

**FRANCISCAN ORDER  
FRIARS MINOR CONVENTUAL**

**FRANCISCAN DISCIPLESHP**  
**GENERAL DIRECTORY OF FORMATION**  
(Ordinary General Chapter - Ariccia 2001)



**FRANCISCAN DISCIPLESHIP  
GENERAL DIRECTORY OF FORMATION**

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## PRESENTATION

**I**N 1981, formation personnel from the entire Order gathered in Assisi for the first international congress in recent history. The fruit of their discussion was the setting up of a committee to prepare the first General Directory on Formation for the Conventual Franciscan Order since the Second Vatican Council. This document, which came to be known as *Franciscan Discipleship*, was approved “ad experimentum” at the Ordinary General Chapter of 1983 and given definitive approval three years later. Since then, *Franciscan Discipleship* has guided the efforts of the Order in the area of initial and continuing formation.

In these past two decades since 1983, significant changes have occurred in the Church, the Order and human society. New church documents have emerged, e.g. *Vita Consacrata* and *Fraternal Life in Community*. The Order itself has grown in its awareness and appreciation of the importance of formation, both initial and continuing. Serious attention, in fact, was given to formation at the Extraordinary Chapter in Mexico in 1992. The Extraordinary General Chapter of 1998 dedicated its efforts almost exclusively to the theme of formation. In accord with its directives, the International Commission on Formation nominated a writing committee to revise *Franciscan Discipleship* to bring it in line with the more recent documents of the Order and the Church and to incorporate into it the Order’s experience of the past decades with regard to formation.

The result of this initiative is the second edition of *Franciscan Discipleship*. The Ordinary General Chapter of 2001 gave it provisional approval until 2007, urging all friars to become acquainted with its contents, and inviting ministers and formators of the Order to commu-

nicate their evaluation of the text and any suggestions for its improvement to the Secretary General for Formation. This text will also be the object of reflection and verification at the international gathering of formation personnel scheduled to take place within the next three years.

In sending this text to the friars of the Order, we are affirming our conviction that formation remains our fundamental concern as Conventual Franciscan Friars. As an Order, we are becoming increasingly convinced that the effectiveness of our initial formation programs depends in large part on the seriousness with which the Order as a whole accepts the challenge to life-long conversion, to a continuing effort “to put on the mind and heart of Jesus” after the pattern of Francis. Most Provinces and Custodies of the Order have struggled in these past two decades to set up effective programs of initial formation, either on their own or in collaboration with other circumscriptions. The availability of trained formation personnel remains the principal problem at this level.

At the same time a number of Provinces and Custodies are leading the way in developing programs of continuing formation, programs which keep alive the values of the Conventual Franciscan charism throughout our human life-span and assist us in communicating them effectively within our fraternal and apostolic life. The Chapter of 2001 emphasised the need for increased diligence in the area of continuing formation (Motion One). The revision of *Franciscan Discipleship* can provide a framework for our reflection on formation but it needs to be enriched by contributions especially from those entities which are pioneers in pursuing a systematic approach to continuing formation in all its dimensions: personal, Franciscan, apostolic.

As we begin a new millennium, we are called to “put out into the deep”, with faith and confidence in Jesus. We, as men of faith, can do so only to the extent that we have interiorised the values of the Gospel and strive to live them throughout the various stages of our life and in the various socio-cultural contexts in which our Order is found throughout the world. We are ever more aware that no single cultural expression can exhaust the richness of the Conventual Franciscan charism. At the same time, we recognize that only if we are faithful to the transcultural values highlighted by St. Francis of Assisi will we be able

*General Directory of Formation*

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to “incarnate” these values not only in the cultures and lands where the Order has traditionally been found, but also in the newer mission lands, where, with God’s blessing, we have been able to bring our Franciscan heritage in the era following the Second Vatican Council.

These are exciting and challenging times. May we be inspired by the operation of the Spirit to drink deeply of the Franciscan sources, now made available to us in most of the languages used in the Order, to assimilate the values they contain, and to communicate them effectively through our initial and continuing formation programs to the next generation of friars whom God is sending to share our Franciscan way of life.

May the Lord Who has begun this work in us bring it to perfection.

Yours in Saint Francis,

Fr. Joachim A. Giermek, OFM Conv.  
Minister General

Fr. Daniel M. Pietrzak, OFM Conv.  
Secretary General for Formation



I

## FORMATION

### DISCIPLESHIP: FOLLOWING CHRIST

1. “*I want my friars to be disciples of the Gospel*”.<sup>1</sup> With this simple statement, Francis of Assisi summarized the Rule and life of the Friars Minor, understood as following Jesus, and placing oneself in His footsteps; in other words, becoming a *disciple*.

In Jesus we meet God, who reveals himself to us as father, savior and sanctifier. In Jesus we also meet an authentic brother, who invites us to become sons of the Father and confreres to one another. Following Jesus is the common vocation of all who are baptized which gives meaning to all Christian existence. Discipleship is a total commitment to Jesus in faith and love. In Him we encounter the God who reveals Himself to us as a Father and Savior. We make a choice for Him and, together with Him, we place ourselves at the ser-

**DISCIPLESHIP:  
total commitment  
to Christ**

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1. *LM XI*, 1.

vice of the Kingdom. Enlightened by the Spirit, we choose to accept Jesus as the “*Good News*” of our own lives.

**DISCIPLESHIP:  
not following an  
idea but  
encountering a  
person**

2. Discipleship, therefore, is not the following of an idea but an encounter with a person, the person of Jesus Christ and, for the friar minor, following Him in the light of the personal experience of Francis of Assisi.

We come to recognize these two persons and their message in the pages of the Gospel and in the writings of Francis.

These writings, read and lived within the experience of the Christian community and the Franciscan fraternity in various cultures throughout the ages, allow us today to rediscover discipleship as a response to the Father’s plan through our encounters with our brothers and sisters, particularly the poorest and those in most need.

In this context, formation helps each friar to discover continually the newness and the freshness of his vocation. The gift of the Spirit offers him the opportunity to be a prophet and a witness,<sup>2</sup> a living icon of what Jesus and Francis have meant and continue to mean for him.

**FORMATION:  
a lifelong  
endeavor**

3. In imitation of Francis who “*seemed like a new man, one from another world,*”<sup>3</sup> the entire life of the friar minor can be understood as a journey toward the total development of the human person through continuous listening to the call

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2. VC 14.

3. 1Cf 82.

of God and constant conversion to His plan.

Viewed in this way, the Franciscan vocation is an ongoing challenge which leads us to an ever-increasing openness to the guiding Spirit of the Lord and to a greater willingness to respond to His inspirations and to the needs of our brothers and sisters.

Formation, then, serves as a means of facilitating and deepening our free response to the Lord's call as it is discovered in the situations of our daily life.

This process of continuing growth is both the right and the duty of each friar. It finds its full development and realization within the commitment to conversion on the part of the whole Church,<sup>4</sup> each religious order and every local community, and in total conformity to that same Church.

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4. VC 47.

## II

**FRANCIS**  
**MODEL OF THE DISCIPLE****Francis: man of  
penance**

4. “*The Lord gave me... to begin to do penance.*”<sup>5</sup>

After the experiences of his youth searching for success, power, money, and other material things, St. Francis was enlightened by the Spirit to discover the mystery of God’s love. After his meeting the leper,<sup>6</sup> he fully converts, assumes a new attitude and begins to follow Christ. “*No longer worshiping himself*”,<sup>7</sup> “*he begins to strive to be perfect and altogether different from what he was before*”.<sup>8</sup> Totally stripped of everything, Francis sets out on his adventure as a disciple in the school of the Lord. His whole life would be

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- 5. *Test 1*
  - 6. *1Cel 17.*
  - 7. *L3C8*
  - 8. *2Cel 7.*

taken up with only one insatiable desire: to be transformed into Christ.

5. “*The Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the form of the Holy Gospel.*”<sup>9</sup>

**Francis:  
Man of the  
Gospel**

“*To live the life of the Gospel*” was the special charism revealed by the Lord to Francis. This was the foundation of the Franciscan way of life.<sup>10</sup> During his whole life “*of penance*” Francis sought familiarity with Christ through the Gospel. In the Gospel, Francis found inspiration, direction and meaning for his life. More importantly, he encountered the very person of the God-Man.

Rejoicing over his discovery, Francis proposed the Gospel as the only *essential* norm for his fraternity and as the way which leads to life. The result of his encounter with the Good News of the Father was a life of Gospel perfection.

6. “*Strive to follow the humility and poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”<sup>11</sup>

**Francis: poor  
and humble**

Francis’ imitation of the poor and humble Christ is described and synthesized in the very name given to his followers: “*friars minor*,” called to be such in their relationships with God, all men and women, the world and themselves. In fact Francis taught his friars *minority* as a way of being present in the world: becoming brothers to everyone, servants of the least and the poor, not

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9. Test 1.

10. Rb 1.

11. Rnb 9.

desiring power and honor but striving instead for minority, sharing and solidarity.

Meditating continually on the words of the Lord which are “*spirit and life*”,<sup>12</sup> Francis began to understand the life and mission of the Lord in the light of the mystery of His *kenosis* or humble condescension in becoming man. The humility of the Incarnation taught him the overwhelming love of the God-Man who deigned to become one of us and wanted to identify with the condition of the Poorest of the poor. In the Passion, Francis discovered the “*loving obedience*” of the Son of God who did not flee in the face of pain, humiliation and abandonment by His disciples, but who embraced all this for the Redemption of all.<sup>13</sup> In addition, Francis understood that this condescending love of God is always present in every celebration of the Eucharist where the Lord of the Universe hides under the humble appearance of bread for our salvation.<sup>14</sup>

**Francis:  
man of prayer**

7. “*Desire to have the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working, to pray always to Him with a pure heart.*”<sup>15</sup>

In following Christ, so humble and abounding in love that He became like us, Francis discovered what it means to be a son of our heavenly Father. “*Oh, how glorious it is, how holy and great, to have a Father in heaven!*”<sup>16</sup> Conscious of him-

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12. *Rnb* 22.

13. cf. *1Cel* 84.

14. cf. *LGC*.

15. *Rb* 10.

16. *LAF*

self as created by God, Francis saw everything as a gift and a grace from his Creator. Aware of his indebtedness, he responded in thankful praise. His life became the story of the loving overture of the Father who invited Francis to share in His intimate life with the Son and the Holy Spirit. Francis' response—his most important one—was a life of prayer, a profound dialogue with the God who had called him. Francis in fact became a prayer more than one who prays.<sup>17</sup> The more he united himself with the Father, the greater was his love for his fellow men and women and his desire for their salvation. In this way Francis was prepared to be sent, as Jesus had been before him, to be a prophetic voice in the Church and in the society of his time.

8. “*The Lord gave me brothers.*”<sup>18</sup>

**Francis:  
brother to all**

Basing everything on the “*law of gospel love*” Francis demanded that his friars “*love one another*”<sup>19</sup> “*that they respect and esteem each other*”, that they “*show their love for each other with works*”<sup>20</sup> and that in every place and in every situation “*they have such an understanding and friendly spirit among themselves*” that whoever comes to them will be received with kindness.<sup>21</sup>

In every person Francis discovered the image of Jesus who, in His Incarnation, made Him-

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17. cf. 2Cei 95.

18. Test 14.

19. Rnb 11.

20. Rnb 11.

21. cf. Rnb 7.

self our brother; he dialogued with everyone, becoming in his time the apostle of peace and fraternity. He worked with his confreres in serving their brother lepers in their homes and working in the fields to earn their living. He brought peace to cities in conflict, announcing to all peace, fraternity and full reconciliation in the Lord Jesus. In fact, Francis considered himself a brother to every created being.<sup>22</sup>

**Francis:  
Catholic**

9. “*Submissive and prostrate at the feet of holy Church.*”<sup>23</sup>

From the very beginning of his religious experience, Francis, hailed the “*catholic and fully apostolic man,*”<sup>24</sup> wanted to live to the fullest his communion with the Church, the Pope and the bishops. He had his Rule approved by the Church, he recited the Divine Office according to the rite of the Roman Church, and he received from the Church the mandate to preach penance and conversion to all. He promised humble respect to the Church and before his death he asked that his friars be as faithful to the Church as to the Gospel.

Francis understood that he had received “*the fragrant words of the Lord*” and the Eucharist from the Church.<sup>25</sup> He honored and respected the theologians of the Church as those who give us “*spirit and life.*” From the very beginning Francis, “*Herald of the Great King*”,<sup>26</sup> and his friars not only

22. *Canticle of the Creatures.*

23. *Rb 12.*

24. *Officium S.Francisci* of Julian of Speyer.

25. *LAF.*

26. *1Cel 16.*

took an active role in the ecclesial community but also participated with zeal and dedication in the apostolic mission of the Church which continues the ministry of Christ.

10. *"The Lord did not call you for yourself alone but also for the salvation of others."*<sup>27</sup>

**Francis:  
apostolic**

Francis understood his vocation from hearing the Word of God in the Church of the Portiuncula. The "missionary discourse" in the Gospel gave him the incentive to go throughout the world preaching penance to all "*in a few words.*"<sup>28</sup>

In his desire to announce the Lord's goodness to everyone, Francis would become an itinerant apostle of the Gospel to the point of not considering himself a true friend of God if he did not love the very souls loved by the Lord Himself.<sup>29</sup> He sent out his brothers two by two into the world and, when the increase in the number of friars expanded their apostolic capabilities, new disciples of the Lord went out beyond the confines of Italy into new lands.

Francis even attempted more than once to go "*among the Saracens and other non-believers*"<sup>30</sup> and finally appeared before the Sultan himself to speak of Christ and His Gospel.

Francis proposes two ways of announcing the Gospel to the friars who "*through divine in-*

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27. *Fioretti XVI.*

28. *Rb 9.*

29. cf. *Liber Vitae* of Ubertino da Casale.

30. *Rb 12.*

*spiration*"<sup>31</sup> request to be missionaries: the witness of their life together... "*they should love one another and avoid quarrels;*"<sup>32</sup> and proclamation..." *they should speak when God gives the grace.*<sup>33</sup>

**Francis:  
man of the  
Spirit-son of  
Mary**

11. "*Toward the Mother of Jesus he was filled with an inexpressible love, because it was she who made the Lord of Majesty our brother.*"<sup>34</sup>

The life of Francis was not a mere alternation between prayer and action, time for the Lord and time for apostolic service; it was rather a life totally absorbed in God and always open to the Spirit. The Spirit was for Francis "*the spouse of the soul,*"<sup>35</sup> a relationship he intuited through his devotion to the Mother of Jesus whom he calls "*the spouse of the Holy Spirit*"<sup>36</sup> and one which he recommended to his friars. Mary helps the friars to discover this same divine mystery within themselves through prayer and contemplation. As Mary conceived Jesus by the action of the Holy Spirit so the friars become mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ when they carry Him in their hearts and bodies through love and a pure and sincere conscience and give birth to Him through their good works.<sup>37</sup>

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- 31. *Rb* 12.
  - 32. *Rnb* 16.
  - 33. *Rnb* 16.
  - 34. *2Cel* 198.
  - 35. cf. *2Cel* 95.
  - 36. *Off.Pass.*
  - 37. cf. *LAF.*

## III

**DISCIPLESHIP IN THE WORLD  
PAST AND PRESENT**

. 12. The Franciscan charism, entirely a gift of the Holy Spirit, is that gospel form of life and witness begun by Francis of Assisi within the heart of the Church handed down to the Order he founded, developed dynamically by it through the course of its history, accomplished and still coming to fulfillment today in a faithful and creative way. Almost from the beginning of its historical evolution, the specific note “*conventual*” was added to the Franciscan charism.<sup>38</sup> Characterizing this “conventuality” in the course of history have been:

- a. Community life—in the strict sense of the word, where fraternal life was strengthened through the exercise of the friary (conventual) chapter;<sup>39</sup>

**The Conventual Dimension**

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38. *The Conventional Franciscan Charism* (Rome: 1998).

39. G. Odoardi, *I Frati Minori Conventuali*, pp. 82 ss.

- b. An attentive response to particular requests for help on the part of the Church—understood as the people of God and as hierarchy, with particular fidelity to the Pope;
- c. Urban life—in the midst of which the friars dedicated themselves to pastoral, liturgical, cultural, charitable, and social apostolic works, the results of being actively involved in the problems and expectations of their contemporaries;
- d. Special attention to cultural efforts—requiring suitable intellectual preparation both in theology and in other fields of knowledge and human activities.

**In the concrete situation of the world**

13. Enhancing and clarifying its identity with the passing of centuries, conventuality—in its best expression, demonstrated in the holiness of life of friars up to our present day—was the concrete way to realize and live the charism of fraternity and the Franciscan vocation in keeping with the needs of the Church and the socio-cultural context of every age. Even today, the Friar Minor Conventual is called to live as Christ, side-by-side with fellow men and women who are lost and fearful and thirst for peace, liberty and justice. He continually encounters the serious problems which disturb human society: “*various egoisms (materialism, hedonism, consumerism), exaggerated nationalisms, the tendency to dominate others*”,<sup>40</sup> the arms race, the division between rich and poor, ecological crises, the lack of respect for life. In this context he heralds and witnesses by his Gospel lifestyle in solidarity with the least

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40. RH 14.

of society,<sup>41</sup> that there is more joy in giving than in receiving, bringing “*peace, where there is discord, and love wherever there is hate.*”<sup>42</sup>

14. In addition to the other traditional pastoral activities of our Order, the Friar Minor Conventual is called today to dedicate himself, in the “Spirit of Assisi”<sup>43</sup> to the new evangelization, to building up peace in justice, to prophetically proclaim forgiveness and reconciliation and to promote care for creation. In working for the Kingdom of God in the various parts of the world, the friars are called to work together with other members of the Franciscan family on the level of international projects, show respect for every person and every culture, listening with ever greater sensitivity to other spiritual traditions and entering into dialogue with different religions.

15. Our Order is aware of being always on the move with the Church and in the Church and it looks to the future with hope and trust in God the Father, the giver of every good gift. Through its capacity for renewal, the Order asks itself how to put to best use the deposit of tradition of the past and at the same time how to give a meaningful response to the world of today. A particular challenge within the Order will be the relationship between unity and the plurality of expressions of Franciscan life as a necessary develop-

**The Spirit of Assisi****Challenges for the Order today**

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41. *TY2K* 323.

42. *A Simple Prayer* (attributed to St. Francis).

43. The “*Spirit of Assisi*” refers to a series of events deriving from the meeting of representatives of various religions that took place in Assisi on October 26, 1986.

ment of encountering the richness of the various cultures it embraces.

**The need for an appropriate inculturation**

16. When implementing the principles of the Franciscan charism, every jurisdiction should pay particular attention to the relationship between the Franciscan spirit and the surrounding culture. The inculturation of the Franciscan charism is an experiential process, not devoid of conflict, that involves both an historical understanding of the Franciscan spirit, the ways in which it found expression and continues to express itself, together with a knowledge, acceptance and assimilation of various local cultures. This process—knowledge, incarnation, redemption—leads to a correct understanding of the Franciscan spirit in its essential and transcultural values and its historical expressions. The contact between the Franciscan charism and culture purifies both of them and is mutually enriching.

**IV**  
**FRANCISCAN DISCIPLESHIP**  
**A FORMATIVE PROCESS**

17. Christ chose his first disciples “*to be with Him and to preach the Good News and have the power to cast out devils*” (Mk.3.14-15), forming them through His teaching and authoritative example by a gradual process of maturing to the acceptance of the will of the Father and being ready for the Kingdom of God. Francis, guided by Christ and taking inspiration from the apostolic community, received the gift of brothers with joy and by his example he encouraged them to embark on the journey of their own formation in the school of the poor and crucified Christ.

**On a formative  
journey**

18. The Friar Minor Conventual lives his discipleship in fraternity where each friar shares responsibility for the formation of the others especially through his example and the witness of his life. If the community fosters the spirit of prayer and fraternal interaction, then it is easier

**In fraternity**

to live the Gospel life faithfully in all its aspects.<sup>44</sup>

**Through teaching  
and experience**

19. From the moment that the friar-disciple decides to follow Christ in the Franciscan way of life, he seeks to assimilate the thoughts and attitudes, the mind and heart of his divine Teacher, according to the example of Francis, by listening to Christ's teachings and living them every day. These two elements, teaching and lived experience, constitute two complementary dimensions of formation.

**And important  
encounters**

20. There are, however, some elements in the formative process which are particularly important for the Franciscan disciple at every moment of his life:

- a. the encounter with Christ in His word and in the sacramental life of the Church: the Liturgy of the Hours, the Eucharistic Liturgy and the Sacrament of Reconciliation;<sup>45</sup>
- b. the encounter with Christ which leads us to a more intimate relationship with the triune God through personal prayer that is devout and humble,<sup>46</sup> full of praise,<sup>47</sup> intercessory<sup>48</sup> and solitary,<sup>49</sup> prayer which, with the help of grace, gradually leads to contemplation;

44. *FLC* 11.

45. *SC* 14; *PC* 6; *ET* 47-48.

46. *1Cel* 71.

47. *LM* 3.

48. *LP* 71.

49. *Cron.* XII, 1

- c. the encounter with Christ in our brothers, whether this be in those events which have special meaning in the life of the fraternity (e.g., chapters) or in daily life (e.g., prayer, meals, recreation),<sup>50</sup>
- d. the encounter with Christ in every person whom we meet, especially the poor and needy and the “lepers” of our own day,<sup>51</sup>
- e. the encounter with Christ in all of creation, as an image and reflection of the Son of God.<sup>52</sup>

21. It is through personal dialogue that an individual can interiorize what he has heard and experienced: interior dialogue with himself, with God in prayer, and with others. Dialogue with those responsible for one’s formation, with one’s spiritual director, and with others who are experts in human and spiritual life, plays a fundamental role in formation as a privileged instrument.<sup>53</sup> Such dialogue presupposes a sincere openness on the part of the one who is being formed and the discretion of the one who is forming him.

**In dialogue with others**

Particularly important is the dialogue that takes place within the community gathered in chapter<sup>54</sup>. Through such dialogue in which each participant remains open to the voice of the Lord, our only Teacher, the disciple is helped to personalize the values presented and experienced.

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50. *PC*15.

51. *ET* 17.

52. *1Cel* 77.

53. *VC* 66.

54. *FLC* 32-33.

**Toward affective maturity**

22. The capacity to engage in fruitful dialogue, however, requires a certain degree of affective maturity and self-mastery in terms of oneself and one's relationship with others.<sup>55</sup> First of all, the friar must be able to accept himself as a gift of God which includes the capacity to experience and accept his own feelings. Accepting one's limitations is the school of humility and the true pathway toward maturity, if it is undertaken in the light of Christ's cross. Through prayer and dialogue with those who are forming him and those who assist him spiritually, the friar should come gradually to understand his motivations and purify them of those elements which are inconsistent with a free response to a divine call.

**Signs of growth**

23. If dialogue is to be effective, the friar must have a genuine respect for others, for it is only in such an atmosphere of respect that the trust necessary for authentic interpersonal relationships can flourish. Growth in this sphere requires an openness to the suggestions, observations and fraternal corrections of others and the flexibility to adapt to differences among personalities and to a variety of changing situations.<sup>56</sup> A sure indication of growth in knowing how to live with others in community is demonstrated by assuming greater responsibility for the quality of community life and in the ability to sacrifice for the common good.

Achieving affective maturity may, at times, require seeking help from other human sciences; this help should be provided willingly by the community for its members.

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55. PG 12.

56. *Adm.* 22.

24. This constant effort to grow in human and affective maturity cannot be overlooked or considered unimportant. Difficulties in living the vows often arise because the level of an individual's maturity impedes interiorizing the values of Conventual Franciscan life and the deeper conversion to which the friar is called. The gradual movement from narrow, self-centered ways of thinking and acting to more open, altruistic, othercentered behavior is a sign that the friar, a servant of God, is moving from the "spirit of the flesh" to the "Spirit of the Lord."<sup>57</sup>

25. If our entire life is a process of conforming oneself to Christ, the period of initial formation has a special importance. It constitutes a time of apprenticeship during which the disciple, guided by those responsible for his formation, learn to distinguish the voice of God from the many other messages he hears. Once he has decided to follow the Lord according to the example of Francis, he is given further help to profit from the instruction and experiences offered him so that he may mature in his choice. Those responsible for formation have the duty to accompany the one being formed, organizing content and guiding experience, especially in the first years so that they truly become formative years, according to the principle of graduality and continuity.

26. Methodology and means are left to the pedagogical and formative creativity of formation directors (with the help of resource persons such as scholars and specialists in the respective juris-

**Passage from the  
"spirit of the flesh"  
to the  
"Spirit of the  
Lord"**

**During initial  
formation**

**With its own  
methodology**

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57. cf. Rnb 17; *Letter to the Entire Order*; Adm. 1:14; *Commentary on the Our Father* 8.

dictions of the Order). They are to respect the general orientations offered here which seek to maintain a unity and gradual progression in the doctrinal presentation or transmission of the charism. Also from this perspective, the importance of a good doctrinal and Franciscan preparation of the formation directors themselves seems quite clear.<sup>58</sup>

**And effective means**

27. However, among the means considered most effective, are the following:

- a. presentation of topics by those who are experts in the field;
- b. personal reflection followed by group discussion;
- c. on-site visits to meaningful places (shrines, churches, etc.);
- d. use of audio-visual aids to present important persons, places, and moments in the history of the Order;
- e. community reflection on significant pastoral experiences (e.g., visits to the sick, assistance to the poor and needy, etc.).

**In a personalized rhythm**

28. The formation directors must be aware of the character and the personal rhythm of an individual's growth as well as of the sociocultural context in which formation is taking place. They should remember that human growth follows a circular pattern more than a linear one. We need to return continually to certain fundamental values to ensure that they be deepened successively and gradually.

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58. SFC 9.

29. Particularly in mission areas and multi-cultural situations due attention must be paid to the process of inculturation, which demands a transformation of mentality and attitude on the part of the formation personnel: an open and respectful knowledge of customs, language, traditions, and all that pertains to a people's identity,<sup>59</sup> without forgetting the universality of the Gospel and all that constitutes the essential and indispensable core of the Franciscan charism.

**Keeping in mind  
the socio-cultural  
situation**

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59. TY2K 15.

## V

## THE DYNAMICS OF DISCIPLESHIP

**Formation: an interaction between God and the one called****Formation is the work of God**

30. We learn from Francis' experience of conversion and spiritual growth that Franciscan formation is an interaction between God and the person He has called,<sup>60</sup> within a community setting where and through which this call can be discerned and understood.<sup>61</sup>

31. Christ led Francis to the contemplation of the profound communion which constitutes the very core of God's Trinitarian life. On his part, Francis saw the joy and grandeur of God's proposal as a "revealed" expression of the loving rapport among the Divine Persons now extended to him.<sup>62</sup> He sensed that the grace which had begun to work in his soul and which was transforming

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60. VC 66.

61. *cf. Testament.*

62. VC 20-21.

his life came exclusively from God. Francis thus discovered God as “*my All*” in his life, and the only One capable of renewing, reshaping and helping him to carry to fulfillment the work of sanctification which had been begun in him.

32. The Friar Minor Conventual, in his continual growth, is called to relive the personal experience of Francis, the *forma minorum*, as his own. In this context he will experience the powerful yet tender love of God whose grace gives him the primary role in growing “*toward full maturity*” (Eph 4:13) in Christ.<sup>63</sup>

33. In letting himself be guided by God and in cooperating fully with Him, the friar is brought to a more intimate communion with God, in Whom he discovers the freedom to love his brothers and the world itself. Francis lived this personal experience in community with the brothers whom the Lord had given him.<sup>64</sup>

34. The friar must be able to find at the heart of the community—both local and provincial—a spiritual atmosphere, a simplicity of life and an apostolic outreach capable of drawing him to follow Christ in keeping with the radical nature of his own consecration.<sup>65</sup> All this will be possible to the extent that every community and each friar within it commits himself to his own continuous formation and remains open and shares participation in the formative process. On its part, the administration of a province should see to it that the

**Following  
Francis' example**

**The friar is  
formed to the  
extent that he  
allows himself to  
be directed by  
God**

**With the  
involvement of  
the entire  
community**

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63. *PI* 29.

64. cf. *Testament*.

65. *PI* 27.

**Some have specific roles**

**They should be joyful and generous in their own vocation; able to listen to and encourage those they are forming**

**A formation “team” is needed**

conditions required for authentic fraternal life be present in every community.<sup>66</sup>

35. In the community today the Conventual Friar continues to find the possibility of growing and of helping his brothers to grow. In fact, every friar is in some way responsible for the formation of his confreres. Within the community certain friars are entrusted with the “ministry” of animating, i.e., of leading the community to assimilate and live the Gospel values as Francis did. This is the mission of “the minister and servant of the fraternity” (the Minister General, Minister Provincial, Guardians) and of qualified formation directors.

36. Formation directors “*should be chosen from among the best friars, outstanding for their spirit of prayer, for their charity and for their sound judgment, and instructed in the principles of training and education.*”<sup>67</sup> In other words, they should teach more by their example than by their words and be endowed with a certain amount of experience in community and apostolic life. They will do this best only if they are committed, generous and happy in their own vocation, convinced of the value of religious life and, in particular, the Franciscan charism, faithful and obedient to the Church and capable of listening to and encouraging others, especially in moments of difficulty.

37. It is ever more necessary that the formation director work together with a formation group or team to plan, develop and periodically

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66. TY2K 42.

67. *Const.* 50,2.

evaluate the formation program, thus enriching the human and spiritual aspects of the formation of each student.

This team, which needs to exercise a sufficient amount of legitimate autonomy within the local community, should strive to be a true formation community itself by establishing trusting relationships through open and constant dialogue, thus creating a familial atmosphere for formation.

38. The personal spiritual director plays an important and increasingly indispensable role in the work of formation at both the initial and continuous phases.<sup>68</sup> His principal responsibilities are to:

- a. discern the action of the spirit of God;
- b. accompany the friar along the ways of the Lord;
- c. nourish a life of solid doctrine and prayer in practice<sup>69</sup>;
- d. train the friar to acquire a clear and informed outlook on personal experience and on the motives that determine his behavior.

39. During initial formation the personal spiritual director is chosen by the friar from a list approved by his major superiors.<sup>70</sup>

It is important that he know how to accept his formational responsibility wholeheartedly. He

**The role of the spiritual director**

**Qualities of the spiritual director**

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68. *FO* 15

69. *PI* 63.

70. *CIC* 239,2.

must be aware of the formational guidelines of the community in which the individual lives, have a sound theological and spiritual formation himself, possess maturity not only on the human level but also in the interior life, and have an appropriately adequate understanding of the principles of education.

In those houses of formation where there is a spiritual director for the entire community, it is good that he be a member of the formation team or work together with it, regulating his participation according to the directives of canon law<sup>71</sup> and coordinating the spiritual formation program of the community together with the other formation personnel.<sup>72</sup>

**A good preparation for the directors with content that is not only theoretical but practical**

40. Every jurisdiction should have as a priority the formation of suitable friars to serve as formation personnel; it should give them the opportunity to prepare themselves properly and update themselves regularly, including being able to acquire a deeper knowledge of the Order's life and charism.<sup>73</sup> The Provinces and the Order itself should make every effort to give them the necessary skills, establishing interprovincial and international centers for this very purpose. Their preparation or updating should include not only theoretical but also practical elements of fundamental importance. For example:

- a. a fraternal sharing of prayer and of lived experiences;

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71. CIC 240,2.

72. cf. OT 8.

73. FO, Motion 10.

- b. a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the Franciscan sources, history and spirituality;
- c. an understanding of the socio-cultural and ecclesial context;
- d. instruction in the use of communication techniques and group dynamics;
- e. competence in the art of dialogue.<sup>74</sup>

41. To ensure that formation become a gradual and continuous process, it is recommended that every province have two Formation Commissions—Continuous as well as Initial<sup>75</sup>—and respective formation directories. The Commissions' purpose will be to examine the various phases of formation and to coordinate the formation programs of the Province, guarantee continuity among the various phases of formation and an interchange of experiences among the formation personnel, prepare and update the provincial directory for formation, suggest names of friars for the formation apostolate to the Minister Provincial and his Definitory, and continually remind each friar and each community of its co-responsibility in formation work.

**Two formation  
commissions are  
recommended  
for every  
province**

42. In Interprovincial houses of initial formation, common guidelines should be drawn up and close collaboration among the formation teams of the various houses should be fostered. The Ministers Provincial with their definitories should establish an Interprovincial Commission to facilitate the formulation and execution of the guidelines.

**And sometimes  
on the  
interprovincial  
level, too**

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74. *FO* 96d.

75. cf. *FD* 128.

**For the  
Conferences and  
Federations**

43. The members of the Conferences and Federations of the Order should commit themselves, wherever possible, to work together toward practical initiatives in both initial and continuous formation, above all to come to terms with common formation problems within the same geographic area.<sup>76</sup> Interprovincial houses of formation should have a special statute in keeping with the *Constitutions* and *General Statutes*.

**And the entire  
Order**

44. The Secretary General for Formation should stimulate, promote and coordinate formation programs in the whole Order by means of visits, meetings and various communiques. He should also promote special programs for the preparation and updating of formation directors.<sup>77</sup> The International Formation Commission assists him in this task.<sup>78</sup>

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76. *FO*, Motion 20

77. *FD* 117.

78. *FD* 119; *FO* 18.

**VI****INITIAL VOCATION DISCERNMENT  
FIRST STEPS IN FRANCISCAN DISCIPLESHP****A. The Vocation Apostolate in General**

45. Within the plan of God, the life of every person expresses a personal response to the universal call to salvation. In this plan, the Christian, through Baptism, already has a particular commitment since he is called by Christ to give witness to his brothers and sisters “*in word and deed*” concerning the Good News of Redemption. In view of this invitation, he must discover and choose within the Church what his particular response to God’s initiative will be.

**A common call**

46. The vocation apostolate arises from the very mystery of the Church and proposes to serve it so that the gifts which God continues to bestow upon his people will find a generous acceptance everywhere.

**Within the  
mystery of the  
Church**

47. All friars of the Order must collaborate in the vocation apostolate so that the People of God will become ever more aware of the univer-

**To serve the  
various  
charisms**

sal call to salvation and of the diverse personal ways of responding to it.

**Especially in youth ministry**

48. Although vocation work is directed to everyone, it has a privileged place within youth ministry. Young people are open and sensitive both to situations of injustice, exploitation and meaninglessness in today's society as well as to Gospel values. This apostolate, however, cannot be detached from the total pastoral ministry of the local Church.<sup>79</sup>

### B. Franciscan Vocation Promotion

**Like Francis, a friar must be a witness**

49. In receiving the brothers whom God sent him, Francis did not put emphasis on what he should say to them or teach them, but rather on showing them how he himself sought to respond to God's call. Accordingly, the friar minor conventional should become a living "*vocation model*"<sup>80</sup> for the Christian of today who is considering responding to God's call through a life of special consecration.

**Able to say to others: "Come and see"**

50. The aspirant begins his Franciscan journey by responding to Christ's invitation to "*come and see*."<sup>81</sup> This period should include certain fundamentals of formation:

- a. a life of intense prayer, especially to discern one's vocation,
- b. a community open and dedicated to build-

79. VC 64; ASS 13; FO 2.

80. ASS 12.

81. cf. Jn 1:39.

- ing fraternity by means of reciprocal acceptance;
- c. the personal witness given by every friar of a life lived in
  - d. generosity and joy;
  - e. providing some vocation materials (e.g., biographies of St. Francis, videocassettes, etc.; cf. *Appendix A*, below).

51. While every community should feel committed to welcoming vocations and have one of its friars directly responsible for vocation promotion, it is proper that the Province designate at least one friary for the special purpose of extending such *community hospitality*, where the possible candidates can come to know and share our life of prayer and fraternity.<sup>82</sup> The Province, on its part, should provide a vocation promoter and other friars who are sufficiently freed from other duties to coordinate such activity. The Provincial Vocation Promoter should coordinate all the vocation activities.

**With a  
provincial  
commitment**

52. Through the service which the Order carries on in collaboration with the already existing vocation endeavors and with its own groups (the Secular Franciscan Order, Militia, etc.), contact will also be made with some who feel called to religious life to follow Christ after the example of Francis.

**Help in  
discerning a  
vocation**

53. Of particular importance to the Order is the International Center for the Promotion of Vocations in Assisi. The Provinces are to maintain contact with the Center and cooperate recip-

**The International  
Center in Assisi**

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82. FO 6.

rocally in its work. Wherever appropriate, similar centers should be fostered on the national or international level.

**With realistic information**

54. The aspirants who are welcomed should be given a realistic picture of the Franciscan way of life as it is lived by the friars in their respective localities and the apostolic activities of our Order, including missionary work "*ad gentes*."<sup>83</sup>

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83. FO 67A.

## VII

### POSTULANCY

#### FIRST LIVED EXPERIENCE OF FRANCISCAN LIFE

55. The importance of this initial phase of formation is indicated in the exhortation of St. Francis to the Minister contained in the Rule of 1221: "*The Minister on his part should receive (the candidate) with kindness and encourage him and diligently explain to him the tenor of our life.*"<sup>84</sup> The objectives of this very important period attempt to:

- a. deepen the candidate's knowledge of the community and, likewise, the community's knowledge of the candidate to the Order, including his social and family background;
- b. help the candidate mature as a person by knowing and accepting himself, by being open to others without losing his own identity, and by integrating himself into

#### Postulancy: an introduction to Franciscan life

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84. Rnb 2

- the human and Christian life of the local setting;
- c. verify the candidate's level of education as well as his knowledge of the faith and the Church, and to give appropriate supplementary instructions wherever necessary;
  - d. help the candidate to enter into a deeper personal relationship with Christ by means of willing conversion and consecration to the Lord that leads him to a new style of life;
  - e. offer the candidate some initial knowledge about the person and life of Francis of Assisi.

**Requirements for admission**

56. Every Province must define the requirements for admission to postulancy in its Directory of Formation, covering the following areas:

- a. personality, human maturity, physical and psychic health and motivation
- b. knowledge of the faith and experience in living it;
- c. preliminary knowledge of the life and character of St. Francis.
- d. In addition, for those who have been in another religious institute or major seminary, a report from those in charge of the community or seminary is required and, insofar as it is possible, a direct dialogue with them.

**A knowledge of language and culture**

57. In cases where postulants come from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, they must have a suitable knowledge of the language used in the house of formation and the culture of that environment.

**The postulancy program**

58. The postulancy should be organized into a program which includes: time for personal and

community prayer, accompanied by suitable explanations;

- a. frequent dialogue between the director and the candidate, whereby the postulant can arrive at a trusting relationship with his director and can, in turn, be kept aware constantly of his progress and offered concrete suggestions to help him along the way;
- b. manual work, especially the kind that helps the community
- c. verifying the human and affective maturity of the candidate and his ability to live peacefully with the other candidates in formation;
- d. conferences and periods of reflection leading to an initial understanding of the vows and religious life;
- e. a study of particular topics, focusing on three areas: the human dimensions of vocation, a knowledge of one's faith, and a knowledge of the Franciscan charism (cf. *Appendix A*, below).

59. The period of postulancy must not last less than one year<sup>85</sup> and must take place in a formation community setting under the guidance of a director specifically appointed for this task. The candidate must take up a steady residency in the postulancy house together, ordinarily with a certain number of other candidates that guarantees real fraternal life.<sup>86</sup> The postulancy provides a first experience of Franciscan life.

**At least one  
year**

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85. FO 36.

86. FO 36

**Working together**

60. In order to facilitate the candidate's passage from one phase to another, there should be close cooperation and communication among the formation directors of the postulancy and the novitiate, even if these are of different Provinces.

**A final check**

61. Near the end of the period of postulancy, the director, in dialogue with the postulant, shall verify the latter's progress in his vocation and send his report to the major superior together with what he recommends regarding the postulant's admission to the novitiate. The following points should be emphasized in reference to the candidate:

- a. the level of human and Christian maturity;<sup>87</sup>
- b. the basic level of general education and culture;
- c. affective equilibrium;
- d. an ability to live authentic fraternal relationships;<sup>88</sup>
- e. the capacity to incarnate Franciscan values in one's own person.

Admission to the novitiate is governed by the norms of canon law and our *Constitutions*. Prior to admission to the novitiate, the major superior should have a fraternal dialogue with the postulant to confirm the latter's suitability to enter the Order. It may prove useful to involve the formation director in such an interview.

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87. *PI* 90-91.

88. *FO*, Motion 4.

**VIII****THE NOVITiate****A DECISIVE MOMENT IN DISCIPLESHIP**

62. If we look at the experience of Francis, in particular at the years of his conversion, we notice that they were the decisive moments of his discipleship or what we might call his “novitiate” in the following of Christ. For Francis, it was the time during which he fell in love with Christ with a consequent desire to give up all that was not Christ and to change *“his heart and mind.”* His new attitude found expression in a new personal and community lifestyle. The difficulties and trials he encountered helped to clarify and test the authenticity of his decision.

**Novitiate: a  
decisive  
moment**

Thus, after the one being formed has been immersed in the task of acquiring a certain level of maturity and has learned about the Franciscan charism, he arrives at the period of “integral initiation”,<sup>89</sup> and of a deep-

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89. *Pi* 47.

ened understanding of discipleship and discernment.<sup>90</sup>

**With the  
following  
objectives**

63. The novice, having begun his vocational journey in the period of postulancy,<sup>91</sup> is called to deepen his choice according to the example of Francis. Consequently, the novice must move toward the following objectives:

- a. a deeper understanding of the divine call;
- b. a change of heart and mind according to the spirit of Francis;
- c. an experience of this new way of living in fraternity;
- d. a clarification and assessment of the stability of his own motivation;
- e. a good understanding of the charism of our Order (cf. *Appendix A*, below).

**A deeper  
knowledge of the  
divine call**

64. Only to the extent that the novitiate fosters interior silence will it succeed in helping the Franciscan disciple to find himself and to dialogue, as Francis did, with the Lord who is present in Sacred Scripture—especially the Gospel—and in the Holy Eucharist.<sup>92</sup> The novice should be helped, likewise, to become perfect in the art of prayer by means of instruction, days of recollection and desert experiences, but especially by finding adequate time during each day for personal prayer. Such a spirit of prayer, accompanied by appropriate instructions and guided experiences, will permit the novice to participate actively in the communal celebrations of the Liturgy of the Hours and

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90. *SFC* 15.

91. cf. *Const.* 32,1-2.

92. *Const.* 75.

of the Eucharist and to cultivate liturgical music and sacred chant. The novice should also be introduced to devotions that are specifically Franciscan. Both spiritual direction and regular sacramental confession are indispensable means for growth in the interior life.<sup>93</sup>

65. A further consequence of his encounter with the Lord should be the total and radical conversion of the novice to Christ and to the Christian life. Through a serious reading of the documents of the Church and the writings and biographies of Francis, the novice friar minor, with the help of his formation directors, will come to understand his prophetic role within the Christian community. The complete novitiate program should also include a study of the meaning of religious life and of the vows, the *Rule* and *Constitutions* of the Order and the history of the Franciscan movement, with special emphasis on the conventual aspect, and its devotion to Mary up to the present day.

66. In his search for God, Francis found himself among brothers whom he accepted as a gift and with whom he formed an authentic fraternity. Thus, an essential part of the novice's experience is living fraternal life in all its dimensions, from faithfulness to the daily routine to the performance of the humblest tasks, to manual labor, in simple yet profound communion .

67. Francis discovered Christ in the leper, the poor, and the suffering. Accordingly, the novitiate program should provide the opportunity for

**Toward a change  
of mind and  
heart**

**Within a  
community  
experience**

**Close to the  
poorest**

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93. VC 95.

analogous experiences which would promote this particular preference of the Franciscan for those most in need. These experiences, however, should be well integrated into the other objectives of the novitiate mentioned above.

**Checking on  
motivations**

68. Through personal dialogue with the director of novices, who is the spiritual guide appointed for this purpose for each and all of them,<sup>94</sup> the novice will be helped to assimilate and integrate the various dimensions of the novitiate experience. If he gives himself totally and faithfully to this experience, he will grow and mature both humanly and spiritually; that is, in a deeper knowledge and peaceful acceptance of himself and in a greater openness to others. This will be evidenced in his willingness to sacrifice for others and to share community work responsibly with them.

Toward the end of the year of novitiate, the novice and his directors shall make a first formal discernment regarding a possible vocation to the ordained ministry. All the novices should be helped to understand that the vocation to consecrated life—in particular, the vocation to “Gospel fraternity”—is the foundation of our Franciscan Order.<sup>95</sup>

**Contacts with  
other friars**

69. A knowledge of the history, character priorities and spirit of our Order should be corroborated through contacts and encounters with friars outside the novitiate. These experiences will help the novice to feel part of the larger family of the Province, the Order, and the entire Franciscan movement.

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94. *PI* 52.

95. *FO*, Motion 12.

70. There should be periodic evaluations—since the novitiate is a year of testing—both on the part of the novice and of the community. The novice, who is now living the Franciscan life in its various dimensions, can clarify his call and his willingness to live it. On its part, the community will help him further in this clarification process. Where the novices live within a larger community, it is indispensable that they have their own space in order to facilitate their formation by the one who is directly responsible for it.

71. At the end of the year of novitiate, the director should draw up a report in which he recommends the novice's admission to temporary profession or counsels that he leave the novitiate. The following criteria should serve as guidelines:

- a. a willingness to participate actively, generously and seriously in the entire novitiate program (personal and communal prayer, study, fraternal interaction, work, etc.);
- b. an openness to dialogue and a willingness to learn (in the sense of the Latin "*docibilitas*,")<sup>96</sup> from the formation process and from the whole community, especially the director of novices;
- c. an ability to live authentic fraternal relationships,<sup>97</sup>
- d. a certain level of interiorization of the Gospel values presented, with a corre-

**With the help of  
those responsible**

**Criteria for  
evaluation**

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- 96. The capacity to be led by those responsible for formation, whose role it is to predispose the friars to listen ever more attentively to the voice of the Spirit.
  - 97. FO, Motion 4.

sponding level of human and affective maturity that will permit commitment through the vows.

Admission to first profession, which is regulated by canon law and our *Constitutions*, presupposes a prior dialogue with the major superior.

**IX****FROM FIRST PROFESSION TO FINAL COMMITMENT  
GROWTH IN DISCIPLESHIP****A. Toward a Final Commitment**

72. The first profession of vows consolidates the formation process of the Franciscan disciple and prepares him for his final offering of self to God in the fraternity. The period of temporary vows also helps the friar to discern his call and to prepare him for service to the Christian community. This phase of initial formation has its own particular importance, for it is during this period that the values acquired in the preceding stages of formation are integrated with new insights and experiences to form a personal synthesis.

**After first  
profession:  
growth in  
discipleship**

73. After the intense period of his conversion, Francis continued to grow in his love of Christ and in certitude concerning the choice he had made. He sought to live together with his first companions as true brothers and began to serve the lepers and others in need, proclaiming the

**After the  
example of  
Francis**

Good News to all, and in this way responding to Christ's command to repair His Church. In a similar way, the deepening experience associated with temporary vows occurs at different levels: human-spiritual, relational-cultural and doctrinal-ministerial.

**To deepen one's relationship with God**

74. Through continual contact with the Word of God and our Franciscan tradition, the friar becomes ever more aware of the meaning of following Christ and of his ability to live it authentically for the rest of his life. By means of prayer and contemplation, he grows in his relationship with Christ and seeks to identify with Him.

**A living member of the fraternity**

75. The friar learns gradually, with the encouragement of his directors, to exercise a more active role in the life of the fraternity, in the formulation of programs and in carrying out community decisions. Through this process he becomes a fuller member of the fraternity, a brother among brothers.<sup>98</sup>

**With every human person**

76. The lived experience of fraternity constitutes the basis of a loving service which embraces every person as a brother or sister. The friar is helped to discover and develop those gifts which God has given him so that he can place them at the service of others through an offering of himself. Aware of the command to "*preach the Gospel*," the friar, like Francis, is called to make this sense of mission and the spirit of sacrifice it requires his own within the socio-cultural context in which he lives and works.

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98. FO, Motion 5; TY2K 4.3.1.

77. The period of temporary profession affords every friar the opportunity to become more aware of the presence of God living in his heart. As he listens attentively to the Word of God, participates in liturgical celebrations and takes advantage of moments of personal prayer, the friar learns to deepen his dialogue with the Lord who has called him and who sustains him along every step of the way. The study of theology and a contact with the Christian tradition through spiritual reading are other sources of enlightenment and understanding. Conferences on the evangelical counsels, methods of prayer, etc. (cf. *Appendix A*, below), complete the spiritual program.

**Through prayer  
and study**

78. To facilitate his immersion in the Franciscan tradition during the period of temporary vows, the friar is presented with the outstanding men and women of Franciscan history, their writings and spiritual doctrine as well as Franciscan thought in philosophy and theology, in keeping with his abilities to understand (cf. *Appendix B*, below). In addition, he should celebrate the Franciscan feasts, penitential seasons, traditions and customs of the Order (Way of the Cross, Transitus of St. Francis, devotion to the Blessed Mother under the title of the Immaculate Conception, etc.) with special attention.

**Within the  
Franciscan  
tradition**

79. In those instances where the educational formation does not include an adequate Franciscan formation, complementary courses and study seminars shall be provided (cf. *Appendices A & B*, below), even during holidays, organized by the individual Provinces, the respective Conference or Federation, or the study centers of the Order.

**With an  
appropriate  
Franciscan  
formation**

**Participating responsibly in the life of the fraternity**

80. During this phase the spirit of fraternity is developed by increasing the sense of participation and co-responsibility for community life on the part of all the friars in those ways that are special to our Conventual Family. Thus, particular importance is given during the formation period to community meetings and to friary chapters (formal or similar, “*ad instar*”).<sup>99</sup> In these meetings the fraternal life in all its various dimensions should be discussed and organized. In this way one puts into practice the art of collaborating, interacting, and living together in a spirit of commitment, mutual respect and true fraternal love. In this regard it is also helpful to make use of communication skills (cf. the document *The Directory for the Friary Chapter*).<sup>100</sup>

**In an ever wider context**

81. By participating in meetings and celebrations at the provincial, interprovincial and inter-obediential level, the friar experiences a broader sense of fraternity and becomes aware of the reality of the Franciscan way of life of which he is a part. Given the international character of the Order, it seems desirable that the friars learn at least one foreign language—English or Italian—in order to facilitate communication and mutual understanding. Such language studies should be fostered especially during the years of initial formation.

**Toward a life of service**

82. In a certain sense, the whole life of the friar (prayer, study, work, etc.) is service insofar as it is an expression of his self-offering to the

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99. GS 18.

100. *Directory for Friary Chapters*.

Lord. During the years of temporary vows, each friar is called to discover what special service the Lord is inviting him to perform in the Order and the Church. The choice of the specific service to be rendered is decided in discussion between the friar and those responsible for his formation, always keeping in mind the individual's aptitudes as well as the needs of the Order and the Church.<sup>101</sup>

83. Every kind of service is worthy of respect, insofar as it is a gift from God, and requires adequate preparation. Moreover each friar should receive sufficient theological formation (Sacred Scripture, Dogmatic and Moral Theology, Liturgy, etc.,)<sup>102</sup> according to his abilities. He should likewise specialize in those areas which will help him in his future work through courses and a supervised practicum. For this reason, there should be a three-year—if possible four-year<sup>103</sup>—formation program for religious brothers, too, guided by the norms of the Province's Directory for Formation and with its own specific director for this purpose.

84. From the very beginning of his formation, the friar should commit himself to maintain a simple and essential lifestyle and to work with others for the growth of peace, justice and the safeguarding of creation in the world. To make such teaching more concrete, it is desirable to offer the friars an experience of some length of time for

**With a serious  
formation**

**And the ability  
to share the life  
with the poorest**

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101. TY2K 36.

102. cf. *Const.* 57,1.

103. *FO* 104d.

**This requires  
proper  
preparation**

direct contact with the life of the poor during the period of initial formation.<sup>104</sup>

**A missionary  
attitude**

85. From the very beginning, our Order has given special importance to the cultural formation of its members. Today, a rapidly changing world and an ideological pluralism require of the friar-disciple a serious preparation in philosophy and theology, a knowledge of the social teaching of the Church, as well as in other human sciences in order to serve the Church more effectively.<sup>105</sup>

86. Apostolic mission occupies a privileged place in the life of the friar minor following the example of Francis, who himself was a missionary. Today the Church issues a constant appeal in favour of a “new evangelization” in many parts of the world. She considers religious as participants in her work of evangelization already by the witness of their lives, be it through prayer, silence or sacrifice or by dedicating themselves directly to the proclamation of Christ.<sup>106</sup>

Therefore, it is important to promote a missionary spirit among the friars in all its dimensions, including mission “ad gentes,” from the very beginning of their formation and to provide them all the means necessary to prepare adequately for this ministry. An evaluation should be made as to whether the friars in initial formation should have a direct experience of missionary life *in situ*, ac-

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104. *TY2K* 34.

105. cf. *RF* 70 ss; *Inst. Gen. F.N.I.* 49-51.

106. *EN* 69.

cording to a program organized by the Province or together with another jurisdiction of the Order.<sup>107</sup>

87. Among the specifically Franciscan works which each friar should take to heart is service as spiritual assistant to the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO). A knowledge of their Rule and some direct practical experience should form part of post-novitiate formation (*FO*, 71).

88. Gratitude to God for the gift of St. Maximilian Kolbe and for his Marian legacy to the Conventual Franciscan Family should provide encouragement to the friars to study his spirituality and the Militia of Mary Immaculate (MI) founded by him and to be available to assist it.

89. The friars should also be helped to appreciate the activities that draw inspiration from the “spirit of Assisi,” e.g., ecumenism, interreligious dialogue, safeguarding creation, etc.<sup>108</sup>

90. The whole period of temporary profession, made up of various experiences that become more profitable through dialogue with the friar’s formation team and spiritual director, serves as preparation for final profession.

It is recommended that every friar spend a well-prepared year experiencing life in fraternity and pastoral involvement outside the formation community prior to solemn profession. Free of academic responsibilities, the friar could in this way integrate within another context the values

**Special attention  
to Franciscan  
works**

**The M.I.**

**The Spirit of  
Assisi**

**Toward a  
definitive  
commitment**

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107. TY2K 40; *FO*, Motion 7.

108. *FO* 71.

which he has acquired. Likewise, the community where he spends this “pastoral year” could judge the friar’s ability to take his place in a typical friary of the Province.<sup>109</sup>

In addition, there should be an immediate and intensive preparation for solemn profession lasting at least one month, the so-called “second novitiate.” It should include the following elements:

- a. a prepared, guided reflection and examination—both personal and communal—on one’s experience of Franciscan life thus far;
- b. a shared discussion of topics that are basic to Franciscan life;
- c. periods of solitude and more intense prayer.

If possible, this program should be arranged in common by the Provinces of the same country or Conference.

**Required evaluations**

91. At the end of each year of initial formation, and in particular prior to solemn profession, there should be a thorough evaluation of the friar written by his directors regarding his suitability. This evaluation should take into consideration the following aspects:

- a. a self-evaluation by the friar in initial formation;
- b. the observations of his confreres;
- c. an evaluation of his scholastic record and of his apostolic service;<sup>110</sup>

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109. FO 75c; 104d.

110. C/C 1041.

This final report is to be sent to the respective major superior and shared with the individual friar.

92. These evaluations should take under examination not only the absence of serious obstacles to profession but, even more, the presence of certain qualities considered essential in a friar.<sup>111</sup>

- a. physical and psychic health;
- b. a spiritual and sacramental life;
- c. a fraternal spirit and the ability to live peacefully in community and in a committed manner;
- d. an affective maturity;
- e. an ability to “die to oneself” and give of oneself to others;
- f. a capacity to live the consecrated life faithfully;
- g. an ability to carry out a ministry in the community;
- h. passion and zeal for the Kingdom.<sup>112</sup>

93. In order to make solemn profession, the friar must have shown during the period of initial formation, a capacity to understand and live the values of the consecrated life as well as a disposition toward continual conversion and constant renewal. Through solemn profession the friar becomes a member of the fraternity with all rights and privileges, according to the *Constitutions*.<sup>113</sup>

**Precise criteria****Criteria for admission to solemn profession**

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111. CIC 244, 247, 721,3.

112. FO 66.

113. Const. 45,1-3

**According to the norms of law**

94. The friar is admitted to solemn vows according to the norms of our *Constitutions* and canon law. In case the candidate is not considered suitable, he must be clearly informed and the reasons that guided the decision must be communicated to him. Even if a friar should leave by his own free will, the director should prepare a written report to keep in the Province's archives.

**B. Toward a Franciscan Priestly Ministry****Toward ordained ministry**

95. An intensely felt question that continues is that of the relationship between religious life and the ordained ministry in the Church (diaconate and priesthood). This refers particularly to those friars in whom the two vocations are united. The friar who, as a result of vocational discernment, feels called to an ordained ministry should express this to his formation directors, who have the responsibility to discern the authenticity of his call. The friar should have sufficient time to deepen his understanding of the specific nature of the two vocations and find within himself what unites them. He will have to learn how to live his ministry as a friar.

**According to the norms of the Church**

96. The criteria and the specific programs that pertain to preparation for the priesthood are regulated by universal and particular Church legislation, without, however, omitting the specific aspects of the Conventual Franciscan vocation.<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, the intellectual formation should be

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114. *FO* 75a, 107b.

complemented with concrete, supervised pastoral experiences so as to bring the friar to a well-rounded human development.<sup>115</sup> Pastoral experiences should be carried out according to an established program, go step-by-step, and be examined by the director together with the friar in formation.<sup>116</sup>

97. Normally, every friar called to the priesthood should attain an academic degree of higher studies in theology.<sup>117</sup> The canonical obligation for a pastoral year must be stressed, if the clerical friars are not furthering their theological studies.<sup>118</sup> Such a pastoral year, however, is also recommended for those pursuing higher theological studies.

98. What was stated above about the method of carrying out evaluations (n. 91) remains in effect up to priestly ordination, keeping in mind the prescriptions of canon law and our *Constitutions*.

### C. Toward Specialization

99. All the friars, counseled by their formation directors, should be guided, helped, and encouraged to obtain a higher academic degree in theology or in other disciplines or professions, according to their abilities and the needs of the Order.

**Toward an academic title**

**Yearly evaluations**

**Specialization**

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115. C/C 258.

116. FO 75b.

117. TY2K 34.

118. FO 107c.

**In theology,  
spirituality or  
Franciscan  
history**

100. Recognizing that the intellectual and cultural formation of the friars is a fundamental component of the Conventual Franciscan charism, it is important that the Order have centers for higher studies in Rome and elsewhere, with a specialization in theology, spirituality, Franciscan history, and other disciplines. Cooperation and coordination among the various cultural centers of the Order<sup>119</sup> and of the Franciscan movement is to be promoted.

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119. *FO* 108.

## X

### CONTINUOUS FORMATION

#### A. The Goal of Continuous Formation

101. Formation is a vital process by means of which a person converts to the Word of God to the depths of his being and, at the same time, learns the art of seeking the signs of God in the reality of the world.<sup>120</sup> Continuous formation is a necessity that is intrinsic to religious consecration, given that the consecrated person will never be able to claim having completed the journey of assimilation to Christ.<sup>121</sup>

**Continuous conversion**

The very nature of Franciscan discipleship, reflected in Francis, requires that one's whole life be a continual conversion and gradual identification with Christ. This means adopting the attitude of a pilgrim who is always moving toward his de-

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120. VC 68.

121. VC 69-71; PDV 70-81.

sired goal.<sup>122</sup> The primary goal of continuous formation is to keep alive in every consecrated person an enthusiasm for conforming oneself to Christ throughout the various phases of life.

**A life-long itinerary**

102. Consequently, the friar minor conventional must continue along the route of interiorizing Gospel values that he set out upon during the time of initial formation. In fact, the responsibility to grow constantly is part of the right and duty of everyone, particularly now, given the pace of modern life. In addition, the demands of apostolic effectiveness require such constant renewal.

**Notwithstanding a certain resistance**

103. Faced with a certain resistance to continuous formation, based in part on an excessive activism or a fear of examining oneself closely, programs of continuous formation seek to bring out the value of “being,” the contemplative dimension of life, the need to make progress day by day in one’s vocation.

**An integral program**

104. There are several dimensions of continuous formation which are closely related and mutually complementary:

- a. life in the Spirit;
- b. the human and fraternal;
- c. the “charismatic”
- d. the cultural-doctrinal
- e. the ministerial and professional.<sup>123</sup>

**According to the freshness of the Spirit**

105. In particular, these dimensions bring us to the following observations:

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122. *Rb* 6.

123. *const.* 62; *VC* 71.

a. The Spirit of the Lord who “makes all things new” (*Rev. 21:5*) never rests but wants to renew our whole person so that we become totally conformed to Christ. The openness and docility to the constant, unpredictable, faithful and creative initiative of the Spirit is the greatest challenge to our Franciscan life. Continuous formation is directed toward “*paying close attention to the signs of the spirit in our times and allowing oneself to be sensitive to them in order to be able to respond to them appropriately*”<sup>124</sup>

The practice of spiritual direction,<sup>125</sup> and the possibility of making retreats in hermitages,<sup>126</sup> foster docility to the Spirit.

b. Fostering the friar’s growth in his human and fraternal dimension requires an understanding of oneself and one’s own limitations, interior freedom, affective integration, and an ability to communicate with all, especially those of one’s own community, a commitment to live consistently one’s community and pastoral responsibilities.

The friars, in their mutual respectful and trusting relationship, composed of appreciation, encouragement, and fraternal correction, can stir up among one another this desire for continual renewal. Such an atmosphere will, in turn, permeate all expressions of community life: liturgical celebrations, recreation, fraternal gatherings, apostolic work, etc.

**Ordinary and extraordinary means**

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124. *Pi* 67.

125. *PDV* 81.

126. *Const.* 77,3.

In this regard, the role of the Guardian<sup>127</sup> and the friary chapter, lived as a meaningful moment in the community's journey together, occupy noteworthy functions.<sup>128</sup>

Furthermore, in order to facilitate the friars' updating, every friary should have at its disposal various periodicals, books and other useful resources.<sup>129</sup> The ordinary means of continuous renewal find further support in certain special occasions, particularly those of a spiritual character: monthly days of recollection, annual retreats, study days or weeks, visitations by the Ministers, regional meetings, Provincial and General Chapters.

In various jurisdictions of the Order a re-organization of activities and presences is an indispensable condition for arriving at a true fraternal life.<sup>130</sup>

c. On the basis of a solid theological formation, every friar should keep himself as mentally receptive and adaptable as possible through a continuous updating that uses to best advantage the means furnished by technological progress, so that his service might become ever more effective.

**Pastoral sensitivity**

Each friar should make a continuous effort to make the proclamation of the Good News more incisive (cf. *2Cor 5:14*). In practice, this will involve becoming ever more in tune with today's men and women—their hopes and joys, sufferings

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127. *TY2K* 43.

128. *Directory for Friary Chapters*.

129. *Const.* 62,1.

130. *FO* 57.

and expectations—in a world that is constantly changing.<sup>131</sup>

106. The friars should feel obliged to participate in continuous formation programs, especially those organized by their own jurisdiction or Conference.<sup>132</sup> It is advisable that every friar draw up his annual continuous formation project and agree upon it with his local community.<sup>133</sup> On their part, the major superiors should create the conditions that allow the friars to participate in continuous formation programs.<sup>134</sup> Provincial Chapters should examine whether continuous formation programs have been carried out.

**An obligation  
for the friar and  
those in  
authority**

### **B. Stages of Continuous Formation**

107. Every phase of life presents us with new signs of the Spirit, new duties to carry out, new challenges to face with a new way of being, serving, and loving. Therefore, every friar should be offered ordinary and extraordinary means of continuous formation that will allow him to embrace the inspirations of the Spirit and face the difficulties of every season of his life.

**According to  
the various  
stages of life**

Among the various stages of life are the following:

- a. the first stage: full involvement in the community and apostolic activity;

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131. GS 1-3.

132. FO 25A.

133. FO 31; 87.

134. FO 28.

- b. essential and when one is disappointed by the meager results in life;
- c. the stage of maturity;
- d. advanced age.

For everyone, regardless of age the moment will arrive to unite oneself to the supreme hour of our Lord's passion. Thus death will be awaited and prepared for as the supreme act of love and self-surrender.<sup>135</sup>

### **1. Transition from Initial to Continuous Formation**

#### **Passage from initial formation**

#### **Everyone has a particular duty**

108. A special challenge that the friar must face occurs in the passage from initial formation to involvement in a community.<sup>136</sup> This transition can express itself in an abundance of positive results for the friar involved, even though the phase is not without its serious risks.

109. Everyone involved in this move must do his part:<sup>137</sup>

- a. the *friar* who arrives in community must assume the attitude of one who seeks to get a "feel" on the already existing situation, be ready to understand without judging, know how to move on maturely from satisfying relationships typical of homogeneous surroundings like those of formation to ones that are more complex, with friars of different ages;

135. VC 70.

136. PI 70; VC 70.

137. FO 100.

- b. the *community* that welcomes the new friar must strive its best to use his talents to the full, involving him gradually in its activities, supporting him in his first apostolic experiences, helping him to integrate both the positive and problematic aspects present in the members of the community itself;
- c. the *superiors* exercise an important role in this situation because they must carefully evaluate which community is most suitable for this stage of passage;
- d. the *guardians* should insure that every friar who enters the community have some time to start and become familiarized, assigning him pastoral responsibilities prudently and verifying with him the progress he has made;
- e. consideration should be given to the suitableness of appointing a confrere to exercise the role of “*mentor*”—a different one for each friar or one for the entire group of friars in this phase of formation.<sup>138</sup>

110. For the first five years following ordination or solemn profession, friar priests and religious brothers should participate in an annual program of continuous formation lasting at least a week.<sup>139</sup>

Such programs should include time for the following:

- a. prayer;
- 

**The first five  
years**

138. *PDV* 76.

139. *TY2K* 37.

- b. an exchange of personal experiences;
- c. rest and relaxation;
- d. guided and shared reflection.<sup>140</sup>

## **2. The Next Stages**

### **Seeking what is essential**

111. The stage of looking for what is essential in life, that normally begins sometime between ten and fifteen years in ministerial community, allows the friar to give a new incentive and new motivation to his vocation, thus overcoming the risk of routine and disappointment because of meager results.<sup>141</sup>

### **Maturity**

112. The stage of maturity is the period when one gives more freely and generously of self, a period of creativity and spiritual paternity, an overcoming of the risk of falling into individualism, inflexibility and diminished enthusiasm.<sup>142</sup>

### **Advanced age**

113. Advanced age is often a painful period that offers the person, however, an opportunity to be transformed by the paschal experience by being configured to the crucified Christ. It is, in fact, a period characterized by a gradual withdrawal from activity, often accompanied by sickness or forced immobility.

### **Programs that offer some breathing space**

114. Each of these subsequent phases requires a periodic renewal that lasts from three to four weeks (the frequency, length, and specific program should be defined in the Province's Directory of Formation, but at least once every ten years)

140. *PDV* 76.

141. *VC* 70.

142. *VC* 70.

and that takes into account the various stages of life and periods of transition. In the same way, a sabbatical year can prove useful. Besides the opportunities offered by the Order and individual Provinces, the friars should avail themselves of courses and programs organized by the dioceses and other religious communities.<sup>143</sup>

115. Independent of the various stages of life, every phase of life can recognize critical situations that arise from the presence of external factors (change of place, lack of success in the apostolate, etc.) or personal ones (sickness, spiritual dryness, faith crisis, etc.). In such situations every friar is called upon to show that he is a real brother to the one who is experiencing such difficulties. Both local and provincial authorities and the community itself should behave with sensitivity and patience, suggesting, if necessary, the intervention of persons or services to lend specific help.<sup>144</sup> The “test” itself could serve as a providential instrument for the suffering friar toward developing an affective and vocational maturity in his following of the crucified Christ.

116. At the end of his life, Francis exhorted the friars: “*Let us begin, brothers, to serve the Lord God, for up to now we have made little or no progress*”.<sup>145</sup> Thus the Minister General, with his Definitory, should use the various opportunities of his ministry (visitations, personal encounters, meetings, chapters, pastoral letters, etc.) to create this attitude of continual renewal in the Order.<sup>146</sup>

**Programs for  
critical moments**

**“Friars, let us  
begin...”**

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143. TY2K 38; FO 25c.

144. FO 59.

145. 1Cel 103.

146. FO, Motion 17.

**With the  
Order's  
encouragement**

117. It is the responsibility of the Secretary General for Formation, assisted by the International Commission for Formation,<sup>147</sup> to promote renewal programs for formation directors and for other friars on the interprovincial and international levels at centers that already exist or in others created for this purpose.

**...And that of the  
Conferences and  
Federations**

118. Conferences and Federations as well as the individual jurisdictions of the Order should commit themselves courageously to work together toward practical initiatives in formation and above all to face common formation problems within the same geographic areas.<sup>148</sup>

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147. *FO*, Motion 18, 19.

148. *FO*, Motion 20.

**XI**  
**SPECIAL TOPICS**

**A. Competence of the Secretary General  
for Formation**

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 119. The Secretary General for Formation fosters vocation promotion, as well as the initial and continuous formation of the friars, through the following means:                                                                                            | <b>General Duties</b> |
| a. visiting the seminaries and houses of formation of the Order and becoming acquainted with those friars responsible for formation and vocation promotion, as well as the programs of formation and study in the Provinces and Custodies;                  |                       |
| b. being available to share information and to make suggestions for the improvement and updating of programs to those responsible for formation on the local, Provincial and General levels, always keeping in mind the cultural pluriformity in the Order; |                       |

- c. encouraging more contact and collaboration in the area of formation and studies between the Provinces and the center of the Order, as well as between the Provinces themselves, especially those of the same nation or Conference;
- d. organizing the preparation and updating of directors of formation by encouraging, as much as possible, interprovincial collaboration.

**Specific responsibilities**

120. Besides these general duties, he also has the following more specific ones:

- a. to preside over and guide the activity of the International Commission for Formation and refer its conclusions to the General Definitory and, in certain cases, to the General Chapter;
- b. to examine the Provincial and Custodial directories of formation in order to confirm their compatibility with the guidelines contained in the General Directory, i.e., *Franciscan Discipleship*, with the *Constitutions* and with the *General Statutes*; he is to communicate his judgment on this to the respective major superior and his definitory;
- c. to participate, *ex officio*, as a member of the Permanent Commission “pro Seraphico” (Board of Trustees for the Seraphicum);
- d. to communicate information regarding formation periodically by means of the *Fraternus Nuntius* and *Commentarium Ordinis*.

**Requirements**

121. The Secretary General for Formation should have a reasonable knowledge of languages,

openness to different cultures, updated knowledge of the theory and practice regarding formation and some practical experience in the area of formation prior to assuming office. In addition, he should be free from other duties incompatible with his office in order to do his work in an appropriate way.

### B. Competence of the International Commission for Formation

122. The International Commission for Formation, provided for in our *Constitutions* (53.2), has the following responsibilities:

- a. to update the General Directory for Formation (*Franciscan Discipleship*) periodically;
- b. to serve as an organ of contact and communication between the centers of formation (initial and continuous) of the Order;
- c. to promote mutual understanding and foster collaboration among the directors of formation (initial and continuous);
- d. to organize meetings at the international level of those responsible for formation (initial and continuous).

123. The International Commission, which should meet at least two times during its six-year term (and more often if necessary), is composed of the following members:

- a. the Secretary General for Formation as President;
- b. the Rector of the Seraphic College at the Seraphicum as Secretary;
- c. one member from each Conference/Fed-

### Duties of the International Commission

### Members of the International Commission

eration, chosen for a six-year term, ordinarily at the first meeting of the respective Conference/Federation following the Ordinary General Chapter, after a consultation of its formation personnel and approval by the Minister General with his Definitory.

**Requirements**

124. The members of the International Commission must be able to communicate in Italian or English and should have a sufficient knowledge of the jurisdictions they represent and some experience in the area of formation.

**C. The Preparation of Formation Directories****The General  
Directory:  
franciscan  
discipleship**

125. The General Directory for Formation, *Franciscan Discipleship*, should contain those principles and norms of formation considered universally valid and fundamentally important for the development of a Franciscan friar today. This Directory should be updated periodically by the International Commission for Formation and submitted to the General Chapter for its approval.<sup>149</sup>

**Directories**

126. Each Province and Custody should have its own Directory of Formation, written and updated periodically by its Formation Commission, and approved by the respective Chapter.

**In agreement  
with the general  
directory**

127. To achieve a certain unity in the Order, the Provincial and Custodial directories are to be sent to the General Curia. It is the duty of the Sec-

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149. *Const.* 48,3.

retary General for Formation to become acquainted with them, confirm their compatibility with the guidelines contained in the document, Franciscan Discipleship, and communicate his opinion to the Minister General and his Definitory and the results of the discussion to the respective major superior and his Definitory.

128. Between Provinces of the same nation or Conference, especially when there is the possibility of cooperation in the area of formation, there should be an interprovincial directory containing the guidelines agreed upon by the Ministers Provincial/Custodes of the participating Provinces/Custodies, according to the norms of the *Constitutions* and *General Statutes*, that is sent to the Secretary General for Formation for his information.

At times,  
interprovincial  
directories

129. In addition, each house of formation is to prepare its own directory which should contain the objectives of the program and the means to be used to secure them, always in line with the overall plan of formation adopted by the Province.<sup>150</sup> The local directory is to be approved by the Minister Provincial and his Definitory.

Local  
directories

#### D. The Seraphicum and the Pontifical Faculty of Saint Bonaventure

130. The Seraphicum, as a house of formation offers the opportunity for an international experience of Conventual Franciscan formation at Rome, the center of the Church.

The Seraphicum  
as college

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150. *Const.* 53,2.

**For well-selected friars**

131. In order to make initial formation in an international environment effective, it is important that the major superiors make a serious selection of friars to send. Thus, the friars to be sent to the Seraphicum should:

- a. have as their chief purpose that international, ecclesial, and Franciscan open-mindedness which Rome is able to foster;
- b. preferably have made solemn profession and completed the basic theological program in their own country;
- c. have a sufficient educational preparation to pursue philosophical and theological studies;
- d. have acquired an adequate knowledge of the Italian language before the scholastic year begins, and be able to adapt to the Italian setting as well as to the multi-cultural experience of the friary;
- e. be willing to participate in the various aspects of the formation program, including some pastoral experience.

**Together with a report**

132. A detailed report on each student should be sent by the Minister Provincial to the Rector of the Seraphicum prior to the student's arrival.

**The faculty of St. Bonaventure**

133. The Pontifical Faculty of St. Bonaventure, located at the Seraphicum, is governed by its own statutes and internal norms, in accord with the Apostolic Constitution, *Sapientia Christiana*, and the relevant norms of the Congregation for Catholic Education.<sup>151</sup>

**A Franciscan character**

134. The Franciscan character of the Faculty should be emphasized through the study of the Franciscan sources, the history of the Order, and

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151. *Const. 61,2.*

theological updating which is faithful to the principles of the Franciscan School.

135. In appointing professors, the international nature of the Faculty should be maintained. On their part, the professors should see to it that they fulfill not only their academic responsibilities, but also those which are formation and pastoral.

136. The Faculty should promote the intellectual formation of the friars and coordinate collaboration with the other study centers of the Order through an exchange of teachers and other initiatives.<sup>152</sup>

137. In the area of the study and deepened understanding of the Franciscan charism, the Historical Institute of the Order should be strengthened. Its purpose is to coordinate, program, and use to maximum effect the historical research that is already going on in the Order. The Institute will also be responsible for publishing and distributing the results of its research in the principal languages used in the Order.<sup>153</sup>

138. The Permanent Commission “pro Seraphico” (Board of Trustees for the Seraphicum) will be composed of the following members:

- a. the Minister General or the Vicar as President;
- b. the Secretary General for Formation as Secretary;
- c. the President of the Faculty of St. Bonaventure;

**An international tone**

**For intellectual formation**

**The Historical Institute**

**Members of the “Pro Seraphic” Commission**

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152. FO 108c.

153. FO 108d.

- d. the Rector of the Seraphic College;
- e. the President of each Conference or Federation;
- f. a student of our Order enrolled at the Faculty of St. Bonaventure (elected by the students for a one-year term);
- g. the Treasurer of the Seraphicum;
- h. the Guardian of the community.

**Specific duties**

139. The specific responsibilities of this Commission are:

- a. to promote communication among the Provinces of the Order and the Faculty;
- b. to improve collaboration and communication among the various study centers of the Order by promoting an exchange of professors and a common collection of publications;
- c. to promote the cultural life of the Order by encouraging studies and other cultural activities;
- d. to approve the budget for the following scholastic year and to hear a report on the preceding year and in this way encourage the development of the Faculty and College and provide the necessary means for their optimal functioning;
- e. to examine formation and other programs at the Seraphicum.

**Annual meeting**

140. This Commission will meet annually, ordinarily at the end of the scholastic year (May or the beginning of June).<sup>154</sup> The recommendations of the Commission are then referred to the General Definitory for their ratification.

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154. By 15th February, the Secretary of the Commission will solicit suggestions for agenda items from the members. Once determined, this agenda will be circulated to all the members by 15th April.

## APPENDIX A

### **(Courses in spirituality and Franciscanism for every stage of formation)**

#### **1. Topics for presentation in vocation promotion**

- a. the process of vocation discernment;
- b. the life of St. Francis and other Franciscan personalities (according to the age and interests of the person);
- c. presence and real activities of the Order in the Province and the world;
- d. Franciscan places with the help of videocassettes, slides and, insofar as it is possible, guided visits;

#### **2. Topics for presentation during postulancy**

##### **A. The human dimension of vocation**

- a. psychological aspects of human development, including the psycho-sexual;
- b. group dynamics and how it affects fraternal life, e.g., addressing conflicts;
- c. methodology for improving self-knowledge.

##### **B. Knowledge of the faith**

- a. contents of the faith as presented in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*;
- b. introduction to the Bible;
- c. introduction to liturgical and sacramental life;
- d. the moral dimension of the human person and Christian moral law.

##### **C. Knowledge of religious life and the Franciscan charism**

- a. an overview of consecrated life and religious life in particular;

- b. presentation of the goals and objectives of postulancy, based on the recent documents of the Order;
- c. study of the life of St. Francis in his social, cultural, ecclesial and religious context;
- d. introduction to the Franciscan sources, particularly the classic writings and biographies;
- e. presentation of the richness of the Franciscan charism and the various ways in which it has been enacted;

### **3. Topics for presentation during the novitiate**

#### **A. On deepening an understanding of the faith**

- a. deepened understanding of liturgical and prayer life;
- b. theological, biblical, spiritual and juridical values of temporary vows;

#### **B. On a knowledge of the Franciscan charism**

- a. writings of St. Francis; reading the Sources;
- b. study of the *Regula Bullata* (Rule of 1223);
- c. *Constitutions, General Statutes, Provincial/Custodial Statutes*;
- d. knowledge of one's own jurisdiction and its history;
- e. the identity of the Friar Minor Conventual within the context of its historical development;

### **4. Topics for presentation during the period of temporary vows**

#### **A. General topics on religious life**

- a. a deepened study of the documents of the Church on consecrated life; e.g., *Vita Consecrata; Fraternal Life in Community*;
- b. psychological aspects of human, personal and community development;
- c. Mary as model of consecrated life.

**B. General topics on the Franciscan charism**

- a. beyond the topics already mentioned for novice, a deepened study of the recent official documents of the Order;
- b. integral ecology: Franciscan inspirations and intuitions;
- c. Francis, "universal brother," ecumenical person;
- d. particulars of the new Franciscan evangelization;
- e. the "conventual" dimension of our charism;
- f. integration of two vocations: Franciscan and cleric;
- g. spiritual direction according to the Franciscan School.

**5. Topics for presentation during continuous formation****A. Personal aspect (spiritual growth and personal health)**

- a. themes on personal renewal according to the stages of life;
- b. themes on updating and continual conversion;
- c. themes on physical, psychic, and spiritual health;
- d. themes on integrating the various aspects of personality.

**B. Intellectual aspect**

- a. themes in sacred scripture;
- b. theological updating in various areas;
- c. updating a deepened knowledge of the Franciscan charism.

**C. Ministerial and sacerdotal aspect**

- a. topics that foster a greater knowledge of modern methods of evangelization and pastoral service;
- b. spiritual direction according to the Franciscan School;
- c. guidelines for new guardians, pastors, formation directors, etc.;
- d. guidelines for harmonizing pastoral needs with community life.

**APPENDIX B****(Courses of a philosophical-theological or professional nature)****A. Philosophy**

- a. panorama of medieval philosophical thought;
- b. history of Franciscan philosophical thought; principal themes;
- c. voluntarism as the basis of Franciscan ethics.

**B. Dogmatic Theology**

- a. sources that inspired Franciscan theology;
- b. contributions of the great Franciscan theologians in the field of theology (Alexander of Hales, St. Anthony, St. Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, etc.);
- c. characteristic traits of Bonaventurian theology.

**C. Spirituality**

- a. Franciscan spiritual reading of the Bible;
- b. history of medieval spirituality;
- c. characteristic aspects of the Franciscan ascetical and mystical experience;
- d. Franciscan response to the needs of people today: option for the poor, non-violence, solidarity.

**D. The Historical Evolution of the Order**

- a. the Franciscan question today;
- b. critical points in Franciscan history: reforms, divisions, etc.; Friars Minor Conventual after 1517;
- c. missionary presence of the Order;
- d. the Order's intellectual and cultural contributions.

**APPENDIX C****ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER IN THE  
SELECTION AND PREPARATION OF FORMATION  
PERSONNEL**

**Introduction:** Formation is an art; even though there are valid principles to guide the formation process, their effective use depends greatly on the creative ability of the formation director in using his own intuitions and good judgment in applying the principles to individual instances.

1. While respecting everything that has already been said in *Franciscan Discipleship* on the qualities required of future formation directors, it is well to accent the following characteristics:
  - a. an ability to empathize, to listen while dialoguing;
  - b. capacity to work with others as a team;
  - c. an ability to perceive the problematic points in a complex situation in order to help the one being formed to overcome his difficulties.
2. The formation program that prepares formation personnel should help the friar to:
  - a. know today's young men and their attitudes, values, concerns, etc. (every generation has its own peculiar characteristics);
  - b. know well the values of the culture in which the formation is rooted: its outlooks, behavior, and traditions;
  - c. know Franciscan spirituality and heritage, and how their elements can be communicated during the various stages of the formation process;
  - d. know the normative documents of the Church and Order regarding formation;
  - e. learn to apply the criteria that govern every stage of formation (e.g., how to discern whether a postulant is ready for novitiate);

- f. emphasize the importance of both the personal development of each formation director as well as the absolute necessity of collaboration among the members of the formation team at every stage of formation;
  - g. participate in a period of apprenticeship;
  - h. know the resources available (points of reference, experts, etc., including the interprovincial and interobediential levels.
3. **Specialized formation for the ministry.** In addition to an adequate humanistic, philosophical and theological formation, the one preparing to become a formation director should also acquire some expertise in the following:
    - a. human sciences
      - courses in the psychology of personality;
      - some background in psychopathology;
      - courses in the psychology of human development;
      - pedagogical method.
    - b. theology
      - theology of consecrated life;
      - theological reflection on priestly ministry.
    - c. Franciscanism
      - Franciscan Thought (philosophical and theological principles)
      - Franciscan spirituality;
      - documents of the Church and Order on formation;
      - spiritual direction and discernment.

## APPENDIX D

### SABBATICALS

#### I. Definition of a Sabbatical

- A. A sabbatical is an intensive continuing formation effort involving an extended period of time away from a friar's normal assignment for the purpose of:
  - 1. study in a program which will allow the friar to become more effective in his ministry, more skilled, more satisfied, more knowledgeable;
  - 2. spiritual renewal at a place established for the development of the spiritual life;
    - A. A sabbatical is distinguished from: a holiday (vacation), a retreat, sick leave, vocational discernment, and full-time study in a degree program.
    - B. Applying for a sabbatical does not lessen the responsibility of a friar to continue his formation/education through seminars, conferences, workshops, summer and/or night school, etc.

#### II. Length of a Sabbatical

The period of time granted for a sabbatical shall be in keeping with the type of program requested. The average sabbatical period lasts one year.

#### III. Number of Concurrent Sabbaticals

Ordinarily, the number of friars on sabbatical at any given time in the Province should be limited between one to two percent of the total membership.

**IV. Eligibility for a Sabbatical**

- A. Ten years after completing his initial formation, a friar may request a sabbatical;
- B. Eight years after a sabbatical, the friar is eligible to request an additional sabbatical;

**V. Application Procedures for a Sabbatical**

- A. After spiritual discernment, a request for a sabbatical is presented in writing to the Minister Provincial and his definitory;
- B. The application should contain the following information:
  1. brief description of the sabbatical;
  2. purpose of the sabbatical;
  3. the relationship of the sabbatical to the friar's personal growth and ministry;
  4. the cost of the program;
  5. location;
  6. time frame with possible alternatives;
  7. implications of the friar's absence on his current ministry.
- C. An application for a sabbatical should be made at least six months prior to its presentation for approval.

**VI. Evaluation of an Application for a Sabbatical**

The application should be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- A. the merit of the proposal as outlined in V.B (above);
- B. seniority;
- C. the overall needs of the Province;
- D. the availability of the applicant at a particular time.

**VII. Granting a Sabbatical**

The Minister Provincial with his Definitory studies the application and may request recommendations from other friars. The applicant is notified of the decision.

**VIII. Financing**

Insofar as it is possible, the expenses for a sabbatical period should be drawn from diocesan entitlements, the ministry in which the friar is involved, and the community in which he is living. Where such funding proves insufficient, the Province will provide for what is lacking.

**IX. Follow-up and Evaluation**

On completion of the sabbatical, the friar must complete an evaluation of his experience and present the same to the Minister Provincial.

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Adm.</i>	<i>Admonitions of St. Francis</i>
<i>ASS</i>	<i>General Chapter of Assisi, 1995, Final Planning Document</i>
<i>1 Cel</i>	<i>First Life of St. Francis</i> by Thomas of Celano
<i>2Cel</i>	<i>Second Life of St. Francis</i> by Thomas of Celano
<i>CIC</i>	<i>Codex Iuris Canonici</i> , 1983
<i>Const.</i>	<i>Constitutions of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual</i> (Rome, 1984)
<i>Cron.</i>	<i>Cronica Minore</i> of Erfurt
<i>EN</i>	<i>Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi</i> , 1975
<i>ET</i>	<i>Paul VI, Evangelica Testificatio</i> , 1971
<i>FD</i>	<i>Franciscan Discipleship: General Directory of Formation</i> , OFM Conv. (Rome, 1983; revised draft, 2000)
<i>FLC</i>	Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, <i>Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor. Fraternal Life in Community</i> , 1994
<i>FO</i>	General Chapter of Ariccia, 1998, <i>Formation in the Order Guidelines for a Renewed Commitment</i>
<i>GS</i>	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i> , 1965
<i>GenStat</i>	<i>General Statutes of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual</i>
<i>Inst.Gen.F.N.I.</i>	<i>General Chapter, 1966, Instructio Capituli de Formatione Nostrorum luvenum</i>
<i>LM</i>	<i>Legenda maior</i> by St. Bonaventure
<i>LP</i>	<i>Legend of Perugia</i>

L3C	<i>Legend of the Three Companions</i>
LGC	<i>Letter to a General Chapter</i>
LAF	<i>Letter to All the Faithful</i>
Off.Pass.	<i>Office of the Passion</i>
OT	<i>Optatam Totius</i> , 1965
PC	<i>Perfectae Caritatis</i> , 1965
PDV	John Paul II, <i>Pastores Dabo Vobis</i> , 1992
PI	Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, <i>Potissimum Institutioni</i> , 1990
Rb	<i>Regula Bullata</i> , 1223
RF	<i>Ratio Fundamentalis</i> , 1970
RH	John Paul II, <i>Redemptor Hominis</i> , 1978
Rnb	<i>Regula non bullata</i> , 1221
SC	<i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i> , 1963
SFC	General Chapter of Mexico City, 1992, <i>The Study of the Franciscan Charism Throughout the Various Stages of Formation</i>
Test	<i>Testament of St. Francis</i>
TY2K	General Chapter of Mexico City, 1992, <i>Conventional Franciscan Presence and Witness Toward the Year 2000</i>
VC	John Paul II, <i>Vita Consecrata</i> , 1996