



## ORDO FRATRUM MINORUM SECRETARIATUS GENERALIS PRO FORMATIONE ET STUDIIS

Curia Generale dei Frati Minori (OFM) Via S. Maria Mediatrix 25, 00165 Roma - Italia. Tel. +39.06.684919  
Tel. +39.06.68491234 - Fax. +39.06.6380292 - eMail: formgen@ofm.org

---

Dear brothers,

First, we would like to present to you what are the mandates and orientations of the last General Chapter, which were then incorporated by the General Definitory into our programme for the six-year period:

- commemorating the Franciscan centenaries
  - the theme of our primary identity as a fraternity, both lay and clerical
  - then, equality of all friars, both lay and clerical
  - organising an international meeting of lay brothers
  - promote the formation of formators in collaboration with the Conferences
- I will speak a little more about these tasks.

### **Formation of Formators**

Concerning the last task:

- to promote the formation of formators in collaboration with the Conferences.  
it depends very much on the Conferences. In Rome we have the Diploma of Formation for Consecrated Life in our Pontifical University *Antonianum*, which is useful and various brothers from Asia and Oceania had attended its programs. We are aware of the problem of inculturation of the program, as it is mostly focused on the European reality. Therefore, it is a great news that these two Conferences are starting with their own programme, based on the one of the *Antonianum*, but adjusted to the concrete situation in Asia and Oceania. We already have a similar experience in Latin America, or more exactly in the Cono Sur – Brazil Conference, where they organised a formation course for formators last year, partly online and partly in presence. Here, in these two Conferences, you already made an excellent preparatory work, and the course is already in progress. We, from the General Secretariate for Formation are happy to be able to actively participate in it.

### **Centenary**

In connection with the great Franciscan centenary, we have decided to prepare each year worksheets and to send them to all provinces before the beginning of the year. The worksheets are composed of some ideas from the Franciscan Sources, from the Holy Scripture, from the last General Chapter, but also from our concrete life. They follow the guidelines of the Commission of the Franciscan Family for the Centenaries, of which Br. Cesare Vaiani is a member. These worksheets are intended to be used either in fraternity or individually. Each worksheet offers a lot of material, although it is arranged on only one or two pages, because it refers to different texts on which to reflect. I invite you to use them.

## **Meeting of lay brothers**

Regarding the deepening of the theme of Franciscan identity, promoted by the General Chapter, and the mandate to organise conferences of lay brothers, the process is already underway.

In May 2022, we presented the guidelines to the Presidents of the Conferences.

In June 2022, the International Council for Formation and Studies, made up of all the Secretaries for Formation and Studies of the Conferences, met and we worked out further details.

The General Definitory appointed an International Commission to organise the International Conference of 2025.

We prepared a questionnaire for the lay brothers. The first idea was to prepare another questionnaire for the secretaries of the provinces with questions concerning mainly statistical data. Later we decided not to send it because in the meantime the IT office of the General Curia prepared a digital database, which provides us with this data.

The other questionnaire, the one addressed to all lay brothers, was sent as an aid to the commissions at the Conference level, in order to identify topics that could be of interest for the meetings organised in the Conferences.

From the organisational point of view, these meetings are entirely entrusted to the Conferences, in order to respect the synodal style.

In the year 2023, at the meeting with the Presidents of the Conferences, we gave more details on this process.

The meetings of the lay brothers in the Conferences were to be organised in the second half of the last year or in the first half of this year.

There were two most important tasks of these meetings: to identify themes for the International Congress of Lay Brothers and to elect four delegates to the International Congress.

The International Congress is scheduled to take place between 28 April and 2 May 2025.

This will be the Holy Year and therefore we plan to organise it in Rome.

Moreover, this date precedes the Chapter of Mats, and proposals for the Congress can be presented to the Chapter of Mats, but also to the General Chapter.

With this process of organising the International Congress of Lay Brothers, we do not want to create or deepen a separation.

Our Order has realised that the percentage of lay brothers in the world is rapidly decreasing, and we want to see together what the reasons are and what we can do to remedy this.

From this process we expect, above all, new proposals in the field of vocation ministry and formation, both ongoing and initial. And we will be able to include these proposals into the Ratio Formationis Franciscanae.

## **International Congress of OFM Study Centres**

I will just mention briefly that last July we organised the Congress of the study and research centres of our Order.

There were about thirty participants.

Among the conclusions of the Congress there were some concerning the modification of the Ratio Formationis Franciscanae.

### **List of fraternities**

From the beginning of our mandate, our three offices of animation of the Order: General Secretariate for Missions and Evangelisation, General Secretariate for Formation and Studies, and JPIC, collaborate closely and we try to enhance such collaboration in the Conferences and in the Entities of our Order.

In some Conferences we reached the conclusion to start or to encourage such collaboration on different levels, even by compiling a special list of fraternities. Such lists comprise the fraternities which are already working in the areas of the poor and excluded, in various types of missions, where brothers can be included in the experiences of integration.

It is a list of fraternities that would allow us to exchange among the provinces.

If a province would like to offer its temporarily professed members an experience of fraternal life among the poor, among migrants, in a hermitage or in the missions, with the help of this list it could, in agreement with the respective provincial minister, send them to make this experience in another province. We had this kind of initiatives in at least two conferences of Latin America and in Europe.

Maybe, that could be thought of even in Asia and Oceania.

It is also clear that this project presupposes knowledge of languages. And this is another area where collaboration between the provinces can take place.

### **Commission “Spirit of prayer and devotion”**

The commission for prayer and devotion of the order is part of General Secretary for Formation and Studies. The idea is to remind and promote this lifestyle for our friars, especially in our formation as Franciscan Friars. For that reason, from 7 to 12 October 2023, the international meeting of OFM Franciscan Hermitage was held at Santa Maria degli Angeli, Assisi. From Asia, there was Br Paolo, from South Korea, who attended this event.

### **Scholarship and obedience letter**

Concerning the scholarship and obedience letter, we suggest to send your request in December, before Christmas, so we can proceed as soon as possible for helping our friars can come earlier for Italian course.

### **Strengthen accompaniment**

Regarding our young friars, we encourage you – the formators – to assist them in a personalized accompaniment and be very close to their context and culture. We need to build dialog, to listen, and share our faith – our vocation each other in the context where we live.

These are the topics of concern we wanted to address today.

Br. Darko Tepert, OFM

Br. Hieronimus Yoseph Dei Rupa