of mission, driven by their passion for God and their compassion for the human person. They wish to do this without losing their connection with people of every kind. But how can we liberate these friars from the desperate worry of keeping existing structures going? How can we get beyond the struggle for survival, and overcome the fear that a certain kind of institution is about to end? How can new forms of presence be formed without affecting the unity of an Entity? How can the cozy lethargy that paralyses the many friars and Provinces be overcome? Pope Francis reminds us that: “The culture of prosperity deadens us” (EG 54).

Non-institutional fraternities have already been established which can also be termed ‘Itinerant’, ‘Inter-Provincial’, ‘International’, ‘Inter-Obediential’, and ‘Inter-Religious’. There are fraternities that work in collaboration with the laity, fraternities where listening, being evangelized, and being committed to mission are kept in balance. These initiatives have taken place on

a sporadic basis, but are likely to become building blocks for the future – combining to make up a mosaic of new approaches.

According to Goethe, “Europe was born in pilgrimage, and its mother tongue is Christianity”. The Franciscan movement was also born in Gospel mobility, moving throughout Europe and the whole world. Why not recuperate this evangelical agility and boldness by promoting Inter-Provincial and International Fraternities? We are called to move from the rationale of conservation and survival to thinking in terms of free gift — from a strategy of being closed in and waiting, to being daring in our openness to encounter. In the life of every friar, within every Fraternity, Province and the Order, we are called to constantly reconcile the tension between being *prophets and being in communion; between choosing newness and valuing continuity*. Daring to establish new forms of life and evangelization does not mean devaluing what has already been done, or is currently being done, but simply means “developing new responses ... new projects of evangelization for the situations of today” (VC 73). The criterion for the authenticity of every form of evangelization (whether new or already existing), is not survival or comfort, but rather whether our lifestyle is consistent with the Gospel and the Rule — “consistency between preaching and life” (VC 85).

Every region and culture needs to find signs of renewal, and a point of reference, in the Franciscan Friars who make up these courageous and prophetic small Fraternities. The message of Pope Francis is stirring and very real; it acts as a stimulus, and gives us hope. The whole world has been woken up by the witness of this Pope who really believes in the relevance of our charism when it is lived among people in fraternity and minority; but do we friars really believe this?

Fr. Giacomo Bini, OFM

*“May the Holy Spirit
give us all apostolic fervor,
and may he also give us the grace of causing discomfort;
the grace to go forward
towards the existential peripheries.
The Church is in great need of this!*

*Therefore we ask the Holy Spirit
for this grace of inner apostolic zeal:
Christians with apostolic zeal.
And if we irritate others, blessed be the Lord!
Let’s go ahead, and as the Lord says to Paul: “Take courage!” “.*

(Pope Francis, *Homily, Santa Marta*, May 16th, 2013)

Franciscan Beatitudes for the “New Forms of Life and Mission”

*“The dream of our holy
father St. Francis of Assisi”*

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.
Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be satisfied.*

*Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you
and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me.
Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.
Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”
(Mt 5,3-12)*

Blessed is the “new form of poor fraternity”, whose only wealth is the praise of God in the liturgy; whose daily task is to cleanse the wounds inflicted by the sin of self-centered selfishness; whose art is the art of charity; whose commitment is to listening; whose practice is to share bread with their neighbors, both at the dining table and at the Eucharist ...

Blessed is the “new form of humble fraternity”, having no perfection other than its defects, with which it must reconcile itself every step of the way, by gazing at the truth of each brother in the same way that God gazes — with a love that is limitless; brothers who forgive, knowing that they have themselves been forgiven ...

Blessed is the “new form of joyful fraternity”, which weeps with those who endure so much injustice, without rebellion, and is engaged in the building of a new Kingdom, to be established forever in every heart and home, in every family and fraternity — because Jesus made himself a brother to us...

Blessed is the “new form of merciful fraternity” which embraces the peripheries of humanity, following in the footsteps of Christ who lives within the crucified of this world, and with the poor; sowing seeds of communion and community, bringing to birth that spirit of trust which brings salvation to the forgotten victims of history...

Blessed is the “new form of fraternity that is clean of heart”, which lives out its Consecration without duplicity, without claiming fake perfection, nor diluting into mediocrity — but rather searches for holiness that is human and in solidarity with all the baptized pilgrim People of God, the Church...

Blessed is the “new form of peaceful fraternity”, which sows forgiveness by forgiving, which builds new relationships, having respect for the little and the lesser, because God has made us great with the

promise of a Kingdom that grows like yeast in our daily crosses, like salvation springing up from our wounds ...

Blessed is the “new form of just fraternity”, whose weakness gives witness to the power of God’s Word — a Word that is heard *sine glossa*, thus allowing obedience to light up the day’s journey; who eat bread dignified by the sweat of work; and experience the satisfaction of sharing faith in God who brings his promises to fruition through the silent and uninterrupted eloquence of the Signs of the Times...

Blessed is the “new form of persecuted fraternity”, where the Gospel is good news first of all for the fraternity, and subsequently for all those encountered along the way; always living as pilgrims and strangers, and, as far as they are able, proclaiming to all creatures that no one is Almighty but God...

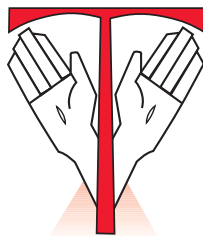
Rejoice and be glad in perfect joy, brothers, when by your life in fraternity you give a ‘new form’ to the newness of the Gospel, according to the Franciscan Rule and Life: a life that is prayerful, fraternal, minor, missionary and evangelizing, in continuous Ongoing Formation... following the footprints of Christ in his Church; walking with all men and women who become our brothers and sisters in service; joining with all creatures who are also our brothers and sisters... confessing together, in the Joy of the Gospel, the paschal song of creation: Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks and serve Him with great humility..., totally entrusting ourselves to the blessed promise of Jesus, the Christ: “Rejoice and be glad, your reward will be great in heaven”.

May Mary, the Blessed and poor Mother of Christ the Lord, be the perpetual star of the “new” Franciscan “forms”; the “new forms” will thus be blessed on earth as in heaven. Amen.

Br. Vidal Rodríguez López ofm, GSFS

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