



IV° PCO

FORMATION GUIDELINES
Rome, 1981

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IV° COUNCIL OF THE ORDER FORMATION GUIDELINES Rome, 1981

LETTER OF PRESENTATION

Dear Brothers,

The Plenary Councils of the Order held at Quito, Taizé and Mattli summarised the fruits of their work in their respective Documents, which put forward guidelines for a number of important aspects of our life. Their impact has been, and continues to be, considerable. The General Definitory now assumes the responsibility of publishing the Document of the Fourth Plenary Council of the Order, held at our International College in Rome from 2nd-31st March, 1981, and fervently hopes that it will meet with the same welcome and determination on the part of the friars to observe it in practice.

While they were in no way obliged to do so, it is a fact that all the plenary Councils so far have drawn up their reflections in the form of a document destined for publication, to serve as a tool for the adequate updating and renewal of our way of life. A future PCO might well choose not to adopt this method, giving the General Definitory, for example, only the bare bones of its reflections and practical guidelines, without formulating them in a Document destined for the whole Order.

It seemed necessary to make these points clear, so as to prevent misunderstandings. The fact remains that, as a consultative body at the service of the General Definitory (cf. Consts. 110, 6), the Plenary Council has proved its worth. This is clear from the inherent value of the documents drafted in the course of its four meetings.

We must also point out that the last two meetings of the PCO, in Mattli and Rome, are special in that their respective subjects for discussion were decided by a General Chapter (Analecta OFM Cap. 92 [1976] pp. 181-182). This fact constitutes an added reason for the General Definitory to publish this document on formation and to ask all the friars, in particular the Conferences of Major Superiors and formation personnel, to put it into practice. The Definitory have also decided to have the document translated into the principal modern languages, as well as Latin. The Italian text remains the official one.

The General Definitory believes that this document faithfully reflects the spirit and norms of the Constitutions. Of course, it is not complete. It says nothing, for example, about the priestly or professional training of the friars, deliberately limiting itself to initial and on-going formation for our Capuchin Franciscan life. But even within that restricted field, there are considerable gaps. Obedience, for instance, was not explicitly treated. Finally, the Plenary Council did not aim to say everything even about the subjects it did deal with.

The PCO realised, then, that many questions still remain open, and has asked that a solution be found as soon as possible, at least to the more urgent ones.

Among the more urgent questions are:

- the Secretariats (at Order, Conference, national or provincial level);
- regional formation centres, with particular attention to the training of formation personnel, the lack of which is keenly felt everywhere;
- means of formation: the various publications dealing with initial and on-going formation, etc., and first of all, the publication of a handbook or manual of Capuchin Franciscan spirituality.

The General Definitory therefore asks the Conferences and the Provinces to be actively concerned for these bodies (the secretariats and formation centres), so as to make them really effective. They should also consult among themselves about sharing experiences and the means of formation.

The publication of this document is therefore an opportunity to draw the attention of all the friars to a crucial question which the Church is facing today: what is the place and role of the religious charism in the Church, particularly in its pastoral and apostolic activity – an activity the Church performs through all its members and institutions to reveal salvation to people in Jesus Christ. We are not alone in rediscovering the evangelizing force that belongs to our charism. All religious institutes are engaged in a similar search, and as communications between religious institutes are intensified it becomes obvious that there exists in the Church a “religious charism” which, through the great diversity of its expressions, is fundamentally the same. We must be mindful of this search now taking place throughout the Church, and contribute our own modest share.

Thus, to speak of the “Franciscan charism” does not express our vocation in its entirety. Proof of this is the fact that we share it with the “Secular” Franciscan Order. What we are asked is to be more and more specific about our religious, Franciscan and Capuchin charism. It is in this way that we will make an effective contribution to the search that is under way in the Universal Church and in the great Franciscan family.

The publication of the document on formation is not, then, a point of arrival, not the end of the line. Rather, it marks a new point of departure towards the implementation, in formation, of the fundamental dimensions of our religious, Franciscan and Capuchin life. So, let us go forward with generosity and courage.

Br. Paschal Rywalski, O.F.M. Cap. Minister General
Br. Charles Sérignat, O.F.M. Cap. Secretary, PCO IV
Rome, 13th April 1981

FORMATION FOR OUR WAY OF LIFE

1. Formation in and for our way of life is understood as the realistic fostering of the growth of individual friars and fraternities so that the way we live in today's world may conform more and more to the example of the Holy Gospel.

The basic model for this formation is given us by Jesus the Master, who invites his disciples to stay with him and continue his mission (cf. *Mk. 3: 14ff*). Saint Francis lived it in his own time; it was studied with fresh insights in the history of the Order and in the Capuchin reform, and is now proposed to us.

Formation involves every dimension of the intellect, will and action. Growth and maturity in these spheres comes about through experience, especially that of faith and prayer, instruction and work.

Although there are stages of formation to be traversed, it is a single process of growth, assimilation and integration of values and experiences; it is likewise an on-going conversion, so that, enlivened by the Spirit, we may conform to the image of the Son of God.

AIM OF THESE GUIDELINES

2. The present guidelines, the result of co-operation by all the friars, are intended to be an informed response to the expectations of the Order in the area of formation.

It has not been our intention to deal exhaustively with all the topics. We have merely tried to propose concrete guidelines concerning the directions formation in the Order should take.

The results of the Plenary Council are not presented systematically, but in a way corresponding to the manner in which it actually worked. We hope that this kind of presentation will better communicate something of the stimulus and encouragement that emerged during our meeting, serving as a basis and point of reference for regional formation programmes.

CHAPTER I° SITUATION AND NEEDS

1. NEW FORMATION CONTEXTS

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

3. Formation is a process which develops in a specific historical and cultural context. Valid formation programmes cannot be prepared without reference to the world in which the forming community and the person being formed live.

In the course of the Plenary Council there was a lengthy, fruitful exchange of views on the state of formation in the Order, and efforts were made to place each topic in proper context. The themes emerging in the present document are intended to be a response to today's challenges. However, the complexity of the data, the diversity of contexts and the different standards by which these can be read and interpreted have made us forego any attempt at a complete examination of present-day reality.

Yet we wish to emphasise the importance of the analysis that follows, even though it is a partial one, in the hope that the friars will be encouraged to take to heart the problem of formation as the core of the Order's spiritual renewal .

FORMING MEN FOR THE EVANGELICAL LIFE

4. "Saint Francis understood, by divine inspiration, that he was sent to convert people to a new life. He therefore called into being a new way of Gospel living. He remained in the world but not of it, and wanted his fraternity to live and work among people, so that the joyful news of gospel conversion would be proclaimed by word and deed" (*Const. 85*).

Consequently, the aim of formation will be to form men capable of living the gospel life in our world.

THE CHURCH

5. Christ sent the Church into the world, just as he himself had been sent into the world by the Father (cf. *Jn. 17*). The Second Vatican Council reflected at length on this "mission". Numerous documents mirror these reflections, especially *Gaudium et Spes*. For a more detailed exposé of the situation in the Church and the Order, we refer back to those documents as well as the documents of the Order, particularly those of Quito and Mattli .

All we wish to do here is emphasise some aspects of formation which seem to us to be particularly important.

THE HUMAN PERSON

6. Today the human person is threatened from every side. There is danger that man will become depersonalised and lose himself in the crowd or that, faced with this, he will yield to

despairing isolation. The ideologies (Marxism, liberalism, capitalism, totalitarianism, national security) assail human freedom by proposing and working to reduce mankind to a unity that serves their own world view.

The Church, particularly in recent years, is inviting Christians everywhere and by every means to promote the dignity of and respect for the person, and commits itself to offer its own contribution for peace and justice in the world.

For us as Capuchin Franciscans, these efforts towards peace and liberty take actual shape when we affirm the primacy of brotherhood, which leads us to acknowledge every person as a brother and serve him as such, sometimes renouncing our own rights, in conformity with our vocation, which is one of penance, minority and peace.

It is in this context that “minors” must be formed. In simplicity and the joy of living, in mutual service and loving obedience, in penance and conversion by means of chaste and generous love, we must form builders of a human society capable of being free and possessed of a critical sense in the face of dominant ideologies.

THE PERSON IN RELATIONSHIP

7. We are witnessing a truly prodigious growth of communications and news media. It is easy to understand the negative side of this growth: superficiality, psychological conditioning, the danger of cultural levelling, etc., but we also perceive how it opens up the possibility of greater knowledge among people, increased opportunity and ability to meet one other, and a greater impulse towards universal brotherhood.

We are witnessing the search for new models of living together, both in families and in nations: a new balance is being sought between the Universal Church and the local church, between the Order and its Provinces. Greater critical awareness is developing in relation to the various grouping systems, though this sometimes leads to a resentful desire for personal self-fulfilment and a loss of social identity.

Saint Francis’ evangelical radicalism offers a model of commitment generating and strengthening freedom and a critical sense . His ideal of ongoing conversion is a clear expression of the critical force of the Gospel , and the person-community relationship provides the proper balance between the person and the group to which he belongs .

All these are stimuli for the formation of the Franciscan today.

SECULARISATION

8. Today many people no longer consider the world as a stepping-stone to heaven: it has value in itself. Hence, secularisation frequently becomes secularism, the desire to build a world closed in on itself, with no outlet to transcendence, one in which God, when he is even tolerated, is considered a private matter. Faced with this situation, which moreover takes on different characteristics according to the different cultural areas, the Church has become aware that salvation is achieved within the reality of everyday life, and has been able to purify its faith and hope by acquiring a truer sense of the transcendence of God and the Christian life. Hence, she seeks to put into practice a new form of presence and activity in the world, faithful to the Gospel command to become a “leaven”.

Here too we find a challenge to our formation projects. Not for nothing does the expression “leaven” or “ferment” recur frequently in the Constitutions when they speak of our presence in

the world , since we are called to be the builders of love, justice, peace and evangelical joy . It is precisely the aim of formation to produce these builders, humble and persevering.

THE ORDER

9. The Order, now spread all over the world, has made its own the value of pluriformity. It is faced with a situation of cultural and geographical change and enrichment, with all the problems these bring.

Long-established Provinces see the numbers of their friars diminish, particularly the number of their candidates. On the other hand, young Provinces, in regions where the implantation of the Order is recent, are growing rapidly. The Order's composition is such as to show a clear need for new and diversified styles of life and formation, capable of responding to the cultural and social needs of the different regions. The presence of the Order in every continent enhances the special urgency of greater identification with the world of the poor and the oppressed, and gives rise to a new awareness of what it means to be "lesser brothers" .

DIVERSITY

10. The principle of pluriformity in the new Constitutions and the changes it has brought mean that we are faced today with models of life and formation differing considerably among themselves . It is difficult to classify these; we are reluctant to reduce a living, changing reality to a mere outline.

As regards formation, in some Provinces there is a great problem as to the type of fraternity in which the formation of candidates should take place, the way they are to share in the actual life lived in a particular Province, and the role of the formation houses for an effective renewal of the Order.

11. In spite all the differences there is profound agreement on many points. The present document is proof of this. It is the unity that comes from sharing the essential inspirational motives of our way of life. One of the most genuine expressions of this unity is the common search for a response to the call to live a life in accordance with the Gospel through a re-reading of our Capuchin Franciscan sources.

12. The present analysis of the new contexts of formation is proposed to every Province or area. Precisely in order to promote a way of life faithful to the original Capuchin Franciscan values and inspiration , the Provinces or regions have need of a formation plan (a "ratio formationis") which takes into account the historical, social, cultural, religious and ecclesial situation of the person in formation. Only in this way will these plans effectively provide genuine formation in the Order, according to places and times.

2. PRIMACY OF THE LIFE OF GOSPEL BROTHERHOOD

LIVING THE GOSPEL IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF SAINT FRANCIS

13. In the new situations just described, there is more incentive for us to live the Gospel in imitation of Saint Francis and the first friars of the Order . Constantly returning to our origins,

which the Church today is inviting us to do, is one of the characteristics of Franciscan history and in particular Capuchin history . We shall never manage to overcome the gulf separating our life from that of Francis - a difference due partly to our own weakness and partly to the exceptional holiness of our Seraphic Father .

... IN BROTHERHOOD...

14. Our Order is an order of brothers. The Gospel form of life it proposes to us is that of brotherhood . Saint Francis applied this term first of all to the Order as a whole: he would say: "I want this Order to be called the Order of lesser brothers" . Hence, the term expresses the real character of the Order, of the province and the local community.

... ACKNOWLEDGING OURSELVES TO BE SONS OF THE SAME FATHER ...

15. "Let us welcome one another as brothers," first of all because we all recognise ourselves as sons of the same Father in Jesus Christ, and then because we wish to advance together in communion with him, through daily submissiveness to the Holy Spirit . Hence, at the heart of our brotherhood we find common prayer and continual contemplation of Christ, particularly in the mysteries of his Incarnation and Passion , that is to say that "spirit of prayer and devotion" which turns our whole life and activity into an expression of filial love .

... LOVING ONE ANOTHER

16. Being brothers means loving one another. This love makes some very specific demands, such as:

- creating in the fraternities a family-like, simple and joyful atmosphere in which each brother can freely grow ;
- developing mutual trust, understanding and esteem for one another ;
- manifesting our needs to each other with simplicity ;
- willingly placing our talents at the service of the fraternity ;
- practising loving obedience and fraternal correction in a continuous striving for conversion ;
- supporting one another in times of difficulty or discouragement .

It can never be stressed enough how much is contributed to the evangelical and Franciscan appearance of our fraternities by those friars who devote themselves to household duties and apply themselves to maintaining an atmosphere of recollection, simplicity and joy .

It is precisely by means of these attitudes and activities that fraternity in minority is built up day by day. This becomes the crucible in which our Gospel life is forged.

UNITED WITH THE ENTIRE FRANCISCAN FAMILY

17. y fostering both the spirit of prayer and reciprocal relationships, the fraternity, far from closing in upon itself, opens us to welcome others, particularly members of the Franciscan family . Especially encouraging and enriching for both sides are the frequent and familiar contacts with the brothers and sisters of the Secular Franciscan Order; and this is so precisely because they live with us our own charism of brotherhood and minority, but in its secular

dimension . Hence it is good for the fraternities both at the provincial and local level to organise shared activities with the lay Franciscans: prayer meetings, retreats, conventions, apostolic activities . . . In this way we will be able concretely to develop the vital interchange between our two fraternities.

BROTHERHOOD AS WITNESS ..

18. The pre-eminence of fraternal life must also be underscored in the field of the apostolate. Our Constitutions clearly state that “the first apostolate of the friar minor is to live the gospel life in this world honestly, simply and joyfully” and that we accept “any work of ministry or apostolic activity as long as it is in keeping with our form of life.”

Before all else, therefore, we must bear witness to a brotherly life, lived with the people and for the people, with the poor and for the poor.

...AT TIMES WEAKENED BY INDIVIDUALISM...

19. This witness is weakened when friars individually devote themselves so much to activities, whether ministerial or otherwise, that they no longer find time to pray with their brothers, perceive their needs, share in the life of the fraternity or take part in household chores. The Plenary Councils of Quito and Taizé have already drawn attention to these aberrations

20. The pre-eminence of fraternal life in the field of the apostolate is even further weakened in some provinces and regions because of the life-style that has developed there. This way of life is organised around the needs of the ministry more than around its witness of fraternal life. One is then faced with a community of priests who draw inspiration from Franciscan spirituality, rather than with a fraternity of lesser brothers endeavouring to live the Gospel .

It is clear that we must see in this situation one of the causes of the constant decrease in brothers' vocations. What is left to attract them when they see that our life is structured almost exclusively as a community of priests?

THE ORDER MUST PRESERVE ITS CHARACTER AS A BROTHERHOOD IN MINORITY

21. These observations are obviously in no way intended to condemn the priestly ministry, but they do show that in many places we exercise such ministry without sufficient discernment, so that we run the risk of propelling the Order towards increasing clericalization. We seem to have fallen into the “trap” of our own generosity, which has constrained us to respond to the urgent needs of the dioceses, without taking sufficient account of the specific character of our own calling as lesser brothers . If we wish to preserve for the Order its specific character, it is absolutely necessary that we have a substantial presence of brothers. As we strive to renew our life of brotherhood let us recognise that this is one problem we face.

CONCLUSIONS FOR FORMATION

22. In order to preserve and strengthen the primacy of the life of gospel brotherhood, we suggest the following:

- in the vocations apostolate the accent should be on brotherly life as a characteristic of our form of life and not only on any particular activity, even priestly activity;

- at every stage of formation emphasis should be placed on the essential aspects of fraternal life among us (community prayer, contemplation, service) and also on our particular way of embodying the Gospel in the world through brotherhood lived in minority among the poor;
- there must be a clear distinction between formation for our way of life and formation for the priesthood or a profession. Formation for our life must take absolute priority, especially in the first years of initial formation ;
- since we are an Order of brothers and “by reason of one and the same vocation, all the friars are equal” , formation for our life must be the same for all. It is also desirable that, following on this point the style of the Rule, the Testament and the Constitutions, we all form the habit of calling ourselves "Brothers" without distinction ;
- yet again because Saint Francis wanted us to be an Order of brothers, offices in the service of the brotherhood - on Order-wide, Provincial or local fraternity level - must be available to all the friars ;
- everyone must be offered the opportunity for cultural, human and spiritual development according to each person’s capacity and in conformity with our Franciscan vocation ;
- we should also strive to find new forms for our traditional services in the Church and in the world: preaching the Word of God, acts of mercy, formation of the faithful in contemplative prayer, etc.

3. INCULTURATION

CONTEXT

23. In recent years several documents the Church and the Order have drawn attention to the principle of pluriformity. These documents are still valid and require careful reflection and appropriate application on our part.

Yet there exists a problem connected with pluriformity which should be given serious consideration today, since it constitutes one of the most urgent priorities both for the implantation of the Order and for formation. That problem is inculturation. Only by tackling this problem with true wisdom can we hope for the unique evangelical and Franciscan spirit to be embodied in the life of individuals just as it is in that of the various cultures. The diversity of expressions will then be able to radiate everywhere a genuine brotherhood of love - the brotherhood so ardently desired by Saint Francis .

24. In many parts of the world the gospel message comes face to face with ancient and highly developed cultures. In such areas it has not been able to exert great impact. At the same time it may also find an aggressive nationalism, which rejects it as the bearer of unwanted attitudes, values and life-styles of a foreign culture. And everywhere in the world it is faced with changing cultural patterns.

Among the newly independent nations a new awareness of their own cultural identity and the desire to grow in the forms and values of their own culture is evinced.

A new consciousness of the legitimacy and need of inculturation has been evident in the Church, particularly during and after the Second Vatican Council.

The local churches in many regions are still far from being truly inculturated in their own surroundings. Due to many historical factors, an atmosphere of fear and resistance coupled with a minority complex prevails among them. Consequently, the process of inculturation often encounters psychological and sociological obstacles, which originate within the churches themselves.

CULTURE

25. The word "culture" does not always mean the same thing. When we speak of inculturation, we use the word basically in a sociological sense to refer to a network of attitudes, values, institutions, artistic creations, language, human and social relationships, etc. This is the result of a people's collective memory of history and heritage that modify and are modified by their ideals, needs and expectations, as these emerge in the process of realising their own destiny.

FAITH AND CULTURE

26. The Gospel is linked to no particular culture and is capable of penetrating any culture, while being subservient to none and losing none of its uniqueness as salvation message . The same must be said of the essential Franciscan values, since they are fundamentally nothing other than gospel values .

Inculturation is not merely a question of transplanting the Gospel and the Order into another cultural area or of adapting it to another culture or to changing cultural forms. It is much more than that. Inculturation is the attempt to bring Christ to birth anew in a given culture. It seeks to transform it by the power of the Risen Christ's Spirit, which is the beginning of a new creation. It is the profound insertion of the faith and the Order into the socio-cultural realities of today. Considered in terms of the local Church, inculturation is the integration of the lived experience of a particular church into the culture of a particular people. As far as the Order is concerned, it implies the integration of the lived experience of the Franciscan charism into the culture of the people among whom the friars live and work .

UNIVERSAL REALITY

27. Inculturation, however, should not be understood merely as the process by which the "young" churches and the newly independent nations seek to realise and live their own identity. It is a process that involves all countries and all churches, since culture is not merely static but a living and dynamic reality, subject to change and growth.

Economic and social realities exert a great influence upon the culture of a society. Faith must enter into the values, norms and perspectives of economic and social projects, juxtaposing them in critical confrontation with the Gospel and thereby purifying them. This requirement applies to every type of inculturation.

The supreme motive and model of inculturation is the incarnation of the Word. This unique act of integration of the universal with the particular must be seen as the foundation of all inculturation.

Inculturation fully corresponds to the spirit and intentions of Saint Francis who lived in intimate communion with the paschal mystery of Christ, united with all creation . He wanted his brethren to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ wherever they were but

always in accordance with the circumstances of time and place . Thus, Capuchin Franciscan identity can and must be lived in its entirety in all cultures.

MUTUAL ENRICHMENT

28. Inculturation leads to mutual enrichment. Just as the Church and the Order can be enriching factors for cultures, so the latter can be enriching for the Church and the Order. Some cultures have values and life-styles which are particularly congenial to the Capuchin Franciscan charism .

Inculturation involves not only accepting the values, norms, lifestyles, etc. of a given culture, but also the critical re-evaluation of these on the basis of the Gospel once the faith and the Order are a part of the culture.

Inculturation demands that, while being rooted firmly in one's own culture, there is openness to the riches and values of other cultures. In this way there will be a continuous dialogue between them, rendering them fertile and causing them to grow in a continuous creative process.

SUB-CULTURES

29. This fact must also be taken into account: that every culture is an aggregate of sub-cultures that exist side by side even in the same area. Intellectuals, students, workers, youth, the middle class, the poor, all have their own sub-cultures, with specific characteristics, sensibilities and tensions. Consequently, knowledge of a culture must above all be acquired through lived contact with it, its modes of being, values, etc. The gospel message and Franciscan values will truly be capable of reaching the various groups ("subcultures") only if they can really confront the challenges the latter present and respond to their needs .

INCULTURATION AND FORMATION

In trying to live the Capuchin Franciscan charism account must be taken of the social, economic and ethical situation of the people among, whom we live and work. Inculturation demands solidarity, especially with the poor and with ordinary people.

Inculturation starts with the people. It cannot be dictated from above; it must grow organically from below. Formation must therefore encourage initiative and creative freedom. Only in an atmosphere of freedom and trust, supported by faith, can inculturation succeed.

Where there is still fear and resistance in the face of inculturation care must be given to making the people and the local Church aware, through gradual introduction to it. In this area we must be capable of acting with discernment and wisdom, but at the same time we must, like Saint Francis, exercise a prophetic role at the service of an authentic renewal of the Spirit .

30. The primary agent of inculturation is the living community of the local church. Therefore, those who are in the stage of initial formation, as well as those in on-going formation, must identify themselves with the traditions, spirituality, liturgy etc., of the local church. They must have a profound knowledge of the values of their culture and also be imbued with the experience of God and prayer possessed by their "wise men", an experience that constitutes the true soul of a culture.

During the period of formation, the friars should not be taken out of their cultural environment. From the very beginning they should try to gain a deep acquaintance with the attitudes, values, norms, life-styles, ways of thinking and acting, language, symbols, art, literature, etc., of their own culture, and this, above all, through genuine experience and living contact with the people. They must be trained to discern the values of their own culture in the light of the Gospel .

As far as possible, formation personnel should come from and be formed in their own cultural environment. Yet, even when this is not the case, they should be possessed of genuine Christian love for the people and their culture and feel themselves in solidarity with it.

The formation programme of the friars should also include a coherent inculturation programme both for those under initial formation and those in on-going formation.

Continental, regional and inter-provincial Franciscan centres can serve the cause of inculturation by helping to analyse and make specific one's own cultural identity in terms of ethnic, religious, social and economic circumstances.

On the general level, the Order can play an important role in promotion and co-ordination of an intercultural dialogue so that the variety of cultural expressions converges toward the unity and universal brotherhood of the entire Order. The unity aimed at must be one of faith, of mutual service and sharing, unity of real brotherhood in the spirit of the Gospel as it was lived by Saint Francis .

4. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF ACTION

Starting with the priority of the need for inculturation, some general criteria and guidelines for our formation can be established.

PRINCIPLE OF THE PRIORITY OF GOSPEL LIFE

31. The principle of the priority of our gospel brotherhood means making radical choices according to the Gospel lived by Saint Francis, in its various dimensions of prayer, poverty, minority and option for peace. Based on this principle, decisions will be made in such a way as to promote above all our common fraternal life .

PRINCIPLE OF INCULTURATION

32. The principle of inculturation demands that our life be deeply integrated into the socio-economic reality of the various regions. This inculturation concerns the different cultures with their characteristics, their values and expectations, as well as the rapid changes that occur therein. Diverse situations require pluriformity in our life, in the sense that it is lived in ways corresponding to places and times .

PRINCIPLE OF PARTICIPATION

33. The principle of participation means that formation is a growing and maturing process if the individual friar and communities overcome the tendency to create their own closed world, and participate in the experience of others. Nobody can mature by himself; everyone needs

other people. In an age that places so much importance on self-fulfilment and at the same time seeks new ways of living together, this openness to others and this capacity to participate is a source of spiritual and cultural enrichment, as well as serving to overcome the conflict one sometimes finds between “person” and “institution.” In line with this principle of participation, an open fraternity should be favoured, especially open to the Franciscan Order in all its parts. This openness will incite us to deepen the Franciscan values we share, and improve our practice of them .

PRINCIPLE OF INTEGRATION

34. On the principle of integration, formation should help the individual and the fraternity to assimilate values and experiences. Some values cannot be easily integrated, such as those of prayer and community, intellectual formation and activity, self-fulfilment and community, intellectual formation and lived experience, etc. Only by forging a living synthesis of values and experiences in the different phases of life can a person achieve interior unity and avoid assuming attitudes out of frustration. Even renunciations, chosen freely because of the Gospel or imposed by life, should become part of this vital synthesis .

PRINCIPLE OF CONVERSION

35. The principle of conversion enables us to make a continual review of our forms of life in the light of the Gospel. As various changes take place and new values emerge, only a critical awareness such as this can make choices in conformity with one’s own vocation .

CHAPTER II° SOME SPECIFIC ELEMENTS

SOME CHARACTERISTIC ELEMENTS OF OUR VOCATION AND FORMATION

36. The Second Vatican Council sees the renewal of the religious life as composed of a two-fold element: return to the primitive spirit of the founders and a sensible adaptation to the particular circumstances of place and time .

For this reason it seems appropriate to point out some of the paths, traced by history and open to the future, along which to carry forward the work of renewal and formation in our Fraternity :

PRAYER

a) In accordance with the example of Saint Francis and the teaching of the Rule, it is necessary before all else to understand that every activity of ours ought to serve “the spirit of holy prayer and devotion” , with the consequent commitment to regain the contemplative dimension that has characterised the Capuchin reform and has been the source of its apostolic and social action .

PENANCE AND POVERTY

b) In line with the fundamental choice made by Saint Francis, and guided by the law of love for Christ , we wish to pattern our lives on him in personal self-discipline, and with him choose to be close to our most poverty-stricken and outcast brethren . Hence the urgency to return to a consistent evangelical poverty, and the invitation to all the friars to search together for new ways of expressing it with greater credibility for the people of today .

MINORITY

c) In face of the pride and ambition that disturbs human coexistence, we wish to be lesser brothers and take the lowest place in society, remaining, like Francis, always faithful and obedient to the Church .

GOSPEL WITNESS AMONG THE PEOPLE

d) As an expression of love for the Father and our brothers, let us reaffirm our commitment to evangelize the poor by being effectively present in their midst, giving witness by the way we live, by preaching to the people, by missionary activity and practical service to those in greatest need .

In this perspective we now underline here some aspects arising out of brotherhood, which have a bearing on formation.

1. A PRAYING BROTHERHOOD

THE TAIZÉ DOCUMENT

37. Since the Plenary Council of Taizé, encouraging progress in deepening our life of prayer has been made in the Order and in the fraternities, even if some difficulties still remain, due to excessive emphasis on efficiency in work and to the flight from brotherhood on the part of individual friars. The establishment of contemplation fraternities has met with many obstacles.

We maintain that the Order has in the Taizé Document a valuable aid for the spirit and life of prayer. For this reason only a few indications concerning formation in the spirit and life of prayer are given here, so that prayer can have the primacy it should rightly have according to the words and example of Saint Francis and to Capuchin tradition.

As a practical principle in formation to a life of prayer, it will often be necessary to reflect upon what is stated in the Taizé Document: "The spirit of prayer that is truly a living one cannot help but inspire and vivify the actual life of the friars, and therefore it necessarily renews the wholesome traditional forms and creates suitable new ones."

AIDS TO GROWTH IN PRAYER.

38. Prayer is a gift of God which, however, must be developed by searching, study and faithfulness.

The following guidelines may prove useful in the process learning to pray more and more:

- profound participation in the liturgy of the Church according to the course of the liturgical year makes us live the great mysteries of redemption ;
- a progressive introduction to and practice of biblical prayer, especially the Psalms, imbues us with a great sense of God and salvation history ;
- an introduction to the great experiences of God among various peoples and to the new and traditional forms of prayer can enrich our way of praying. Prayers which are highly valued in the various cultures merit special attention;
- shared prayer with our brothers and the people makes us aware of their anxieties and joys in the presence of God;
- regularity of prayer helps growth in the spirit of prayer itself, which needs continuity and fidelity if it is to develop .

ANIMATORS OF PRAYER

39. There are various requirements of a general order for promoting the growth of fraternities and individuals in prayer.

The fraternity itself can play its part as a formative community in prayer if all the friars contribute by participating in prayer, by appropriate preparation for community functions, by creating a favourable climate for prayer. Traditional forms, e.g., night vigils, can then take on new meaning. In this context the problem of the time schedule must also be resolved, both as regards set times and more prolonged, special periods of prayer .

Qualified local formation personnel with experience of prayer are needed to instil spirit and life and promote creativity so that ritualism can be avoided.

FORMATION IN FRANCISCAN PRAYER

40. Formation should aid Franciscan prayer in such a way that prayer becomes more and more the expression of our whole way of being, our values, our essential individual and community existence, and the demands of our times .

Inner or mental prayer, personal and of an affective character, has always held first place in our traditional prayer, it has been the true centre of fraternal and apostolic life (*Taizé 20*). It appears vitally important to renew this type of prayer, teach it to our friars and make it the core of our apostolate. This is particularly true in that today there exists a widespread desire for this kind of contemplative prayer, especially among the young .

The characteristics of Franciscan prayer as being biblical, emotional, contemplative and penitential indicate the directions in which formation should proceed: formation in listening to the word of God ; formation of the heart ; development of the capacity for awe before God's great works in the whole of creation and redemption ; interest in the mysteries of Christ's death and resurrection ; formation to discover God's presence and His will ; formation to acquire a universal spirit that prays and lives as it shares in the joys and sorrows of its brothers .

This kind of formation will aid in finding the right solution of the prayer-activity dilemma and will contribute to ensuring that the spirit of prayer and devotion pervades the entire life of the friars.

TEACHING PRAYER THROUGH CONCRETE PROGRAMMES

A true and proper step-by-step teaching method in the spirit and life of prayer must respect differences in the cultural areas. The Conferences, in cooperation with the regional Franciscan centres, should prepare a suitable programme.

2. PENITENTIAL FRATERNITY

REALITY AND IMPORTANCE OF PENANCE IN THE ORDER

41. Many traditional forms of penance have lost meaning and are no longer practised. On the other hand, the concrete suggestions of the Constitutions concerning penance have not in practice had the desired effect. Yet the need to find new and adequate forms of penance seems to be strongly felt. In particular, the meaning of penance is nowadays emerging more and more clearly in the fraternities, understood not just in a negative fashion as renunciation but especially as conversion .

INTERIORIZING PENANCE

The meaning of the Gospel challenge to "be converted and believe in the Gospel!" is perceived in a more forceful and profound way. The call to penance and faith is a call to break with the

world (Exodus, conversion) and a new orientation towards Christ and the Gospel, through which radically new relationships with God, men and the world are established. For us this means spiritual renewal (change of mentality) so as to build a fraternity according to the Gospel. Hence, penance is a means towards the evangelical growth of brotherhood, which is the essential goal of our formation .

It should then not be forgotten that in the new ecclesial situation, penance is seen not only as an ascetic value but above all as a means to improve the practice of charity. What is taken from the “table of the Lord” should be given to the poor in a spirit of brotherhood .

PENANCE, INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR

Penance as Exodus and conversion essentially concerns one’s interior attitude but should also find expression in exterior life, in the manner denoted by the term “austerity” – which is certainly a characteristic of our identity . Penance or exterior austerity, permeated with gentle, sensitive charity, will be joyous: the saints were always austere with themselves but full of goodness and kindness with their brothers .

In actual practice, a detached attitude must find expression in daily choices and actions by individuals and the community alike. It is these which create, by the grace of God, the “new man” and the “new world” .

SPECIFIC FORMS OF PENANCE

42. Among the specific forms that can aid us in making the transition to this new life, we can mention:

- the renunciation of self in order to be converted to the life of the fraternity through the practice of charitable obedience;
- accepting the promptings to conversion that come to us from the Church, especially in the special seasons of renewal;
- accepting the specific forms suggested by the Constitutions, in particular, fraternal correction and fasting;
- joyful acceptance of the difficulties and persecutions that might come our way because of our consecration to God, our preaching of the Gospel, our efforts to accomplish justice and peace, etc.
- accepting all the consequences of our vows, especially that of obedience, even when they are painful and difficult;
- accepting life’s difficulties, in work, sickness, poor food, bad climate, etc.
- sharing the lives of the poor and meeting the “lepers” of today, that is to say, the outcasts and the disinherited;
- seeking new external forms suitable to local circumstances which at the same time signify a witness and a break with the world.

ANIMATORS OF PENANCE

In order to encourage the fraternity's growth in the evangelical life there is need for men who can inspire renewal. Foremost among these are the forming fraternity itself, the local Superior and the Minister Provincial, the formation personnel, among whom we find especially the one responsible for spiritual direction, who, by adapting his ministry to the needs of the individual, helps each friar to grow.

PENITENTIAL ITINERARIES

As a way of putting this into practice, we recommend a penitential itinerary: that is, the fraternity could propose for itself a path of more intense penance- conversion, based on the Word of God and the Franciscan experience, with a deeper penetration of Sacred Scripture, special occasions, objectives to be attained, etc.

DETAILED PROGRAMMES SHOULD BE PREPARED BY EXPERTS AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL.

Still, among all the itineraries, preference should certainly be given to those provided by the liturgical life of the Church and in particular, Lent, which is the penitential journey par excellence, leading to the "new life" of faith in the Risen Christ.

3. FRATERNITY IN POVERTY AND MINORITY

SITUATION IN THE WORLD AND THE ORDER

43. In today's world we find on one hand an opulent consumer mentality and on the other, poverty, injustice and hunger which cry out for a witness of evangelical poverty.

The Church desires to appear in the eyes of the world as the "Church of the Poor" at the service of mankind, especially the outcast.

Among the Order's positive aspects there are many expressions of poverty in loving kindness and the responsible use of money on the part of many friars. Nevertheless it must be remarked that poverty does not entail the renunciation of material possessions alone but the renunciation of power as well. At times, too, we work for the poor but do not live as and with the poor.

POVERTY AS AN IMITATION OF CHRIST "THE SERVANT"

44. Poverty, understood as loving solidarity with others, is the foundation of what makes us Franciscans. This implies the contemplation of the poor and crucified Christ, the practice of self-denial and our presence among the lowly.

Poverty goes beyond availability in love; it consists in shaping one's life according to Christ, Who came to serve.

This calls for a whole life-style, a simple way of life (in dress, food, housing), and the giving up of any form whatever of social, political or ecclesiastical power.

POVERTY AS OPENNESS TO THE PEOPLE

In order to put all this into practice, the friars should be formed to live and work among the people and for the people, preferring and fostering those forms of the apostolate - both within and outside the fraternity - best suited to our minority and poverty.

While being men of peace, we should be formed in and seek to form people's consciences to the significance of the quest for social justice. Let us also participate in the work of social and political reform, but always in the Spirit of the Gospel and in accordance with our Constitutions, especially by turning away from any form of violence whatever.

Let our houses be open to a type of hospitality which also encourages sharing in our life of prayer, while preserving their atmosphere of silence and a definite area of privacy.

MINORITY AS INSECURITY

Material insecurity is also a sign of the reality of poverty and minority. Even the insecurity involved in undertaking new, prophetic initiatives (studied and undertaken, certainly, in the sight of God) is a part of our life, inspired by Saint Francis, which as minors we accept at the risk of failure.

FORMATION IN POVERTY AND MINORITY

45. During initial formation it can be useful for the young friar to have real contact with the poor and needy in order to learn in a more concrete way how to be poor and live a life of poverty. This is in the spirit of Saint Francis, who placed himself at the service of lepers.

At any rate, for such an experience to be truly effective and fruitful, it should be "guided".

It is very important that all friars should be trained to have a practical sense of responsibility in the use of money and other material things in accordance with the precise criterion of "the minimum necessary, not the maximum permitted".

To this end, all the friars should avoid expenses not permitted to the poor.

There should also be very strict standards for the use of the mass media for reasons of the apostolate or brotherhood, any other purpose being excluded. This will also safeguard recollection and purity of heart.

Within the fraternity, formation for poverty and minority includes formation for generous, voluntary service especially in household tasks, mentioned by our Constitutions as being part of the loving obedience we owe to one another.

4. FRATERNITY IN THE MIDST OF THE PEOPLE IN THE MIDST OF THE PEOPLE

A ROAD TO BE TRAVELLED

46. Closeness to the people characterizes our Order. The process of renewal has made us more aware of our identity and tradition in this area also, and increased our desire to regain it. This has brought about a rediscovery of the riches contained in the traditional forms of our presence among the people; missions for the people, ministry for confession ... and the quest

for new meaningful forms of being part of the people: the world of workers, the disinherited, small fraternities ... a process in which we find both light and shadow. Surely there still remains much to be done in this area.

A LIFE-STYLE THAT IS "OF THE PEOPLE"

47. The economy of the Incarnation and the historical example of Jesus will always be the archetype of the Franciscan option in relationships with people. It is as Christ's follower that Francis could incarnate, as no one else has done, the life, deeds and language of the people of his time, so that he has passed into history as the "universal brother".

The primacy of fraternal life leads us to live as brothers with the people and work among them for the Kingdom of God.

By its very nature Franciscan fraternity is open and predisposed to sharing. By taking our place among people, not so much as individuals but rather as a fraternity, we should live in their midst moved only by true love and sincere conversion. In this way our presence will not be alienating, and will remain discerning in the face of social, political and economic conditioning. Living as we do among the people we should place at their service not only our material goods but also our talents – not just those of individuals, but also those which are part of our identity as Capuchin Franciscan fraternity.

FORMATION

48. The process of insertion among the people should always respect legitimate pluriformity of choice, both at the provincial and fraternity and personal level. Small fraternities are one of the means that can be used, as long as the guidelines given at Quito are observed, which the Provinces will continue to encourage.

Initial formation should help the candidate to begin the process of incarnation among people, taking as a point of departure our Capuchin Franciscan identity. For this to happen, it is important that as far as possible the candidate should not be removed from the people among whom he was born. This dimension should also be kept in mind in relation to ministerial or professional formation, with for this reason paying less attention to the friars' solid Franciscan, theological and professional formation.

The need for a process of incarnation also holds true for on-going formation. Here too, experience of living among the people is useful in providing a real possibility of conversion and renewal of one's life and vocation. Also, it reveals the need for sound and continued preparation, to serve the people better in building the Kingdom of God.

WITNESS AND SERVICE

A NEW SITUATION

49. Our Franciscan vocation makes an ample wealth of forms of life and activity available to us. Historically, apostolic and ministerial work have been pre-eminent, and this has given rise to an abundance of thought and writing in this area. We refer back to this literature. The

rediscovery of other forms of life and work has provoked a series of problems to which satisfactory answers have yet to be found - for example, as to how it is possible to reconcile apparently contradictory aspects of life, such as manual labour and the work of the ministry, activity and prayer, personal charism and fraternal life. The present considerations are intended to be of assistance in finding answers to these questions.

While the word "work" is understood to mean any honest activity of the friars, and even though all that is said here may also be applied to ministerial work, our reflections have centred particularly on the subject which today more and more demands an answer - that is, the new situation in the Order in the face of new forms of presence and work.

CHOICE OF LIFE AND ACTIVITY

50. The "religious" character of work (the "grace" of working) needs to be underscored. The friars' activities - apostolic, charitable, intellectual and manual - should be seen as a "locus theologicus" of encounter with God. Christ, who did the work of the Father both at Nazareth and as a preacher and worker of miracles as well as in his Sermon on the Mount, is transmitted to us in the form of life we inherit from Francis. This indefatigable preacher of the Gospel and man of prayer, or, rather, a living prayer, worked with his hands and wanted all his friars to do the same. He was always at the service of the Church, together with his friars. And yet he remained firmly in opposition to any suggestion of a life and activity that entailed giving up the form of life revealed to him by the Lord. The principal service of the Friars Minor is to live the Gospel life in this world - honestly, simply, and joyfully. But it is also an evangelical and Franciscan value to develop our talents in order to share in the creative work of the Father, in the Redemption of the Son and in the sanctifying mission of the Spirit. Consequently, initial formation should propose a concrete process of apprenticeship which will effectively lead to joy in living one's proper vocation in a personal and community balance between fraternal life, prayer and work, between study and manual work, between apostolic life and intellectual preparation.

This balance must begin with the person himself, and one should seek to develop in appropriate ways the personal gifts of each brother, in accordance with our own Capuchin Franciscan identity.

WORK AND FORMATION

51. Candidates should have a genuine experience of work, particularly understood in the sense of service, firstly, within the fraternity and then in being available to others. Formation in work effectively aids in maturing a person in the true dimension of brotherhood, intensifying solidarity, vivifying communion and sharing in and contributing notably to heightening the credibility of our way of life.

People must be taught not to confuse work with activism and not to quench the spirit of prayer and devotion, which all things should serve. Franciscan life involves real work, whether physical or spiritual, not merely for ascetical reasons but because of the natural law of work: "Whoever does not want to work is not to eat".

It is right to present study and meditation to the young as being necessary and authentic work, since our formation, while emphasising the primacy of the lived life, should give the friar a specific and qualified preparation through specialised studies as well, in order better to

serve the Church, the people and the fraternities themselves. This aspect is most important and should not be neglected in on-going formation.

The way of overcoming the present difficulties and dichotomies can be found by putting into practice everything our legislation tells us regarding the discernment of the work of the whole community and of each friar, namely; the local chapter, truly lived; the provincial chapters, particularly the “spiritual” ones; reflection on this problem at the level of the Conferences of Superiors. These are the places where the newness of our Order, with its wealth of life-forms and modes of presence and activity in the world, can really become a fact.

5. AFFECTIVE MATURITY

IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL (AFFECTIVE) AND SEXUAL MATURITY

52. Affectivity, meaning the capacity to experience feelings, to establish interpersonal relationships and to love, contributes particularly to the integration of a person’s various dimensions (social and working relationships, sexual role) and is basic to one’s healthy development. In a mature person, the value of sexuality is accepted and integrated. For one who has opted for a consecrated evangelical life, maturity means coherence, creativity and constructivity for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

Concretely, affective and sexual formation travels the gradual road of conversion from self-centred and possessive (infantile) love to an altruistic and self-sacrificing love capable of giving itself to others. It is clear then that affective maturation accompanies a person for the whole of his human and Christian life, like an on-going conversion.

MOTIVATIONS

A life consecrated to God in chastity is a charism not everyone can understand. It is a choice made for the Kingdom of God and is a value in that perspective alone. The new family of those who have given up their own in order to follow Christ with an undivided heart and to serve one another as brothers and friends is a prophetic sign that the Kingdom of Heaven is already in our midst, as well as being a testimony of faith in the life to come.

THE AFFECTIVITY OF SAINT FRANCIS

53. One of Saint Francis’ characteristics is the richness of his feelings and emotions and his ability to express them. Francis, in love not only with God, like every other saint, but with all mankind and all creatures, is the brother and friend of everyone and everything. With a more than maternal heart he puts himself “at the feet” of each and all, subject to every human creature for love of God. With extreme courtesy and nobility, sensitive to all that is good and beautiful he wished his friars to be joyful heralds of penance and conversion, in peace and universal brotherhood of cosmic dimensions.

THE TASK OF FORMATION

54. In order to help the friars attain the affective maturity indispensable for the personal integration of values, for life in fraternity and for fulfilling our service in the world and the Church, formation must provide effective aids in this area, likewise taking advantage of the contribution of the human sciences.

In initial formation, affective formation is as important as intellectual formation. The formation person must be conscious that his knowledge of the problems relating to affective formation, his way of interpreting them, dealing with them and helping to resolve them, depends in great part on the psychological, moral and religious lives of the persons entrusted to him. He will therefore be very tactful when dealing with problems of emotional development.

Friars in the on-going formation phase also need help in overcoming the loneliness, anxiety and spiritual aridity which are often encountered in life so that they can emerge enriched and renewed from the transitional stages which life itself involves.

Formation programmes should also include guidelines as regards affective and sexual maturity.

Friars qualified in the subject should be in a position to help their fellow-friars to make use of modern science in their psycho-sexual development and emotional maturation.

AIDS FOR AFFECTIVE FORMATION

55. The fraternity could and should be the place where the friars grow in affective maturity.

The atmosphere of the community, if serene, optimistic, frank, free and open to dialogue and acceptance of others, makes it possible for each person to develop his affectivity normally and communicate his emotional difficulties spontaneously. Commitment to brotherhood demands constant renunciation and dedication from each brother, and these give rise to the genuine, deep friendships that are so important for fulfilment of the affective life. On the other hand, fraternity fosters a way of working in togetherness and reciprocal responsibility, teaching one to be flexible and adaptable to different personalities and circumstances.

It must be part of every formation programme to learn how to really care about others. Young friars should be led to have an attitude of regard for the old, who in turn will love the younger friars as gifts granted to them by God.

Very early on in the course of formation, the friars should get to know the members of their own province by attending the more important gatherings and visiting other fraternities when the occasion arises.

Social contacts with every class of people, men and women, children, young and old, of varying social condition, facilitate not only a normal life but also an open and balanced personality development capable of being open to others.

Friendship, including friendships with persons outside the Order, is a great gift and offers the possibility of human and spiritual growth. By virtue of our consecration and out of respect for the vocation of those we meet, we should avoid binding others to ourselves too much, but rather giving of ourselves. This is the way to begin a friendship that is liberating and not destructive for the fraternity and families.

The friars' contact with their own families is good for emotional growth; but we must also consider that the fraternity is itself our family.

SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

56. Saint Francis offers a pedagogical itinerary for the formation of the heart.

He always tried to form the friars' hearts - which is the same as saying the vital centre of the person. It is in the heart that the Spirit of the Lord wishes the Father and the Son to dwell, instead of the carnal spirit of self-love.

Formation consists precisely in overcoming self-love under the holy inspiration of the Spirit. The most effective means of formation for Francis is to lead the friars to feel, experience and know the sweetness, joy and goodness and the love which is God. And to the friars, who have nothing of "their own", he offers in exchange the love of God and the more maternal love of brethren.

CHAPTER III° PRACTICAL GUIDELINES

57. The formation process, while being divided into various stages, must correspond to an underlying unity.

As a continuous procedure opening out to values, formation should be distinguished by certain characteristics.

Formation must be regarded as a personalised process in the sense that it must take account of the characteristics, the charism and needs as well as the growth rhythm of the individual. At the same time, the individual must also grow as an open person.

Formation must be continuous. Only a continual adaptation in ways of living, thinking and acting can guarantee the ability to face new situations, challenges and expectations. From this comes the need for the friars to learn how to learn.

The process of formation must be organic and coherent and set the targets to be aimed for. These targets will enable corresponding choices to be made.

All growth must be gradual. Formation is therefore a journey whose stages must be respected. The young should not be made to repeat the same stage twice, just as older persons must be helped to continue to advance. The objectives to be reached in the various stages are points of arrival and departure at one and the same time.

In order to attain these objectives in a manner corresponding to the different cultural circumstances, the provinces should provide themselves with a “ratio formationis”.

Formation in and for our life is made up of three major phases: vocational guidance, initial formation and on-going formation.

1. VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE AS A SERVICE

58. Vocational guidance is a pastoral activity aimed at helping young men discover God’s plan for their lives and deepening within them their baptismal commitment, promoting their apostolic spirit and inviting them to follow Jesus.

Since the vocational apostolate is a service carried out with the individual's charism and the good of the Church in view, the guidance of the young to all callings that exist in the Church is to be respected and encouraged. The Secular Franciscan Order, which shares with us the spirit of Francis, and the spiritual youth movements, should receive assistance, and there should likewise be cooperation with the vocational guidance agencies in the particular local church.

ORIGIN

59. Vocational guidance begins with the friars' realisation that they are living and can offer the example of a life rich in human and evangelical content, in which aspirants can fulfil themselves completely and render service to the Church and humanity. It goes without saying that it is our desire for continual renewal that makes us able to proffer a convincing model of this kind. Vocational guidance should not be motivated by the will for survival or the necessity for keeping certain structures alive, but only by the desire to activate God's plan by means of our charism.

MEASURES

60. Among the more effective measures that can be taken to assist those seeking a convincing model of Christian and religious life, it must be remembered that first place is held by consistent witness of our brotherly Gospel life, along with prayer, which, according to the teaching of Jesus, is absolutely necessary for achieving vocations to the Lord's vineyard.

Offering young men the real possibility of sharing in our life in some way is among the practical means that have been found to be particularly useful, especially in community activities such as prayer, celebration of the Eucharist, meals and work. All these could perhaps be done in houses especially geared to the purpose, with the chance for individuals to be given assistance in personal reflection.

Amid the clamour of so much propaganda for movements and ideologies, the use of the mass media can also serve to give a voice to the testimony of evangelical life.

Other forms, apart from minor seminaries, where they still exist, could be work and school camps, camping trips and pilgrimages to Franciscan shrines.

It can prove useful to develop the vocations apostolate in environments that are spiritually close to us, such as Franciscan Youth and in the parishes in which we minister.

Even greater effectiveness may result from assigning certain religious to vocational guidance, to promote and coordinate an activity in which all the friars should be involved as a sign of the fruitfulness that is part of Franciscan life.

2. STAGES OF INITIAL FORMATION

DESCRIPTION AND PHASES

61. The term "initiation" implies progressive detachment from one form of life and the assimilation of new values and insertion into a particular society. In this process of initial formation for our life, the candidates, under the guidance of a master, acquire the necessary knowledge and experience, thus interiorising the Franciscan evangelical life.

As a period of insertion into our fraternity, initial formation comprises the following stages:

- the postulancy, as a period of seeking and choosing;
- the novitiate, as a period of interiorisation and integration into the fraternity;
- the post-novitiate, as a time of maturing and consolidating.

Provision must be made for total initial formation to follow a consistent line that permits progressive development, just as it is likewise important not to promote a candidate to a further stage if he has not attained the objective set for a particular period.

THE POSTULANCY

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

62. Postulancy, as the first period of initiation, is a time of discernment and choice of the Franciscan life. During this period, the candidate is in close contact with the fraternity and comes to know our way of life, while the fraternity on its part comes to know the candidate better, so that it can discern his request and give a responsible reply. Postulancy is the time for the candidate to discover the deepest reasons for his own vocation, to know and experience our Capuchin Franciscan life, complete the break with his environment and gain a first experience of brotherhood.

For postulants, formative activity above all revolves around completing their catechesis of faith; methods of prayer, especially with an introduction to the liturgy; Franciscan instruction; an initial introduction to apostolic work. It also seeks to examine and promote human maturity, especially their emotional maturity.

What is done in formation must be centred on the person of the candidate so as to meet his needs on the intellectual, affective and spiritual plane. It is important that those not suited to our way of life be guided along other ways.

PLACE AND DURATION

63. There is a great variety of methods among the Provinces with regard to where the time of postulancy is to be spent. In any case, the place should be one that allows a sufficiently realistic knowledge of Franciscan life in a given region. In every instance the candidate ought not to be taken outside of his cultural milieu.

When postulancy begins, the candidate is admitted into the fraternity as one of its members and takes part in fraternal life. The duration of the postulancy, which varies according to the Province, is conditioned by the candidate's human and Christian maturity and likewise by the needs of the initiation. It presupposes a certain degree of detachment from the former life and a certain level of insertion into the fraternity. Practical norms should be laid down in the formation programmes of the Provinces.

THE NOVITIATE

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

64. The novitiate is the period of intense initiation into Franciscan evangelical life and of experience of this life, the choice of which has already been made.

The aim of the novitiate is to put the novice in a position, through direct experience, to deepen and interiorise the values and spirit of our life and be integrated into the fraternity.

Novitiate takes for granted the free and mature choice of the religious life.

In order for the novitiate to be truly an introduction and rehearsal for our life in its fundamental aspects and requirements, we note some of the objectives of this period:

- introduction to our life in accordance with the Gospel and evangelical counsels, given that the Gospel constitutes the content and rule of our life;
- deepening of our Capuchin Franciscan life;
- a life of intense prayer (liturgical, community, private with periods of contemplative prayer);
- a life of charity, brotherhood and work;
- participation in the different ways of life the Province has to offer;
- participation in the real life of the example the handicapped or needy persons for a certain period of time.

The rhythm of life in the novitiate should correspond to the essential aspects of our life.

From these objectives it is also possible to deduce the criteria for evaluating the novice and creating a programme more adequately serving his needs.

AIDS

65. The principal aids for the novice are Sacred Scripture, the Office, the writings of Saint Francis and his early biographies as well as the writings of Saint Clare and those of the early Christians.

These aids are intended to help the novice traverse the road he is following.

The novitiate fraternity

66. The formative fraternity of the novitiate has the outstanding task of assisting the novice to become a part of the fraternity, especially through practical living. It should consider the novice as a gift of God, a reason for hope, a stimulus for renewal, accepting him as a brother and trying to promote his personal charism in a context of fraternity and service.

THE POST-NOVITIATE

DESCRIPTION

67. The post-novitiate is a time for acquiring depth and maturity vis-a-vis the commitment undertaken at first profession; it prepares the friar for solemn profession as the definitive opinion for the evangelical life.

PROGRAMMES AND PRIORITIES

68. Given the primary place held by the life of evangelical brotherhood in our vocation, it must be given priority also during the post-novitiate formation period. As well as taking priority, such formation must be one and the same and available to all the friars without distinction.

The programmes include deeper probing of Sacred Scripture, spiritual theology, Franciscanism and the various forms of work, especially in the house. In order to round out

this formation completely, even correspondence courses in theology and similar subjects should be considered. Certain forms of intense study and professional preparation are difficult to reconcile with the priority that must be given to formation for the evangelical life.

SPECIALISATIONS

69. As regards the work to be done during this period or the specialisations to be undertaken, there are two directions being followed in the Provinces.

In some Provinces, the principal aim of the post-novitiate is the continuation of religious-Franciscan formation, reducing to a minimum the types of cultural, apostolic and professional formation. Future specialisations (including study for the priestly ministry) are foreseen after solemn profession.

Other Provinces consider the post-novitiate as a time when the fraternal Franciscan life is lived in a new environment, that is, in another house and another life-style, such as work, study, apprenticeship to a profession. The religious-Franciscan formation programmes are given priority and are the same for everyone, even if the candidates do not live in the same house. Along with the programmes of formation for a deeper evangelical life, there are courses for cultural formation and the like. If this approach is followed, formation will take pains to lead the candidates to the point where they experience a solution of problems arising from the tension between prayer and activity, or activity and fraternal life.

Before solemn profession, a period of intense preparation, also called a "second novitiate", is desirable. Its length and methods vary according to the Province.

In order to make solemn profession, the friar must have adequate knowledge and experience of our life, as well as a disposition for continuous conversion and renewal.

Solemn profession makes the friar a member of the fraternity with all the attendant rights and duties in accordance with the Constitutions.

3. ON-GOING FORMATION

DESCRIPTION

70. For us, on-going formation is a process of renewal by which we are rendered capable of living our vocation in accordance with the Gospel in the actual situations and contingencies of daily living. The whole document is conceived with a view to development of our human, Christian and religious life, that is to say, in view of on-going formation as well. If we devote a special section to it here it is for the purpose of better emphasising its importance and the means for achieving it.

NECESSITY AND DIFFICULTIES

The urgent need for on-going formation, so vital in the whole modern world, is increasingly noticeable within the Order. We perceive how necessary it is for the full realisation of our charism. In fact, by means of continuous personal and community renewal and a consistent adaptation of structures, it favours growth in the spirit of the Gospel and the effectiveness of

our witness. Furthermore, it consolidates fraternal life, making dialogue among the different generations easier and aiding in overcoming some of the unavoidable problems and crises arising with advancing age.

Yet you cannot help but notice almost everywhere a certain resistance. At times the reason for this is excessive work but more often it is based on an erroneous concept of on-going formation itself, as if it meant evasion and lack of something to do; again, other times it lies in a subconscious fear of self-examination.

DIMENSIONS

71. While it embraces the whole person as a unit, on-going formation has a twofold dimension: that of spiritual conversion through continual return to the sources of Christian life and the spirit of the Order, in view of greater fidelity to them; and cultural and professional updating by means of “technical” adaptation, so to speak, to the conditions of our day.

This twofold dimension must always be seen in relation to different phases of human life.

ON-GOING FORMATION IS A FRAME OF MIND

On-going formation, more than methods and external aids that are concrete and structured – though these too are necessary – consists in acquiring a frame of mind, a spiritual attitude, which makes us conscious that formation, in other words our human and Christian commitment on the spiritual, scientific and professional level, is never-ending because it can and must continually be worked at, improved and perfected.

One who has ended his period of initial formation cannot claim to be right for the rest of his life. Instead, a genuine “formative attitude” is acquired during initial formation with the realisation that basic formation is only an introduction – certainly necessary – to our continual conversion that lasts as long as we live. Indeed, this is one of the most decisive accomplishments of the initiation period. Ongoing-formation is not identified with or fulfilled by participating in a few “updating” projects, but it is a continuous, living process.

ON-GOING FORMATION: A RIGHT AND A DUTY

72. Without a doubt, making oneself responsible for one’s own ongoing formation is firstly a personal obligation of the individual religious. It is a duty, but also a right, to which everything else must be subordinate, because on-going formation is nothing but the continuous unfolding of our vocation.

But at the same time this formation must be regarded by the Province and its superiors as a serious obligation towards the friars. Every Province should have regulations in this regard and do everything to encourage renewal of the religious, thus creating a climate in which on-going formation cannot only find a place but is considered a normal thing.

RECIPIENTS OF ON-GOING FORMATION

On-going formation is for all friars. There are, however, some groups which must be the object of special attention: older friars who might feel life has passed them by; those friars who for various reasons have not yet been able to benefit from an improved formation whether on the

religious or professional plane; missionaries, often left out of these projects because of too much apostolic work or lack of opportunity; and brothers, who did not always receive sufficient formation in the past.

FORMATION OF THOSE WHO FORM.

73. A very special subject of fundamental importance is the formation of those who form. They, more than all others, have the serious duty of renewing and updating themselves, in other words, of constantly deepening and improving the living of their own vocation, and continuing in the specialisation they began.

Provincial superiors must be fully aware of and responsible for all this.

ON-GOING FORMATION - WAYS AND MEANS

74. The possible means for on-going formation are many and various. Much depends upon a spirit of initiative, good will and dedication on the part of the individual religious and the superiors of the various areas and circumscriptions to find new and stimulating ways.

Not only do extraordinary initiatives contribute to growth and a better realisation of our project of evangelical life. So do moments in our ordinary life. Especially valued among these are: an intensely lived liturgical life in the Mass and in the celebration of the Hours, following the rhythm of the liturgical year; reflection together on the word of God; mediation and periods of silence; the local chapter; the review of life; dialogue and fraternal correction; meetings of the fraternity concerning various problems, even at the level of culture; personal study taken up methodically and with commitment, etc.

All these are means that are available at the level of the local community which is the true family where we live every day. Among the functions of this field there is also that of making opportunities for formation, especially for excessively busy friars. Within the fraternity the local superior has a decisive role in on-going formation. He is the real animator and a large part of the success or failure in this area depends upon him.

There are also “extraordinary means”, that is, new or renewed initiatives in on-going formation. While not an exhaustive list, we recall the following:

- on the part of the Order: apart from the work of animation by the General Minister and his Definitory, the general Secretary of formation should take up the task to point out ideas and experiences; to inform, to foster the exchange of personnel, to promote awareness; in short he should become one of the main driving forces for the animation of the Order. Other centres can also be created in the various areas and make better use of those that already exist (Historical Institute, Franciscan Institute of Spirituality ...)
- on the part of the Conferences: the creation of centres for animation, refresher courses, meetings, the exchange of personnel ...
- on the part of each Province: The Province is immediately responsible for formation in general and for on-going formation; apart from the work the Provincial Minister and his Definitory, the formation Secretary should have a particular role. Where possible it would also be good to create a special group for on-going formation, in which there might be representatives of the various fields of activity of the Province. Special “open” Chapters (“chapter of mats”), in which all the friars can take part, are very important to share in the life and journey of the Province;

- various other initiatives can be suggested, such as: the institution of prayer fraternities and of study fraternities; the practice of the sabbatical year and the priestly month; intensive refresher courses; seminars on our spirituality; certain periods of intensive renewal such as animation weeks, retreats ... organised for all the friars.

75. As with initial formation, on-going formation will also need to work out a plan to guide work and check outcomes. Starting with the situation of the fraternity (both local and provincial), the plan should determine the outcomes to be achieved, those who are responsible, the timing and concrete steps to be taken.

The plan should be organic, dynamic and complete as far as possible. It should be organic in that it forms a consistent whole in itself and should also be consistent with the previous stages of formation. It should be dynamic, taking account of the development of the human person. It should be complete, because it must embrace the different dimensions of formation (intellectual, affective, practical ...) while giving priority to evangelical fraternal life.

Since the responsibility for drafting such a plan belongs to the local or provincial fraternities, we suggest here only a general outline:

- daily: meditation, celebration of the Hours, Eucharist, Word of God, living together in fraternity;
- monthly: local chapter, monthly retreat, other meetings;
- yearly: the liturgical year, spiritual exercises, updating sessions, other initiatives;
- at least every ten years, taking into account the different phases of life and transitional periods, (e.g., the "mid-life crisis"): sabbatical year, longer cycles of prayer and updating.

SPECIAL TIMES FOR ON-GOING FORMATION.

76. Furthermore, it can be said that while our whole lives should be spent in on-going formation, yet certain times are particularly appropriate for a more intense and fruitful effort.

The following are some that come to mind: the first years after solemn profession and priestly ordination, so as to help our young confreres become part of the community life of the fraternity in the Provincial and socio-ecclesial context; in the event of a vocational crisis, so as to consolidate and deepen one's religious life; and in cases where adaptation to new situations in life and work is difficult, etc.

4. THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR FORMATION

SITUATION

77. In order to guarantee its commitment to formation, the Order must have at its disposal certain elements which really correspond to the specific requirements of its charism. This is all the more important now that there is a danger of a certain "levelling off" process in religious life. (MR 11-12)

A glance at the situation in the Order shows that the principle that all the friars are to consider themselves responsible for formation at all levels, local, provincial and general, has not really

caught on everywhere. Quite often, one comes across fraternities whose life-style is incompatible with a serious commitment to formation. In a few cases it is actually the life of the Province itself that is at variance with the direction taken in formation.

YET THERE ARE FACTORS THAT GIVE GROUNDS FOR HOPE.

Superiors are more involved in ministry to their own communities, and this favours the field of formation; new fraternities of hospitality are being founded, made up of friars who are particularly aware of their responsibilities as regards formation; there is a growth in dialogue with the use of positive methods in the formative relationship, and candidates in general tend to be more open and involved.

DIVINE INITIATIVE

78. The chief agent in the formation process is the Holy Spirit, present and life-giving within the formation personnel and those being formed. The initiative is His. It is He who calls, who inspires, who conforms us to the image of the Son and consecrates us to the Father. It is for the candidate to respond, complying with His "holy operation" (Reg. Bull. 10) by accepting Christ as Master and model of our life, both individually and as a brotherhood. In this the friar in formation is sustained by his filial love for the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, by her "whose life is a rule of conduct for everyone" (PC 25). In this connection, the importance of prayer and spiritual direction, which helps one to hear, discern and fulfil God's will in fraternal life, must be emphasised.

THOSE IN FORMATION

79. On the level of human response, formation demands the active cooperation of those being formed, who, as principal architects of their own growth, bear the primary responsibility. They must be understood, respected and loved for their spiritual and cultural worth, and still more for those unique and irreplaceable characteristics that bespeak the primacy of the human person. In this way they will be helped in the development of their psychological balance and emotional growth to advance toward a more conscious and sincere commitment to our life in brotherhood. Obviously, candidates must possess those qualities and dispositions which are considered indispensable for belonging to our Order.

THE FRATERNITY

80. Every fraternity achieves its identity to the extent that it consciously assumes its formative role. Each of its members must consider himself as both being formed and imparting formation, open to cultural, ecclesial and social realities and at the same time anxious to foster religious recollection and a family-like atmosphere. In the sphere of fraternal life, prayer should hold first place, beginning with affective contemplation understood as a source of life. The human qualities of the friars are also to be prized and appreciated, qualities such as authenticity and a spirit of initiative, as well as particular personally significant moments in life.

In fraternities which are specifically houses of formation – first among them that of the novitiate - every other commitment should be subordinated to and coordinated with the work of formation under the guidance of a director. The family should meet frequently to agree

upon the direction the fraternity is to take, the necessary planning and consequent evaluation, and above all to conduct a review of how they are living, with frankness and judgement and constructive charity. It is of great importance to know how to accept the friars as they are, without dwelling excessively on how they ought to be. A lively sense of forgiveness creates an atmosphere of evangelical joy at the heart of the fraternity.

Those fraternities charged with the work of initial formation should be set up on normal principles, so that the fraternity is typical and the candidates do not later feel estranged from real life. This does not mean that the formation fraternities ought not to provide an effective stimulus to the other fraternities.

THE PROVINCIAL FRATERNITY

In order that the individual fraternities can effectively acknowledge this role, they should draw inspiration, stimulus and encouragement from the primary fraternity: the Province. The degree of fidelity, conviction and realism of the provincial fraternity has immediate repercussions upon the security and vitality of every friar, as well as on the effectiveness of the work of teaching in the formation centres.

If a Province lacks the ability to establish authentic formation fraternities, the serious question arises of whether it may assume the responsibility of accepting new candidates.

SUPERIORS

If it is true that everyone must have a formative role to a certain degree, it still remains indispensable that some qualified friars be chosen to take charge of formation, beginning with the Minister Provincial and the local superiors. They are the everyday animators and coordinators of the formative process for all the friars.

QUALIFIED FORMATION PERSONNEL

81. This brings us to the urgent problem of qualified formation personnel. They should stand out for certain qualities which they possess with an open and dynamic attitude, namely: they should lead a genuine life of faith; have a firm hope in God and in the future of the world, the Church and the Order; they should love the Franciscan vocation and be convinced of the value of the religious life, able to work in a team and to animate the life of the fraternity, especially as regards prayer, work and discussion. They should feel the need for continual updating, and be encouraged to specialise in psycho-pedagogical disciplines, or at any rate those that have a bearing on formation. They should have a deeply-rooted belief in the value of their formation work, drawing generously upon the many models by which the authentic image of our Order is being constantly consigned to history.

From this it is obvious that the need for qualified personnel opens out into a further question which is more delicate still: the training of the formation personnel themselves. This has been one of the most keenly felt problems of the present Plenary Council of the Order.

CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS INFORMATION

82. Finally, as contributory factors in our Capuchin Franciscan formation, particularly important are the dynamism of the local Church, the family and the genuine values of the

culture and religious faith of the people. Special emphasis must be given to the contribution made by the entire Franciscan movement, beginning with our cloistered Sisters and the Secular Order, who share and promote its genuine spirit in a dynamic interchange with the First Order.

SECRETARIATS AND FORMATIVE EXCHANGES

83. The structure of the Secretariats should be constantly improved so as to promote and arrange meetings for broad areas of study, information, reflection and exchange of experiences on various levels: provincial, inter-provincial, international. In the final analysis, the ultimate formation method is the brotherhood of the Order.

That brotherhood, however, while on the one hand working to overcome racial and nationalistic divisions, must also strive to safeguard, and indeed to promote, its wealth of ethnic and spiritual values, following the principles of prudent inculturation.

It is necessary to spell out and systematise the pedagogical aims and practical stages of the learning process in every phase of formation, keeping the entire educative process in view. In drawing up programmes and in the process of encouraging and enabling formation, there should be a prudent place for dialogue and a team spirit, in support of the practical guidelines laid down by the formation personnel.

CONCLUSION

84. These, then, are the reflections and guidelines that emerged during this Fourth Plenary Council of the Order on the formation of the Capuchin Friar Minor. Essentially their only aim is to make us observe the Rule, that is, the Gospel, more faithfully and more “spiritually”, by living in obedience without property and chastity.

The text offered here is the result of work by the members of the Plenary Council, but it is also in some sense a product of the Order as a whole, which cooperated during the entire preparatory phase.

As presented, the text has its limitations, first of all because it does not tackle all aspects of formation - and this was pointed out from the beginning. Then, too, because of its deficiencies: we did not always manage to reach the depths of the problems. In any case its purpose is not so much to be perfect as to induce the friars to continue their own reflections. The text will therefore have to be enriched and completed. The Plenary Council can only be a beginning rather than an end.

We must “go forward”, especially by putting into practice the guidelines sketched out here. They will be for us an effective help for “following in the footsteps of Christ”, as Saint Francis wished. Everything we have done and will do must have the effect of leading us into ever-closer companionship with Christ. We must “go forward” each day, even though we may slow down or fail, always keeping our hearts full of courage, hope and joy.

In order to observe what we have promised with ever greater fidelity, let us be guided by the Virgin Mary, the handmaid of the Lord, for it was precisely to ensure that perseverance of his friars in their vocation that Saint Francis entrusted the Order to her who is called “the faithful Virgin”.

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