

CIRCULAR LETTER 2

Brothers,

Greetings from the General Minister and Definitory!

We are glad for the opportunity to share with you some brief reflections regarding the work we have accomplished and our vision of the task before us governing and animating our Capuchin brotherhood.

We met for three weeks during the month of September. Of the 26 sessions during those weeks, 10 (nearly 30 hours) were dedicated to presenting a panoramic view of the various jurisdictions of the Order and reflecting upon the Guidelines and Priorities for the Years 1994-2000, defined by the various regional language groups during our recent General Chapter (Analecta OFM^{Cap}, June-July 1994, 428ff). Obviously, this also allowed us some practice with "the tools of the trade" and enabled us to get to know one another better, since most of the definitors are new. We undertook the imposing task of constituting – in large part, brand new – fraternities for the curia, the international college, St. Fidelis Guest House (Via Cairoli), and Frascati, and naming the official commissions that serve the Order. The search for personnel was, at times, indeed difficult. But a generous spirit of availability prevailed and we are grateful to both friars and communities who responded in that spirit.

In addition, we have begun to plan meetings of the general definitory with the Conference of Major Superiors.

Thus, in a context of fraternal dialogue, we sought a better understanding of both the problems and the potential existing in the various regions of the Order – different by culture, sensibility and need – and represented by the variety of members on the definitory.

During our common reflection several situations and needs within the community emerged with particular urgency. For the present, we would like to highlight the following:

- the renewal of fraternal life at the local level;
- evangelization;
- cooperation throughout the Order as a whole;
- the rethinking of structures of government (Ch.8, Constitutions); and
- the reorganization of economic structures.

Faced thus with the challenge of situations that need attention and problems that need resolution, we encounter an invitation to authenticity and to commitment. The presence of these and other problems in the Order must not trap or paralyze us so as to make it impossible to overcome them. What is important, on the contrary, is to have guidelines for the future and reasons for hope.

For our part we have taken a first step toward responding to these challenges with the composition of the offices and commissions that serve the Order within the general curia. In particular:

- The Office of Formation, which is to focus its attention upon helping the formation personnel both in the old and young provinces; upon the growth of collaboration in development in this field; upon the importance of local chapters and all other means that render fraternities living and vital.

- The Office of Evangelization, a new organ, with a wide scope for the study and engagement of the global theme of evangelization a sit confronts our Order: evangelization understood generally, not confined to the sense of "missionary," but taking in issues of secularism and individualism; evangelization a sit addresses Islam and the other religions and sects; evangelization vis-à-vis inculturation; evangelization and the impact of the opening of Eastern Europe.

On the other hand, we envision this office having a direct link with the Office of Justice, Peace and Ecology, since many challenges facing both are related. One specific contemporary problem that we envision the JPE addressing vigorously is that of violence, in both its obvious and hidden manifestations. This dramatic problem ravages society at large, but is one that confronts us from within our fraternity as well.

- The Office of Research and Reflection is a body within the administration that we hope will assist the whole Order as it identifies and studies the many and varied problems facing Capuchins today. It is our hope that an office of this kind will help the ongoing education of the Order.

- The Technical/ Juridical Commission had been given the task of describing the competence of the chapter commission for the study of Chapter 8 of the Constitutions ("The Government of the Order") as envisioned by the general chapter.

We have approached the Holy See with the question of changing no.116, 4 of the Constitutions, according to the vote of the recent general chapter.

At the same time, in accord with the desire of the general chapter, the definitory has vigorously reaffirmed the commitment of former general definitories to the recognition of the fraternal charism of our Order.

- The Commission for Economic Solidarity will concern itself with the requests of the needier areas of the Order.

- In the establishment of the Office of the General Bursar/ Treasurer we have followed the directions given by the general chapter, forming a group of three friars, acknowledging the desire for openness and the need to seek the technical assistance of trusted lay persons.

We have indicated three specific goals for the economic sector:

1. the implementation of an accounting system and a uniform method of financial reporting for the houses, funds and diverse projects that depend directly upon the general curia. Such a system needs to be easily understood while at the same time being clear and complete.

2. the introduction, within all the services that depend on the general curia, of a system of budgeting, in order to be able to present clear, advance information about the economic needs of the curia's various structures and projects.

3. the establishment of three small groups of consultants and advisors to assist with and verify the work of the Office of the General Bursar/ Treasurer in questions relative to finances, currency management and legal matters.

Within this context, we consider it necessary to examine our economic solidarity in the concrete: for instance, evaluating current practices regarding study burses.

As we have highlighted several times already, we want to give particular importance to collaboration at every level. It was very much on the minds of the brothers at the general chapter; we would especially like to help the regions of the Order that have need of formation personnel, as we have just begun to do, for example, with the communities in the South East Africa Capuchin Association (SEACA). In addition, many provinces have now begun to collaborate in initial formation. We encourage them to go forward on this road, notwithstanding the inevitable difficulties, sharing with others their experiments and the wisdom gained from their experience in this regard.

In the appendix of this letter it is possible for you to see that the list of the members of each office and commission is rather reduced. For the moment, in fact, we have chosen to form small groups so that in these first months they might reflect upon the scope, organization, programming, etc. relative to their offices. Following this we will finalize the membership.

We are not so foolish as to suggest that we have completed the work of initial planning for the sexenium in these first meetings. Our intention, on the contrary, was to make decisions only about those things that were most urgent. Then, during these last months of the year, we plan to visit and meet with the friars in our respective zones in order to gain a clearer sense of specific situations and needs. We will gather for another plenary

meeting during the week of 16-21 January 1995, and continue our work toward other decisions with better understanding.

In attempting to be faithful to the task given us by our brothers, we propose to serve and animate the Order with special attention to the following:

- our presence in the regions assigned to us, at chapters, assemblies, celebrations, visitations and conference meetings, to which we give priority as we formulate our calendars and program;
- the application of the principle of subsidiarity, thus asking, in many instances, that conferences, major superiors and local chapters assume some responsibilities;
- encouraging friars everywhere to work according to the priorities they established at the general chapter.

Finally, brothers, we wish to address an appeal to all of you at this moment in which the church, during the synod of bishops, reflects on the charism of the consecrated life. Ours is a call to radical and continual renewal, in order that we might recognize and respond to the challenges that face the Order, the church and society at the end of the millennium. Ours is a call to personal and communal engagement in prayer, service and reflection in a manner that will maintain the vitality of our Capuchin vocation and identity.

Br. John Corriveau,
OFM Cap. General Minister

Rome, 4 October 1994

Feast of the Seraphic Father, St. Francis