



Circular Letter of the Minister General

Mauro Jöhri OFM Cap

LET US FAN THE FLAME OF OUR CHARISM!

8 December 2008

© Copyright by:
Curia Generale dei Frati Minori Cappuccini
Via Piemonte, 70
00187 Roma
ITALIA

tel. +39 06 420 11 710
fax. +39 06 48 28 267
www.ofmcap.org

Ufficio delle Comunicazioni OFMCap
info@ofmcap.org
Roma, A.D. 2016

Sommario

Let us fan the flame of our charism!.....	5
1. Some urgent needs of the moment.....	8
1.1 What has happened to the missionary spirit?.....	8
1.2 Mission takes time.....	9
1.3 Have a dream for your people.....	10
1.4 Moving from personal projects to fraternal ones.....	10
1.5 Let the brothers work.....	11
2. What is the ultimate purpose of our lifelong choice?.....	12
2.1 A life that is given.....	12
2.2 To follow in the footsteps of his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.....	12
2.3 After the example of Francis.....	13
3. What values will we hand on to the new Capuchin generations?.....	14
3.1 Choosing fraternal life in minority.....	14
3.2 The contemplative dimension.....	15
3.3 Closeness to the poor.....	16
3.4 The charism of continuous renewal.....	17
4. How to transmit these values during initial formation?.....	18
4.1 A way of initiation.....	19
4.2 Personalised accompaniment.....	21
5. The periods of initial formation – some notes.....	24
5.1 The postulancy.....	24
5.2 The novitiate.....	25
5.3 The post-novitiate.....	25
6. Fixed points.....	29
7. Conclusion.....	32

LET US FAN THE FLAME OF OUR CHARISM!

CIRCULAR LETTER TO ALL THE BROTHERS IN THE ORDER ON INITIAL FORMATION

Prot. N. 00766/08

Let us fan the flame of our charism!

Dear Brothers,

1. In paragraph three of my letter outlining the Action Plan for this sexennium¹ I announced that the General Definitory had decided to “establish an International Formation Council”² alongside the General Office for Formation. This would “give us an up-to-date perspective on what was happening in the field of formation, both initial and ongoing”³. This decision grew out of the General Chapter of 2006 and in the light of the first direct contacts of the General Definitory with the various jurisdictions. At the end of our first year of service as General Minister and Definitors, we asked ourselves this question: “What does our Order need most of all at this time?” The response was unanimous: “Formation”. And so we determined to support and strengthen all that has so far been done in this area, and we have decided to restructure the General Office for Formation⁴, which, as a body and in its individual sections, exists in order to implement the prescriptions of no. 24 of the Constitutions. The General Office for Formation has a General Definitor as its president, who accompanies the work of the Office and acts as a natural channel between the Office and the Order’s governing body. The job of the General Formation Secretariat, at present

¹ *Analecta OFMCap* 123 (2007), 43-45.

² The International Formation Council was appointed on June 21, 2007.

³ *Analecta OFMCap* 123 (2007), 44.

⁴ The General Formation Office is composed of the President (General Definitor), the General Secretariat for Formation and the International Formation Council.

composed of four brothers from different regions⁵, is to work directly with the General Minister and his Definitory in all that concerns the various sectors of formation (initial, special and ongoing). Its task is one of reflection and planning, but it also has an executive role. This central agency of the General Curia has a fundamental importance for the life of the Order; it is our fervent wish that its work, for the purposes envisaged by the Constitutions, will develop further and have an ever more decisive impact for the good of our entire brotherhood. Lastly, the International Formation Council collaborates with the General Secretariat as a consultative and evaluative body.

2. In this letter I will deal mainly with some of the emerging challenges in the field of initial formation, although it is more than obvious that everything that is said here could easily be extended to special and ongoing formation also⁶. In fact, whenever some weak element is apparent in the body, one can be sure that it is connected to a whole series of manifestations affecting the rest of the organism. The uncertainties often found on the journey of initial formation are only an echo of the confusion felt by the brothers at the level of their everyday lives. When our grasp of our charism is uncertain, this cannot fail to have repercussions on the way we introduce people to our life. It then becomes evident that we face a number of choices. Our choice as General Definitory is to approach the subject through the door of initial formation. We realise that no single aspect of formation can ever be adequately tackled without also touching on all the others. There are those who say that the crisis in initial formation is due essentially to the crisis in ongoing formation. If there is no serious undertaking to model ourselves more and more closely on the gospel lived in brotherhood, we have little to say to those embarking on the initial journey, and even less to demand of them. This is certainly true. Others say that the crisis lies especially with the formators, who are unsure of how to do their job and are often more occupied with other responsibilities than they are with formation⁷. Wherever one chooses to start the discussion, the questions I have are these: what aspects will we need to insist upon in order to avoid the problematic trends I will mention in a moment? And again, how should initial formation be

⁵ *Analecta OFMCap* 124 (2008), 36. The General Secretariat for Formation is at present composed of: Br. Rocco Timpano (General Secretary for Formation), Br. Piero Erik Véliz Valencia, Br. Patrick Crasta e Br. Marek Karol Miszczyński.

⁶ Our Constitutions envisage three types formation: initial, special and ongoing.

⁷ "Formation for Capuchin life in the Post-novitiate", in *Analecta OFMCap*, 120 (2004) 1043-1053. Commonly known as the Assisi Document.

structured so that candidates to our life discover, even through hardship, what a beautiful thing it is to give oneself totally?

3. Our Order is going through a historic transition fraught with consequences for the kind of presence it will have in the future. Over half of all the brothers are now living in the southern hemisphere of the planet. The fact that today 72% of novices belong to the jurisdictions of the southern hemisphere tells us that the number of brothers from that part of the world will gradually increase. While this is certainly a new challenge for all of us, it is at the same time an invitation to strengthen dialogue in the Order about the charism that lies at its origin, and about how it is to be lived and embodied in conditions that will never cease to be new. The work of renewing our Constitutions provides a wonderful opportunity to begin a deeper, inter-cultural dialogue about how we are to pass on our charism as Capuchin Lesser Brothers.

1. Some urgent needs of the moment

4. This letter was also born out of a more circumstantial fact which I have not yet mentioned. I mean that I would like to share with you some concerns I have which are based on observable data. I will try to list them briefly one by one, fully realising that we are dealing with tendencies or trends which, if we tackle them now, will be seen in their true dimensions, without causing alarm, which would serve no purpose. It will be up to the institutions I have mentioned above to provide further data and produce concrete proposals for a full implementation of the Capuchin charism in the present and in the immediate future. What is necessary before anything else is to rekindle the flame of our charism, remembering that Francis wanted us to be lesser brothers, and that his life-plan institutionally disregarded the clerical or lay element as a constitutive feature of the members of the Order.

5. But let us turn to the urgent needs I mentioned, which I think can be observed here and there in the Order. Visiting the various jurisdictions, presiding at Chapters, discussing their findings with the General Definitors, as well as studying the mid-term reports, gives one an excellent vantage point from which to observe what the Order is experiencing at its various levels.

1.1 WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE MISSIONARY SPIRIT?

6. One of the first facts is a declining readiness to be sent on a mission of first evangelization, or generally to places marked by economic, social or political difficulties. The pastors of the local churches repeatedly invite our Order to take responsibility for places needing first evangelization, or to consolidate what was begun only a few decades previously. But I must say I find considerable reluctance to accept such requests, even in the case of jurisdictions with a fair number of vocations. The biggest difficulties are due to the fact that this type of commitment requires great sacrifices, including the need to settle in places that are often without the kind of communications we are becoming accustomed to more or less everywhere (internet access, etc.). What concerns me is that many brothers concentrate primarily on what they might lack for themselves, while easily forgetting people who do not yet know the Gospel or who need to be accompanied in their journey of integration of Christian values. I could quote

you more than one case where this reluctance to go to poor and sometimes dangerous places is evident. Thank God I have also found young men who are ready to go out and face new and demanding challenges, even the day after they are asked. Neither do I wish to forget those brothers who, long ago, dedicated their lives to a missionary apostolate and are still working faithfully.

This resistance to commit oneself to places where conditions are difficult needs to be looked at against the background of one of the characteristics of our Capuchin charism: namely, a readiness to go where no-one else wants to go, a willingness to leave the hermitage to render unconditional help to the incurably sick or to those who have not yet received the first proclamation of the faith. It is part and parcel of our charism to take on missionary commitments as a brotherhood and to promote that fraternal spirit everywhere, involving the people in facing and resolving together the challenges that lie before us⁸.

1.2 MISSION TAKES TIME

7. Another fact I have noticed is the length of time devoted to a missionary presence. There are jurisdictions that give their “yes” when asked to be present in a “missionary” country or territory, only to end up having to beg or even fight with the brothers who are assigned there, because very often they agree to stay for little more than three years. Then there are some brothers who make their willingness to accept the mission conditional on a promise to be allowed to pursue higher studies when they return. We have to ask the question: how is it possible to get to know a culture thoroughly if we do not even take the time to learn the local language in some depth? How will we be able to love the people entrusted to our care, if our mind and heart is already somewhere else? There is a real danger of introducing a type of conditional obedience which says: “I am ready to do anything you ask of me, as long as it doesn’t last too long!” In this case, too, we cannot forget those brothers who have been living for years in very different situations from those they came from, and who are ready to continue their service until death. Jurisdictions that send brothers to other countries for first evangelisation or to support the local churches must commit themselves to

⁸ Our missionary commitment is another subject that deserves special attention and profound study. I will only remind you here that the Order devoted a Plenary Council (III) to it, and article 1 of chapter XII of the Constitutions is entitled: *The missionary role of the Order*.

provide adequate support for their brothers, so that they do not feel alone or left to themselves.

1.3 HAVE A DREAM FOR YOUR PEOPLE

8. I notice in candidates of young jurisdictions a very strong desire to be able, one day, to find their way to northern shores and to settle there for some time. Some believe that having “become Capuchins” gives them the right to pursue specialised university studies later. It is evident that we cannot support such a view, otherwise we simply become an agency for social advancement. The Order is not against the provision of adequate formation and training to those destined for formation work, teaching or other services for the fraternity. Unless we bring with us a comprehensive plan aimed at improving the conditions of life and faith for whole peoples, we can easily fall victim to partisan selfishness. We do not “become friars” for our own benefit, or in order to have access to better living standards, but to live our charism of brotherhood among a particular people, either in the country we were born in or the one we were sent to by divine inspiration and with the merit of holy obedience, and we always do this by sharing in the social status of ordinary poor people. And if we are invited to pursue higher studies, it is for the benefit of those who will later be entrusted to our care. Otherwise, what is the point?

1.4 MOVING FROM PERSONAL PROJECTS TO FRATERNAL ONES

9. In jurisdictions where vocations are few and candidates often come to us in adult life, I notice a strong tendency to consider the choice of our life in terms of self-fulfilment before anything else. The danger is that each person comes with his own personal project to fulfil, while disregarding that of the fraternity. And so it happens that the personal aspect is exaggerated and stressed in a completely individualistic, narcissistic way. Anyone embracing our form of life must be led to appreciate the real form of life he has renounced: only then will he be able to assume and exercise his new life with full awareness. If we say “I entrust myself to this fraternity” as we make our profession of the gospel counsels, this requires that we embark on a real journey of “de-centering”, a transition from being centred on my personal project to that of the fraternity. In this context, we need to question also any type of idealisation of our charism

which serves as an alibi or an excuse for not accepting the real fraternity, the real brothers the Lord has actually given to us, and not those we would like to have. Those who come to us as part of a conversion process, if they have not been accompanied properly or for long enough, often tend to regress to forms and beliefs unsuited to our ideal of life. The choice of our life then becomes a platform or a spring-board to something totally unrelated to it. This becomes possible because the person at some level is unclear about what he wants, or sometimes because we lack the courage to challenge a brother who seems to have embraced our life in a rather superficial way.

1.5 LET THE BROTHERS WORK

10. One finds here and there signs of a clear refusal of manual and domestic work. We have so many employees that we are accustomed to being served in everything, right from the first years of formation. With some friars this happens so that they can devote themselves full-time to pastoral work, others because they are busy with study. In such cases fraternal life is the biggest loser, because we limit ourselves to praying and eating meals together, but everything else is delegated to someone else. Also, having a large number of employees makes it very difficult to resize our presences when necessary, and, thanks to our employees and salaried workers, we think we can manage even with a very small number of friars. Meanwhile the witness of our brotherhood deteriorates and eventually dies. What do we make of the directions of Plenary Councils and other documents of the Order repeatedly telling us that everyone should take a share of the housework?

2. What is the ultimate purpose of our lifelong choice?

2.1 A LIFE THAT IS GIVEN

11. What is our ideal in life, if not to make a total, unconditional gift of ourselves to God and all people? Let us be honest and ask ourselves: what is it that gives meaning to our choice of life? In the formula of profession we say: “Since the Lord has given me the grace to live the gospel of Christ more perfectly...I vow to God and ... surrender myself with all my heart to this fraternity...” What matters and what characterizes our choice of life is total, unconditional self-giving. What is the point of saying we are consecrated, if we then set conditions and reserve for ourselves times and places where no-one has a right to comment or intervene? I believe that, with all due respect for each person’s interior life, the fraternity can and should expect every single brother to live what he has promised to the full. The three vows embrace all spheres of life, since they touch the aspects of a person’s free self-realisation (obedience), of ownership (without anything of my own) and of the affective life (chastity). Consecration signifies that we have set aside, reserved for God and the brothers, not just a part of our life, but the whole of it.

2.2 TO FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF HIS BELOVED SON, OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

12. St Francis never ceased to point to the following of the poor and humble Christ as the way to God, the Most High and Three-in-One⁹. We must conform ourselves to him who, rich as he was, emptied himself to take on the condition of a slave (Cf. *Phil 2,7*). This means being very clear about what our Lord says of himself: “I did not come to be served, but to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many” (*Mk 10,45*). I am reminded of some words of our own Saint Pio of Pietrelcina, who used to say that one learns how to love at the foot of the cross. The way of Christian self-fulfillment is necessarily a process of emptying oneself: “Whoever loses his life for my sake and the sake of the gospel will find it” (*Mk 8,35*). We should also remember that powerful statement, according to which there is no greater love than to give one’s life for the person one loves (Cf. *Jn*

⁹ Cf. St. Francis, Letter to a General Chapter and to all the Brothers, 62.

15,13). To embrace the gospel life means to grow in the dimension of a love capable of giving itself, it means learning to love without ever drawing back.

2.3 AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF FRANCIS

13. It follows from this that one of the values we aim for is precisely that of availability, even when it costs us something, mindful of what Saint Francis writes in his letter to the entire Order: “Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, so that he who gives himself totally to you may receive you totally”.¹⁰

As we stand on the threshold of the celebrations for the eighth Centenary of the confirmation of the First Rule by Pope Innocent III, let us remember that Francis arrived at his choice of life after a long journey which brought him to a true and genuine “de-centering”. If at first he avoided lepers because they caused him bitterness and he could not get over his feelings of revulsion, subsequently, thanks to God’s intervention, he went to meet them and showed them mercy¹¹. In him a transformation occurred which turned him inside out, and he became totally for God and for the brothers. The state of holding back nothing for oneself can only be reached through a process of profound and, at times, painful transformation. But it is precisely here, beginning with the unconditional gift of self, that our lives become beautiful and meaningful, and we are called to assume this dimension with full awareness.

It is important to me to point out that there are plenty of people who continue to give their witness of fidelity, full of concern for those in their care and living in very difficult conditions. I have also met young friars who have told me: “Brother Minister, we’re ready to leave for any mission you have for us!” The Capuchin reform is distinguished for that radical quality I mentioned earlier, as the Church itself has not failed to remind us: ready to go where no-one else is willing to go¹² and to do so joyfully¹³. Only someone with a loving heart who wants the good of his most abandoned brothers and sisters is capable of this.

¹⁰ *Idem*, 37, FF 221.

¹¹ On this particular aspect cf. PIETRO MARANESI, *Facere Misericordiam*, Assisi 2007.

¹² This statement by Pius XII made to the Capuchins in 1949 is taken up in an article by GIUSEPPE SCALVAGLIERI in *Laurentianum*, 48 (2007) 3, 377-476.

¹³ These are the words Pope Benedict XVI said to me in a private Audience on January 5, 2007.

3. What values will we hand on to the new Capuchin generations?

14. If we wish to understand fully the dimension of unconditional self-giving, initiation into our life must be rooted in the transmission of certain values, and must question how and when this transmission is to take place. In addition, the formation process requires a faithful verification of what has been transmitted. And it is pointless to speak of handing on the core values of our life if, at the same time, one does not feel strongly the need to embody those same values in the daily life of each fraternity and every single brother. There is nothing more harmful to education than a lack of consistency in the formators, and, in a sense, we are all called to be formators, at least by our example. In this area it is impossible to adopt a neutral stance: either we are formators, or we become de-formators!

3. 1 CHOOSING FRATERNAL LIFE IN MINORITY

15. The ultimate aim of our choice of life is consecration, the gift of ourselves. Every gesture and every action acquires meaning from the consecration of ourselves. It must also be added that for us, there is an irreplaceable means of achieving this. I mean our identity as lesser brothers, that precious heritage from St Francis. In recent decades this aspect has been abundantly studied, and several steps have been taken to ensure that our charism, as Saint Francis left it to us, will be recognized by the Church's Authority. Whoever chooses our life chooses, first and foremost, to become a lesser brother. This is the fundamental choice that underlies any subsequent specification. In the Order founded by Saint Francis there are no categories, there are brothers, there is every brother. It follows that fraternal life and the capacity to relate to all without distinction must have the primacy in our daily journey. My predecessors have written abundantly and intensely about this, and the Plenary Councils (cf. I, 20-22; II, 22; IV, 14. 22; VII, 7) have several times rightly highlighted this same aspect. However, and this is confirmed in practice, the Order is still firmly launched in the direction of giving first preference to the formation of brothers destined for sacred Orders. The inclusion of philosophical and theological studies in initial formation, in particular during the post-novitiate, in fact gives preference to the clerical option.

According to the Lord's "revelation" to Brother Francis, when he gave him brothers and showed him that he was to live according to the form of the holy gospel¹⁴, we are an Order of brothers. Hence our Constitutions state: "To live together as lesser brothers is fundamental to the Franciscan vocation. Therefore fraternal life is always and everywhere a basic requirement of formation." (*Const. n. 23, 4*)

3.2 THE CONTEMPLATIVE DIMENSION

16. Saint Francis attributes his conversion journey and the beginning of the new evangelical fraternity of lesser brothers to the intervention of God himself. This is why he never ceases to give back to God what belongs to God, in a prayer whose main connotations are praise, honour, blessing, thanksgiving and adoration. And Francis never tires of inviting his brothers to pray in the same way, extending the invitation to all peoples, governors and to every creature. He is constantly aware of a love that touches him at every moment. This is why he forever invents new forms to proclaim that love and to invite the largest number of men and women to do the same. Praise is born of contemplation, born out of prolonged meditation on the great events of salvation history. What other explanation can there be for his enthusiastic outburst: "You are all our riches and sufficiency!"¹⁵.

The Capuchin reform arose out of a profound desire to return to the hermitages, the deserted places which foster a one-to-one relationship with God. From the very first pages, our Constitutions urge us "to give priority to a life of prayer, especially contemplative prayer" (*Const. n. 4,3*). Being in the presence of God for long periods, giving him their time and affections, did not prevent but rather heightened the capacity of the early friars to perceive the sufferings of others, and whenever the need for practical help arose the friars placed no obstacle in the way of serving the most needy, and they did so with enthusiasm, sparing no effort. I wonder whether the hesitations one finds in the area of missionary work might be traced back to a waning of the contemplative dimension in the Order. Whoever contemplates a God who gives himself wholly to us, a God who is happy in the act of self-giving¹⁶, cannot remain indifferent or with his arms

¹⁴ Cf. Saint Francis, *Testament*, 14.

¹⁵ Cf. Saint Francis, *The praises of God*, 4

¹⁶ H.U. von Balthasar, *Lo Spirito e l'Istituzione*, Brescia 1980.

folded. A half-hearted prayer life can only give birth to half-hearted, inadequate service that draws back at the first obstacle it meets along the way.

17. “The primacy of the spirit and of the life of prayer should completely prevail, both in fraternities and with individual brothers, wherever they may be, as is required by the words and example of Saint Francis and by sound Capuchin tradition.” (*Const.* n. 53,1). Often we are content with having taken part in fraternity prayer or recited the breviary even when alone, but we do not bother about the next step, namely acquiring the spirit of prayer. The latter can only grow in the patiently cultivated ground of the interior life. How can we ever achieve it if we spend hours and hours indiscriminately consuming whatever we are offered by the media? It is unthinkable that we could ever reach the goal without a capacity for renunciation and without being clear about the priorities of our life.

3.3 CLOSENESS TO THE POOR

18. Our Constitutions never tire of repeating two fundamental aspects of our choice of the Franciscan life of poverty: “Let us practise a radical personal and community poverty, together with a spirit of humility” (*Const.* n. 4, 3). In the following paragraph we read: “While willingly living in fraternity among ourselves, we should gladly live among the poor, the weak and the infirm, sharing their life while preserving our characteristic approach as brothers of the people” (*Const.* n. 4, 4)

The Constitutions clearly reflect the will of Saint Francis, which he forcefully expresses in a number of passages in the Earlier Rule: “Let all the brothers strive to follow the humility and poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ, and let them remember that we should have nothing else in the whole world except, as the Apostle says, having food and clothing, we are content with these” And immediately afterwards Francis adds: “They must rejoice when they live among people of little value and looked down upon, among the poor and the powerless, the sick and the lepers, and the beggars by the wayside ”¹⁷. His words are dictated by personal experience, because he had learned at first hand what it meant to approach lepers and show mercy to them¹⁸. “Identifying with Francis’

¹⁷ Saint Francis, *Earlier Rule*, IX,2

¹⁸ Cf. Saint Francis, *Testament*, 1-2.

experience, we should go among the “lepers” of our age and commit ourselves to showing them ‘mercy’.” (*PCO VII, 2a*). The poor are rarely easy to deal with and it is natural for us to want to steer clear of them, to behave like the priest and the levite in the gospel (Cf. *Lk 10*). This is exactly why we are called to embark on a long journey of conversion, so that we learn to become their companions along the way and to lighten their sufferings. If ever we found ourselves preoccupied with the thought of how to avoid as much as possible the company of the poorest, most abandoned people of our age in the society in which we live, then we would need to seriously ask the question: by what right do we continue to call ourselves “lesser brothers”?

3.4 THE CHARISM OF CONTINUOUS RENEWAL

19. The first important task of formation is “the development of the brothers and the fraternities in such a way that our life may daily more closely conform to the holy gospel and the Franciscan spirit according to the needs of times and places” (*Const. n. 22,1*). This general statement from our Constitutions covers the entire time of formation - initial, special and ongoing - which is a process of growth. The same text from the Constitutions goes on to speak of “integral formation”, underlining the fact that the whole person is involved. We Capuchins were born as a reform movement, with a strong need to be radical. This simply means that a concern for continuous renewal ought to be part of our DNA! Our Constitutions leave no room for doubt on this point when they state: “In order to give a clear witness to this way of life we must engage in a continual process of renewal.” (*Const. n. 15, 1*) How many of us are aware that our Constitutions contain a whole chapter, the seventh, entitled “The brothers’ life of penance”? It contains one of the typical values of the Capuchin reform, namely austerity. “The spirit of penance in a life of austerity is a characteristic of our Order, for we have chosen a strict life after the example of Christ and Saint Francis” (*Const. n. 101, 5*). What has happened to our choice of a strict life, if we start complaining as soon as something is missing, or if our desire to have the latest sophisticated gadget is not immediately satisfied? *PCO VII* calls every fraternity to “a serious review of our lifestyle, aiming for a real solidarity, avoiding unnecessary waste and the exaggerated use of vehicles and other tools of modern technology. We should ask ourselves whether our possessions are essential for the mission that is ours in virtue of our charism” ” (*PCO VII, 26*)

4. How to transmit these values during initial formation?

20. The objectives of initial formation are fully and clearly formulated in n. 25 of the Constitutions, which states that the candidates, under the guidance of the formators, are gradually introduced into the Franciscan way of evangelical life. It goes on to explain that this is an integrated process divided into stages: postulancy, novitiate and post-novitiate, which calls for continuous and generous openness to God, to the fraternity and to the whole world. If the ultimate objective of initial formation is to lead a person to make a generous and unconditional gift of himself in following Christ in the footsteps of Francis, the different stages must primarily serve this purpose. If problems are found in obtaining this result, then we need to revise and modify the ways of achieving that spirit of wide-ranging openness. I remind you once again of the need to have, as a general principle, the same educational journey for all candidates throughout all three stages of initial formation.

21. I would like to clarify my thinking because my fear is that as soon as one mentions the need for some formation programmes to be changed, especially in the post-novitiate stage, one gets lost in a long, pointless dissertation about whether this stage should or should not include the study of philosophy with a view to theology later on. That is not the nub of the matter. The real issue is: how to find the best formula to ensure that we achieve the goal I mentioned above: a breadth of vision and openness. In this stage, too, the primary reference should be to religious consecration and the profession of our life, and not to the preparation for specific jobs and/or ministries.

22. The point here is not that we have to invent something new, but simply to restate and properly highlight what our Constitutions propose. They actually contain some elements that were consciously introduced, the far-reaching implications of which have not yet been fully realised. I am referring in particular to the term “initiation”.

4.1 A WAY OF INITIATION

23. Our Constitutions distinguish three stages of a life-long formation journey: initiation into our way of life, special formation and ongoing formation. Initiation is geared towards religious consecration according to our specific way of life, gradually incorporating the candidate into our brotherhood through postulancy, novitiate and post-novitiate (*Const. n. 27*). The focus of initiation into our life is our *being* brothers, while special formation relates to the *activity* of the brothers. By special, or specific, formation, the Constitutions mean the journey of initial preparation for the apostolate, which each of us is called to exercise either in the ordained ministry or in some professional activity understood in various ways.

Introduced into the Constitutions of 1968, the term initiation was deliberately chosen by analogy with “Christian initiation”. What this means is that in the formation journey the main emphasis is placed on the transmission, or gradual learning, of the values and attitudes that are fundamental to our life, values which I have already briefly mentioned. A formator’s central concern should be not how much a candidate knows about our way of life, with all the relevant historical references, but rather how much of it has he made his own. The way of formation, necessarily, is one of trans - formation, or rather “con-formation” to the model of life proposed to us by Christ himself and by Saint Francis. The Franciscan charism is not something abstract: it is embodied by each individual person. How many of us embraced this life because we met a friar who impressed us enormously? Thence was born the desire to embrace the same form of life. This does not happen in a single day: one has to agree to set out on a journey, step by step, and to let oneself be guided. This is why the initiation dimension of formation needs to be explored in greater depth: we must build up an integrated vision of the path we wish to put forward so that this solid “conformity” with our charism is actually achieved. The outlines of how to conduct this progressive journey need to be filled out, so that the various agents of formation, the ministers and formators in charge of the different stages of initial formation, have sure and useful reference points available with which to carry out their service.

24. The formator has a great responsibility. The challenge he faces is no small matter, and must also be seen in the light of the beauty of such a journey. At heart it is a question of introducing somebody into a form of life one has personally embraced and of which one feels proud. The formator’s task is to

exercise a real form of psychological and spiritual fatherhood: he fosters the journey of growth, allows time for the person to assimilate experiences and to mature, and intervenes when it is time to fine-tune the process and to launch the candidate into a new stage. To the one setting out on the journey he must necessarily propose a gradual process with gradual challenges. Formation must be structured in such a way that it allows real growth in emotional maturity, in an “adult” faith and in the ability to internalize values. Initiation also involves an experiential aspect, moments when the brother in formation is confronted in concrete ways with the various facets of the values being spoken about. In this respect I will never forget how I was enriched by the month I spent living with the down-and-outs in Zurich during my formation. At times I thought I wouldn’t make it, because I missed the peaceful, protected atmosphere of the friary. Yet I learned to see the poor person no longer cloaked in romanticism but as someone with serious difficulties who was often marked by the experience in the depths of his being. I thank my formators at the time who prepared us to live this experience and afterwards helped us to realise how far we had come as a result. In this sense the formation journey should take on the nature of a true and proper process, and any kind of fragmentation should be avoided.

25. For the formation personnel in the different stages it is important to have the support of fraternities that feel involved and co-responsible for the formation task. The duty of initiation and of specific initial formation is shared by all the fraternity. The Ministers must therefore pay special attention when it comes to forming the fraternities where each stage of initiation into our life is carried out. I think it is also useful to remind Ministers to supervise very carefully and attentively all persons engaged in the initial formation journey.

26. Our legislation indicates three precise stages of initial formation: postulancy, novitiate and post-novitiate. Each of these has its own objective which in turn provides the foundation for the next stage. The goal remains that of perpetual profession, the generous consecration of the whole of one’s life to God in the Order. The decision to take this step must flow from habitual familiarity with the mystery of God’s love revealed in Christ. It can only be the generous response which the person feels called to give to the One who, right from the beginning, was the first to make an act of generous, unconditional love. This means that the journey of formation will have assumed, in a concrete and progressive way, the characteristics of a mystagogical journey. I wonder whether at times, when the

decision to make perpetual profession is continuously postponed, the hidden reason may be that the candidate has remained basically centered on himself and therefore unable to grasp that Christ gave himself to us in the fullness of his loving act. The fear of losing something, of horizons in life that I will never be able to explore because the choice I am being asked to make is final, reveals once again that I am attached to self and have failed to pass from the “me” of my ego to the “you” which is Christ. Perhaps one profound reason for the frequent defections during the period of temporary profession lies in the fact that this is the time when the process of initiation comes to a halt and priority is given to learning the first elements of theology. It is not sufficient to add a couple of months (or even a year) prior to perpetual profession for the mystagogical way to be resumed. Fragmentation of the process can only lead to problems because the fruits are not yet ripe.

4.2 PERSONALISED ACCOMPANIMENT

27. The way of initiation is proposed to all candidates to our life in the various stages of the initial formation journey. However, it needs to be buttressed by personalized accompaniment, because each individual differs in the way he receives and integrates the proposal. This is just as true for candidates who come to us as adults as it is for the young. Anyone choosing our way of life is called to leave behind a whole context of affections and achievements in order to embrace new ones which are not always immediately congenial. The transition we have described may not even take place, even if on the face of it the candidate may give the impression of having complied with everything that was asked of him. Personal accompaniment enables the candidate to take cognisance of the challenges involved in every step the formator proposes, and to realise that a merely external compliance can never make him happy. Furthermore, he learns to identify the obstacles that, for him, are most difficult to overcome. At the same time, he also learns to know himself better and to savour in the depths of his own self the beauty of the way that is being proposed to him. What is indispensable is that he becomes aware of what he wishes to do with his life in the light of the call addressed to him by the Lord.

28. The journey of formation involves a further requirement: there should be specific times to review the journey undertaken by each candidate.

Accompaniment will enable him to become aware of how far he has interiorized the values he proclaims, and to ascertain whether these values are already affecting his life, his choices, and his way of thinking and acting. To integrate and consolidate new values requires a patient, slow, gradual journey. This is why one cannot be content with the fact that someone may have become perfect at doing what he is told. A candidate's perfect obedience to what he is asked to do does not necessarily reveal what is hidden in the depths of his heart. In this respect I find Saint Francis' words on loving obedience absolutely inspired. They completely revolutionize the question and take it to a new and critical level. Obedience often simply means carrying out an order and I can do that without inwardly agreeing with what I am asked to do. In the best case I agree and I obey because I trust the person who has asked me to do something: I move from being passive to active! I appropriate something to myself which before seemed like an imposition from outside. But Francis, in Admonition III, explains his thought, which our Constitutions also take up in a well-structured passage (*Const.* n.164-167). They place before us a type of obedience that goes beyond the merely executive and takes on the character of personal initiative¹⁹. I do not wait to be asked to do something, but precisely because I am attentive to the needs I meet, I take the initiative and step forward. I become proactive, whether with individual brothers or with the fraternity as a whole. Some people never take any initiative for fear of making a mistake and having to take the consequences. This is very dangerous because it means that the person only acts out of fear. Remember the parable of the talents as Luke tells it! (Cf. *Lk* 19). It really raises questions, when a candidate never shows any particular interest in our history, in individual brothers or in the activities of a province. He may be present physically but no-one knows where his heart is!

29. It is primarily up to the formator in charge of a particular stage to accompany the candidate on the way of integrating the significant values of our particular form of life. It is up to him to place before the candidate the goal he has to aim for and the way to achieve it. By this very fact he is more than just a neutral observer, in as much as he invests his whole self, with the choice he has made in his own life, in the delicate task entrusted to him. Being convinced of our form of life he is not afraid to propose new challenges to the brother whose companion he is, in view of the goal to be reached. If he has the candidate's

¹⁹ Cf. Saint Francis, Admonition III. See on this subject, Giovanni SALONIA, *Odòs – La Via della vita. Genesi e guarigione dei legami fraterni*, Bologna 2007

growth at heart, he will not fail to challenge him out of his apathy when necessary. As I hinted above, the formator is called upon to exercise paternity, since his task is to promote the human and spiritual growth of the young man in his care. In this sense I believe it is a fascinating and very responsible role. Many today are afraid to take it on. Their fear comes not only from feeling ill-equipped for such a task, but perhaps even more because of the distance between them and the rest of the fraternity. More often than not, the formator's uncertainty is shared by the whole fraternity. It is not enough to have acquired some professional competence if the fraternity as such seems to have lost its bearings and is going through a profound identity crisis. In this sense the formator cannot make up for the shortcomings of a larger group. By this I mean that a crisis of formation personnel is always a crisis of an entire fraternity. We still have a long way to go to improve the specific training of formators, and to give them adequate human and spiritual tools for the job, but even that is not enough. I would like to remind the leaders of the various jurisdictions how important ongoing formation is, understood as a way of continuous renewal of our life. In this regard it seems quite evident to me that many of the difficulties we find in initial formation are nothing other than the reflection of a crisis being lived out on another level. This should result in an awareness that we are all facing a wide-ranging challenge for which we all share responsibility. I am not afraid of brothers who tell me that the Order is going through an identity crisis. What does alarm me is to find brothers who have simply given up, who have stopped searching, and are not in the least concerned to move forward to new horizons. We owe our formators a great debt of gratitude, and the whole Order should feel committed to supporting them and creating the conditions in which they can calmly do their job.

5. The periods of initial formation – some notes

30. It takes time to lead a candidate all the way to perpetual profession. One must verify that he has gradually assimilated our values, and that he is now able to structure his life and the choices it involves on the foundation of his consecration to God in our fraternity. In addition to the methods I have already mentioned at some length, he must be given the necessary time for these things to happen. Wisely, our Constitutions envisage three stages, together lasting for a minimum of 5 or 6 years: postulancy, novitiate and post-novitiate. Today the reality has become very complex and distinctions necessarily have to be made whenever we speak about the length of time it takes to achieve the different stages of the initial formation journey. Once again, this letter does not aim to answer all the questions and difficulties that arise. However, I do want to highlight some of the problems and key issues on which the Order will have to take decisions that will steer the journey in new directions..

5.1 THE POSTULANCY

31. Moving now to the merits of the different methods of initial formation in the Order, two fundamental facts must be kept in mind: there are geographical areas, mainly in the north, where candidates come to the Order mostly in adult life and with a lifetime's journey and searching behind them, whereas in others, mostly in the south, a seminary type of curriculum is followed, where the young men come to our life around the age of twenty if not before. In both cases, for different reasons, the need is felt to lengthen the pre-novitiate period. In the north, many candidates come to us as a result of a conversion experience and after having neglected all religious practice for a long time. Hence the urgent need is felt for adequate catechesis and a gradual integration of fundamental religious values. In the south, because of the fairly young age of the candidates, it has been found necessary to foster a maturation process so that they can later make conscious, responsible choices. This is why some jurisdictions - I am referring mainly to those of India - provide two years of postulancy in addition to the time of aspirancy, plus one year of pre-novitiate. For different reasons, the need to lengthen the period prior to the novitiate seems to be a common requirement in all the jurisdictions of the Order. The decision to intensify this

period and structure it differently in the various formation plans is praiseworthy and necessary. This entire stage must be principally geared towards vocational discernment, and those who ask to be admitted to the novitiate must be fully conscious of what they are asking. Some jurisdictions, precisely in order to lengthen the period of discernment and foster a healthy growth in maturity prior to entry into the novitiate, have chosen to anticipate the study of philosophy during the postulancy period. I simply raise the question whether it might not be more appropriate to pursue the same purpose by applying and deepening what our Constitutions propose for this first stage of initial formation.²⁰

5.2 THE NOVITIATE

32. The novitiate seems to be the least problematic stage. It is also without a doubt the stage that is most protected by the Church's legislation. It is during this period that the candidates are initiated more intensely into our life and experience it more profoundly (*Const.* n. 29). Where the novitiate is shared by more than one jurisdiction, difficulties occasionally arise about how strictly it should be structured. In general the danger, it seems to me, is one of excessive idealisation of this stage, leading to the belief that the novitiate year is a sufficient foundation for the rest of one's life. I deduce this from the fact that in many jurisdictions the following period, namely the post-novitiate, is devoted in the first place to academic studies, to the neglect of the initiation dimension of this stage of formation. This is a knotty problem which calls for deep reflection by all concerned. Sooner or later this reflection will have to be followed by the necessary decisions.

5.3 THE POST-NOVITIATE

33. Now it is important to turn our attention to the post-novitiate stage. For years this has been the most controversial stage and the one which raises the most questions. It may be that we have turned the novitiate into a kind of myth, so that the following stage appears quite pale in comparison, both in its contents and its methodology. The post-novitiate should be considered first of all as the

²⁰ *Const.* n. 28,2, Cf. also the Acts of the Convention on Postulancy, in *Analecta OFMCap* 109 (1993), 475-483.

time during which the values learned in the novitiate are deepened and integrated into the life of each temporarily professed brother in the conditions of everyday life. In fact, no-one can be admitted to perpetual profession if these values, in addition to being integrated, have not also grown stronger and the individual candidate has not given sufficient guarantees that he is able to live his vows serenely and with commitment. Our life, if it is lived coherently, is a source of joy and serenity! We cannot exempt ourselves from the responsibility of ensuring that the proposed values have actually become an effective part of the life of the temporarily professed brother. This takes time and requires the proper formative methods. The goal remains that of final consecration with a strengthened attitude of unconditional availability to the brotherhood for the good and the growth of the Kingdom of God.

34. The immediate danger when discussing this subject is that one gets lost in a sterile diatribe about how to structure this period. In itself, it is not so much a matter of discussing whether studies can be allowed during the post-novitiate or not. It is obvious, and nobody would contest this, that even postulancy and novitiate are times of study. The post-novitiate must also include study. The question is rather: what kind of study should be done during the post-novitiate? Our Constitutions do not exclude study during this period. They say: "The brothers should apply themselves, in keeping with each one's gifts of nature and grace, to a more profound study of sacred scripture, spiritual theology, liturgy, and the history and spirituality of the Order. They should also exercise various forms of the apostolate and engage in work, including domestic work. But this formation should always be adapted to the way of life and the gradual maturing of the person involved." (*Const.* n. 30,3). It is clear that the type of study envisaged by our legislation is aimed in the first place at strengthening the person's integration into the consecrated life and acquiring a deeper grasp of various aspects of our charism.

In the previous paragraph the Constitutions state that "Since the fraternal gospel life holds the primary place in our vocation, it shall be given priority also during the post-novitiate period. Therefore the same religious formation shall be given to all the brothers for a period of time and in a manner determined by the Provincial Minister with the consent of the Definitory". (*Const.* n. 30,2): PCO IV mentions this in the following terms: "[the post-novitiate] is the period of deeper study and maturation of the commitment assumed at first profession and

prepares the brothers for solemn profession as the definitive choice of the gospel life". (PCO IV, 67). These texts speak of study and a process of deepening with a view to making a definitive choice of our life. They do not speak of special formation geared towards sacred Orders (Cf. *Const.* n. 39). We must not forget that the accent is placed on the fact that this formation is intended for all the brothers, as brothers; which means that this intention is the heart and foundation of initiation into our form of life, whether or not a person chooses sacred Orders. In practice however, although the term "post-novitiate" is now in common use in the Order, it seems to be understood in the first place as a new name for what used to be called the Seminary or Student house for philosophy and theology.

35. From what I have said about the worrying trends, the values that must be handed on and the ways and times of doing so, I think the central issue cannot be whether or not to schedule studies during the post-novitiate. Rather, it is about ways and times that promote in the best possible way a gradual initiation into our life and its underlying values. It is not even a question of different models: experiential or seminary style²¹. At this point we must try to be very consistent, because there is a danger of wanting to achieve different objectives at the same time, for example, preparation for perpetual profession and formation with a view to sacred Orders. We do not realise, unfortunately, that by acting in this way we encourage a lack of clarity, to the detriment of the primary objective we are aiming for, namely affective maturity, an "adult" faith and the interiorisation of our values, all of which are fundamental pre-requisites for admission to perpetual profession. But they are also, if you like, indispensable conditions for the scientific study of philosophy and theology with their serious and absorbing demands.

No. 22 of PCO IV stated: "A clear distinction must be made between formation for the priesthood and formation for profession. Especially in the first years of initiation, formation for our life must have absolute priority." In cases where the current post-novitiate programme includes a part of special formation, its approach and structure must be reviewed to see how far it corresponds to the requirements of initiation into our life, in conformity with the Constitutions. Above all it is necessary to prepare a programme that effectively safeguards the primary reference to religious consecration and to our fraternal form of life,

²¹ *Analecta OFMCap*, 120 (2004) 1043.

ensuring that, effectively and in everything, the same formation is given to all the candidates.

36. Given the disquieting trends I mentioned at the start of this letter, we must seriously ask the question: what is the best direction to take in order to reach the objective of total, joyful and disinterested self-giving by every candidate to our Order? My aim in this letter is to communicate to all the brothers of the Order my own heartfelt concerns and those of the General Definitory. This will of course highlight certain difficulties of the moment, but above all I hope to involve the Order in a constructive reflection about the ways and means of achieving, in the changed conditions of today, that wide-ranging availability and openness which, it seems to me, is the finest fruit of any journey of consecration. I am aware that there are circumscriptions which are experiencing other types of difficulty, different from those mentioned above, but the important thing is to create a climate of fraternal dialogue about a subject as delicate as initial formation. We need to conduct this dialogue always in the light of the promises we ourselves have made, the same promises to which we intend to lead those who ask to embrace our form of life. In other words, each of us must always keep in mind the charism that Saint Francis left us as it has been lived and matured in the Capuchin Order. We cannot be content with cheap solutions, possibly chosen with reference to a misunderstood principle of pluriformity. There can be different forms, but they should never be cheap!

6. Fixed points

37. We would like to open a dialogue with you about how to improve the entire process of initial formation in the Order. This does not mean we want to redefine everything from start to finish. What the Constitutions say is valid and must be implemented faithfully and precisely. The Order's profound insight about the *initiation of candidates into our life* has not yet been understood or studied in sufficient depth. Consequently, except for rather minor adjustments for the sake of expediency, the structures and approaches to initial formation, in general, have remained almost entirely traditional.

Whatever happens, the Constitutions can always be further enriched and refined. In fact, with reference to some aspects of formation, the Constitutions should be expanded to promote in our Fraternity a greater sense of communion and working together not just among the jurisdictions themselves but also with the central authorities of the Order, so that the latter may offer every possible contribution to the entire Fraternity for the initiation of the candidates and the initial and ongoing formation of the brothers. The delicate area of formation constitutes a challenge for us all. On the one hand, it is true that the Ministers of the circumscriptions are the ones directly responsible. On the other hand, equally directly, the General Minister is also challenged, since he, together with his definitory, has a particular function of animation and governance which he cannot abdicate, given the fact that every Institute has the inalienable right and duty to provide for the formation of its members.

38. The need is perceived for the Order to have a *Ratio formationis* or "Formation Plan", outlining the objectives, programmes and specific methodologies of the entire formation process of the friars. Before embarking on such a task it is necessary to define and describe, at least in broad outline, the specific journey of initiation into our life, in the three stages of postulancy, novitiate and post-novitiate. The "initiation into our life" envisaged by the Constitutions, analogous to Christian initiation, implies the need to lay out the details of a "catechumenal" way leading to perpetual profession in our Order.

It is equally necessary that the type of specific formation given to friars preparing for ordination should be better delineated. Only after this preliminary work will it be possible to start work on a *Ratio formationis* or "Formation Plan"

as such. We commission the General Formation Secretariat, with the help of specialists, to help the Order to take the necessary steps in this direction.

Each circumscription or group of circumscriptions should have its own Formation Plan, as the Constitutions prescribe (*Const.* n. 24,7). This special tool must be in conformity with our charism.

39. I would also like to recall other aspects that the Order has been considering in recent years and which must be considered “fixed points” of reference in the future:

- Some circumscriptions have only a few candidates and have begun to collaborate with other jurisdictions to ensure the best conditions for formation. This is a correct and wise option, because in this way each candidate is able to join others on the formation journey and to benefit from the presence of one or more formators who are “free from all duties which could interfere with the care and direction of the candidates” (*Const.* 26,4). It is certainly not appropriate to interrupt a relationship of co-operation just because, in a particular year, there may be a larger number of one’s “own” candidates. Our Order still has a way to go before it can see collaboration at all levels, and not just in formation, as a value that must be pursued and strengthened.

Today it is accepted that the way of initiation into our life calls for personalized accompaniment whereby the individual brother is enabled to make unhindered progress and tackle those aspects that concern him most closely and require him to mature. There are circumscriptions with many young friars in formation who have opted for formation communities with a maximum of ten members. In this way they are able to lay the foundations for a very fruitful journey of fraternal integration, and to guarantee that each brother will have the necessary accompaniment. Circumscriptions or groups of circumscriptions which, during the time of initiation, continue to have formation houses with a considerable number of young friars in formation (20, 30 or more) are invited to question seriously and evaluate responsibly whether in such a way they are actually ensuring that, through true personalized accompaniment, candidates are really initiated into the consecrated life and learn to live a life of brotherhood. It seems obvious that, if these objectives are to be reached, a high number of candidates grouped together in the same fraternity is not a favourable condition. One can

attempt to remedy the situation by stressing discipline, but this cannot simply be equated with the act of formation!

- the post-novitiate is the stage of initiation during which the values experienced during novitiate are integrated and lived in greater depth, in view of perpetual profession. In addition to the moments of study envisaged by the Constitutions (*Const.* n. 30, 3), and which should be engaged in a manner that is typical of an initiation process, it is accepted that prolonged experiences of life among the poor, of pastoral work, housework, manual work and contemplative prayer, are indispensable formative moments. It is important that this experiential dimension should not just feature occasionally but should accompany the brothers in formation throughout the time of this specific stage, which is intended to lead to the definitive profession of our life.

- At the present time there are cases where during the post-novitiate the candidates attend courses of specific initial formation in external religious Institutes. Such situations must be seriously evaluated and if necessarily revised in the light of the meaning and purpose of the post-novitiate, and of its specific nature in relation to religious life in our Order. In any case where such situations exist the above-mentioned conditions must be observed, so that candidates can be guaranteed strong points of reference in everything concerning our Franciscan and Capuchin charism.

7. Conclusion²²

40. There are other subjects I would like to have raised with you in this letter which are extremely important to the present General Definitory. I am referring particularly to issues relating to specific initial formation in preparation for the apostolic life in the ordained ministry or in another profession; to ongoing formation; how to promote co-operation among circumscriptions as a value at every level of formation, and in other areas of our life, in the apostolate or in houses of prayer and hospitality. I will deal with these in a future letter.

41. The question I would like to ask each of you is: "To whom have you given your life, and how are you living your consecration? It is important to ask to whom and for what cause I am ready to give my life! If we rekindle in ourselves the sacred fire of our consecration, I am convinced we will also succeed in proposing new directions in the journey of initial formation. Initial formation cannot be the prerogative of superiors and formators alone: it concerns everyone. It is impossible to opt out or take a neutral stance. To do so would be clearly to the detriment of the formation journey. Religious life is lived in times, places and cultures that differ widely from one another. Ours is the challenge of facing these dimensions in a spirit of brotherhood and a climate of communion. We will all emerge enriched from the process! May our Father and Founder Saint Francis bless our efforts in this field!

Br Mauro Jöhri
General Minister O.F.M.Cap

Rome, December 8, 2008
Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

²² In writing this letter I have drawn inspiration from the three years I spent at the "Institut de Formation intégrale de Montréal". See further references in: Jeannine GUINDON, *Vers l'autonomie psychique. De la naissance à la mort*, Montréal 2001

Sommario

1. Some urgent needs of the moment.....	8
1.1 What has happened to the missionary spirit?.....	8
1.2 Mission takes time	9
1.3 Have a dream for your people.....	10
1.4 Moving from personal projects to fraternal ones	10
1.5 Let the brothers work.....	11
2. What is the ultimate purpose of our lifelong choice?	12
2.1 A life that is given	12
2.2 To follow in the footsteps of his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.....	12
2.3 After the example of Francis	13
3. What values will we hand on to the new Capuchin generations?.....	14
3.1 Choosing fraternal life in minority	14
3.2 The contemplative dimension.....	15
3.3 Closeness to the poor.....	16
3.4 The charism of continuous renewal	17
4. How to transmit these values during initial formation?.....	18
4.1 A way of initiation	19
4.2 Personalised accompaniment.....	21
5. The periods of initial formation – some notes	24
5.1 The postulancy	24
5.2 The novitiate.....	25
5.3 The post-novitiate.....	25
6. Fixed points.....	29
7. Conclusion	32

