



I° PCO

OUR LIFE IN FRATERNITY AND POVERTY
Quito, 1971

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**I° PLENARY COUNCIL OF THE ORDER
OUR LIFE IN FRATERNITY AND POVERTY
Quito, 1971**

**THE BROTHER MINISTER GENERAL AND THE BROTHER
DEFINITORS GENERAL TO ALL THE BROTHERS OF THE ORDER:**

Peace and Good in the Lord.

With this letter we wish to inform you of the conclusions of the first session of the Plenary Council of the order, which was held at Quito, Ecuador, 4th – 24th October, 1971.

It is the duty of the Plenary Council of the Order “to assist the Minister General and the Definitors by constructive cooperation in bringing about the renewal and adaptation of the Order.” (Const. 108c). United in prayer, the Council engaged in common study and fraternal dialogue concerning our life in fraternity and poverty in the light of our evangelical vocation, as outlined in the Constitutions and expressed to the friars in the Letters of the General Chapter and of the General Definitory, and recently proposed to us by Pope Paul VI in his Apostolic Exhortation on the Renewal of the Religious Life.

Faced with the actual social reality of Latin America as illustrated to us by Latin-American specialists in the first week of the session, and as we ourselves were able to verify from first-hand experience, the relevance of our life and vocation became more vividly evident to us, since so many opportunities exist in all parts of the world for our Order to be really and effectively inserted in human society as a leavening influence of justice and social development (cf. Constitutions, 11, 46, 84ff.)

Hearing with our own ears “the cry of the poor, rising up more urgently than ever” and seeing with our own eyes the subhuman condition of so many men and women “in their personal distress and collective misery,” (Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI, Evangelica testificatio, 17), we felt the urgent call of the Spirit urging us to an ever more authentic faithfulness to our vocation. In a new and more insistent way we understood why our Constitutions call us to seek new forms of presence and activity, so that we may offer genuine assistance in the work of evangelizing and elevating human society.

Likewise, it became more vividly evident to the brothers of the Plenary Council of the Order how valuable and significant our Franciscan way of life is, if we sincerely strive to live our ideal of minority and poverty in brotherhood: in that unity of mind and heart that makes Christ really present among us, so that every fraternity of ours, whether local or provincial, becomes an expression of the presence of the poor and humble Christ, serving God and man in charity.

Seeing the reality of Latin America with this inner clarity, the Plenary Council recognized the signs of the times for the Order as a whole. From these evolved the practical guidelines of the final document, presented by the Plenary Council to the General Definitory in the form of fraternal recommendations.

In conveying these guidelines to the whole Order, the General Definitory, for its part, makes these same desires and proposals its own and is resolved to put them into practice, to keep them always in mind when making decisions and proposing guidelines to the Order or the individual provinces and in planning the governance of the Order.

We invite all the friars to receive these resolutions willingly and to find in them guidelines for practical living. It may appear that we are giving a new set of directives; far from it – they are nothing more than a practical application of the spirit of our new Constitutions, both as regards the particular situation of the friars in Latin America and that of all the friars wherever they may be, so that all may live our life of fraternity and poverty in a more authentic manner; fraternity and poverty are, after all, the very foundation of our evangelical vocation.

It is our hope and firm conviction that the first effect of these resolutions will be to awaken the conscience of the friars in these times of spiritual renewal of the Order. Let us not forget that the source of true renewal is the interior conversion of mind and heart, profound communion with God and the constant search for His Will. From this effort at personal and communal renewal will spring new expressions of fraternal life, new modes of presence among the men and women of our times and an authentic witness of life in poverty and humility.

We wish to thank the friars of the Plenary Council for the valuable help they have given us in the exercise of our office and responsibilities. We also wish to encourage our brothers who are working in Latin America for the welfare of the poor and powerless peoples; and we ask all the provinces of the Order and all the friars to be generous in their assistance and collaboration in the work.

In conclusion, we urgently invite all our brothers, particularly the Conferences of Major Superiors and the provincial and local Superiors, to undertake with us a since re-examination of their way of life and a profound conversion in view of the practical guidelines given by the Plenary Council.

Thus, in unity of spirit and in a variety of ways (Const.4,4) we will make an ever more effective and worthy contribution to the renewal of the world in accordance with the demands of the evangelical values of justice and peace.

Your brothers in the Lord,

Paschal Rywalski, Minister General
William Sghedoni, Vicar General
Benedict Frei, Definitor
Bonaventure Marinelli, Definitor
Aloysius Ward, Definitor
Clovis Frainer, Definitor
Optatus Van Asseldonk, Definitor
John Dovetta, Definitor
Lazarus Iriarte, Definitor

Quito, October 23, 1971

CHAPTER I°

CAPUCHIN-FRANCISCAN LIFE IN LATIN AMERICA

A. OUR LIFE IN LATIN AMERICA

1. Just as in every country and in every culture, so also in Latin America, we must look for other specific forms of Franciscan life, adapted to the real situation of each country and in accordance with the spirit of the new Constitutions, so that our identity may be more clearly apparent and we may respond to the voice of God, calling us in the signs of Latin America; in this way we also hope to be able to awaken new vocations to the Order.

2. Considering the conditions in Latin America, we can express the presence of our fraternal and minoritic life in many ways. We can express our presence by means of the traditional fraternities properly renewed, but especially by new fraternities of prayer, witness, evangelisation and work. All these fraternities must be truly ecclesial in themselves and help to raise up other ecclesial communities around them, especially Franciscan ones and those which are called "basic Christian communities."

3. Our opinion is that these new types of fraternity should have the following characteristics:

- a) they should be vital, in the sense that they are forms of our Franciscan life that have their source in the person of Christ;
- b) they should favour personal development, in such a way that each member can develop his own personal charisms for the good of the whole fraternity and of the Church;
- c) they should have a spirit of ongoing renewal that results in devising ever better forms;
- d) they should honour the principle of pluriformity, as the diversity of situations demands.

4. In order that these forms of fraternity in Latin America may be truly minoritic, two things are necessary:

- a) through their spirit of service and availability, they must always manifest themselves among the people as a prophetic sign of solidarity;
- b) above all, as truly poor men, the friars must be present among the poor by their life and witness.

Nevertheless, whatever the forms of fraternity may be, they must have a unity of spirit and true communion among themselves and with the provincial fraternity; in fact, with the whole Order.

5. In view of the particular character of Latin America, special attention must be given to inter-communication among the different circumscriptions of the Order in this territory for the purpose of fostering fraternal life, the sharing of news and the seeking of solutions to problems together. This can be brought about through meetings of men trained in leadership, by means of special courses conducted by CEFEPAL (Latin American Centre for Franciscan and Pastoral Activities) or by other courses, by meetings of Superiors, or by other means judged adequate by the Superiors.

It is greatly desirable that efforts be made to unify, even juridically, the various circumscriptions of the Order in Latin America, especially within the confines of each one's own country.

6. A special fraternal presence on our part is called for among those who suffer from want and isolation, such as those who live in the poorer suburbs of cities and towns, or those who are neglected in rural areas, *A fortiori* the life of our missionaries among indigenous populations and others, undertaken in order to evangelize them and promote their full human development, must be considered as a true Franciscan presence among the poor.

7. In order that this sort of life may be rendered possible in practice, it will be necessary to devise new forms of initiation, with the active participation of the young men themselves, according to the conditions of each region and the recent declarations of the Church and the Order. In order that such improved formation may come about, collaboration among the different circumscriptions is much to be desired.

8. The Plenary Council of the Order gladly expresses its appreciation and confidence in the friars of Latin America and it hopes that they will bring about a new and stronger impulse towards a genuine 'incarnation' of the Franciscan presence in these countries. If this new vitality is to succeed, the native friars themselves have a great part to play and should be considered as having the prime responsibility for the future of the Order. The Order for its part must be ready to provide a sufficient supply of personnel for the formation and animation of the fraternities and other related activities.

B. OUR WORK IN LATIN AMERICA

9. Our Mission in Latin America is shown especially:

a) by evangelisation, as an expression of our apostolic vocation and as a means of deepening the Christian life;

b) by our presence among the poor, as an expression of minority, in order to promote their human development.

All this, in union with the life of these nations, should contribute towards finding valid solutions to the many serious problems they face, so that individuals and communities may enjoy genuine human progress. (Medellin, *Message to the Nations of Latin America*)

Moreover, it will be our task, too, as men of justice and peace to form the social conscience of these people and to cooperate in legitimate activities for social and political reform according to the mind and spirit of the Constitutions (No. 85ff. and 166).

10. Pastoral activity should be constantly renewed in our Franciscan spirit. For this reason, in order to be better aware of our identity as Franciscans and to find new and better ways, it will be necessary to relinquish certain pastoral activities. We invite all the Major Superiors of Latin America to undertake a serious re-examination of their commitments, especially with regard to schools requiring the payment of tuition, and certain parishes in urban areas that are already well developed, and other similar activities.

11. In order that poverty may be a genuine and obvious sign and in order that we may truly become part of the reality that surrounds us in Latin America, the friars are encouraged to place at the disposal of ecclesiastical or social works buildings and property which are of no further use to the fraternity or not in harmony with our spirit, to sell them or even give them away for the good of society as a whole.

12. In order that we may discover genuine vocations, it will be necessary to undertake new forms of vocational pastoral activity. Therefore, we propose:

- a) that various methods be tried, according to the local situation;
- b) that more attention be given to vocational pastoral activity among youth who are able to make their decision with greater maturity;
- c) that friars be selected and trained to specialise in this work;
- d) that communities of presence and witness be set up to arouse and foster an atmosphere in which young people will wish to consecrate themselves in the Franciscan life.

13. On account of the present needs of the Church in Latin America, the pastoral work of our friars in parishes is to be highly regarded, especially in Mission territories, but it is to be promoted in new forms so that true Christian communities may be built up. All the friars should prefer to direct their attention to the poorer people and those on the fringes of society.

14. Pastoral work in Latin America pertains first of all to the friars of this territory, so that it is chiefly their responsibility to evangelize and promote the development of their own people. However, assistance with personnel for the missions and new forms of apostolates is still required. The Major Superiors of Latin America should prepare a precise list of the projects requiring material help and of the personnel they require. Friars sent to work in Latin America should be:

- a) carefully chosen;
- b) suitably trained and ready to complete their training in Latin America;
- c) capable of becoming fully integrated into Latin America.

15. Lay collaborators, or collaborators from other religious congregations, are to be welcomed, especially in the missions, as long as they have the proper qualifications.

16. The Plenary Council of the Order invites all the friars to make themselves aware of the needs of Latin America, and to decide on some concrete action they could take to meet those needs, even at the cost of some personal or communal sacrifice. Superiors should see to it that the efforts of individuals and fraternities in their jurisdictions achieve their objective.

The primary responsibility for providing personnel and economic assistance to the vice-provinces and missions rests with the provinces on which those vice-provinces and missions depend, but the latter should, as far as possible, seek to achieve sufficiency in personnel and in financial means.

17. As men of justice and peace all the friars are urged to exert an effective influence to remove whatever injustices may be inflicted on the peoples of the Third World by their governments or by national or international commercial organisations.

18. In every country, where this is possible, or if it seems preferable in every Latin American Conference, there shall be an office for the preparation of projects, and for communication with ecclesiastical and civil organisations and with those of the Order.

19. In the General Curia, there shall be an office whose task will be to study the situations, projects and requests of the circumscriptions of Latin America, to decide priorities and to negotiate with those provinces of the Order which are in a position to help and wish to do so.

CHAPTER II° FRATERNITY

A. THE FRIARS

20. All the friars are equal (Const. 73 & 101), therefore, each should be given equal opportunity to develop his own gifts and talents, in his own state of life, for the service of others, both within and outside the fraternity.

21. To foster the equality of the friars, the following means are proposed:

- a) there should be a common novitiate, without any distinction between clerics and non-clerics;
- b) throughout the whole period of initiation, the first place should be given to religious and Franciscan formation, and this applies equally to clerics and non-clerics;
- c) the liturgy of the Hours and the Eucharistic liturgy should be celebrated in the vernacular and with the active participation of all; they should be renewed not only according to the letter, but more according to the spirit of the Second Vatican Council;
- d) All should receive an adequate formation according to their aptitudes to carry out the variety of duties within the Order and to engage in apostolic work;
- e) the suppression of titles, privileges and exemptions, taken for granted in the Constitutions, should be put into effect;
- f) the participation of all the friars in domestic chores, unless prevented by more urgent work, should be put into practice;
- g) within the norms of sound administration, we should share our material goods both on the local and provincial level and on the inter-provincial level and that of the Order as a whole.

22. The Plenary Council of the Order asks the General Superiors to petition the Holy See again in a prudent manner and at an appropriate time, to allow non-cleric friars to hold any office in the Order.

23. The Plenary Council believes that the negative response of the Sacred Congregation for Religious to n.101 of the Constitutions does not prevent the Major Superiors from petitioning the Holy See, through the General Definitory, to allow an eminently suitable non-cleric friar, in a particular case, to assume the office of Superior, if the good of the fraternity requires this.

24. Since the Spirit of God may speak through all the friars, Major and local Superiors should give the younger friars a chance to take an active part in the renewal of the Order. Therefore, Superiors should:

- a) encourage their active participation in the local Chapter;
- b) promote contacts with the various friars and fraternities of the province;
- c) convoke provincial and inter-provincial gatherings of the young friars for this purpose.

25. Since the young, along with the other friars, should take a responsible part in the renewal of the Order, Superiors should use suitable means to discover their opinions and aspirations, support their undertakings and lead them to dialogue with the other friars.

26. In order that the Constitutions may be put into practice more faithfully, superiors should take care that the friars do not habitually live away from the fraternity, even for the apostolate, and that they are not deprived of the benefit of fraternal life.

27. Where, however, because of special circumstances (e.g. in the missions) the friars are compelled to live alone for a long period, Major Superiors should see that the opportunity to share in fraternal life be provided for them frequently.

28. Among all the friars an educational process should be going on so that they may learn to understand in a fraternal manner the anguish and distress suffered by friars undergoing a crisis and try not to be their judges but their guardians and truly their brothers.

29. a) Provincial and local Superiors are earnestly advised to exercise the greatest consideration and concern for friars returning to the world; they should remember that the admonition contained in paragraph V of n.VI of the Instruction issued by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 13th January 1971, applies also to us especially: "The Ordinaries concerned, among whom is the Major Religious Superior, should treat with paternal and pastoral charity priests reduced to the lay state and, as far as they can, assist them in those things necessary for living a dignified life."

b) The Conference of Major Superiors shall engage in common reflection on this problem and, if necessary, unite their forces to discover suitable means to fraternally and effectively help those friars who leave the Order to find their place in lay life smoothly and honourably.

B. FRATERNITIES

30. The Plenary Council of the Order earnestly advises all Superiors to foster by suitable means the spirit of fraternity, which is the primary and essential element of our Franciscan life.

31. In every circumscription of the Order the structure of the fraternities shall be adapted in such a way that the renewal of the Order may become effective in regard to our special presence with and among the poor and in regard to the apostolate.

32. Each fraternity, whatever its form of life, must give an evangelical witness of poverty and minority by its spirit and by its way of praying, living and working.

33. With due regard for the primary pastoral responsibility of the Superiors themselves, the Plenary Council of the Order recommends also that they, in whatever way they see fit, enlist the help of friars trained in leadership of fraternities to arouse, foster and perfect the renewal of our life.

34. Our fraternities should be open in such a way that lay persons may not only give us special services, but also share in our fraternal life more closely in regard to prayer, or fraternal fellowship or the apostolate. If such participation is to be only temporary, the consent of the local Chapter is needed; but if it is to be for a longer or indefinite period, the consent of the Major Superiors must be obtained.

35. The services of lay experts should be engaged with regard to both economic administration and our integration into society, so that we may reflect more deeply on our poverty, minority, and apostolate, and be more confident in adopting practical and more efficient guidelines.

36. It is recommended to each circumscription of the Order that, after all things have been considered thoroughly before God, at least one fraternity of witness according to n.11 and n.46 of the Constitutions be established. In the circumstances of today, this kind of fraternity seems to be particularly in harmony with our spirit and the requirements of a world in need of the Gospel message.

37. In order that the creation of new fraternities may become possible, the following should be done besides the preliminary information and awareness to be given to the friars of the province:

a) if necessary, in every circumscription at least some house or some apostolic work should be given up, especially schools and similar institutions conducted for the wealthy;

b) a friar who wishes to become a part of such a fraternity should be free to do so, even if he must give up some office exercised in the province, provided that the common good does not suffer therefrom and that he possesses the necessary qualifications.

38. Only those friars should be admitted to such fraternities who are suitable for fraternity life; they should be men of prayer and spiritually mature, and competent in their work, particularly in preaching the word of God. The friar who bears the responsibility of such a fraternity should possess the qualities of a true leader.

39. Granted that, according to the Constitutions n.12, n.40 and n.155, the friars must always unite prayer and work and that they may go to a house of recollection set up according to the mind of n.42 of the Constitutions, the Plenary Council of the Order earnestly recommends further that there be contemplative fraternities where the friars may exclusively foster intimacy with the Lord for as long a time as seems necessary to them in the Lord.

40. Since our life is manifested in a variety of forms, those fraternities which by right preferably carry on the traditional life and activity should imbue their internal life and the external apostolate with the spirit of the new Constitutions.

41. To this end the Superiors and also the Conferences of Major Superiors should see that suitable means are used to adapt and develop the thinking of the friars according to the mind of the new Constitutions and other documents of the Church and the Order.

42. Since the renewal of a fraternity depends to a great extent on the Superior, the Major Superiors should appoint as Superior one who is capable of inspiring renewal in the traditional type of fraternity; the Major Superiors themselves should give him their assistance in this.

43. It is the function of the local Chapter to strengthen the spirit of fraternity, to promote the co-responsibility of all the friars for the common good, and to undertake fraternal dialogue on everything that concerns the life of the fraternity in order to seek out together the will of God.

44. Because of the special importance of the local Chapter for the life of the fraternity, Major Superiors shall effectively promote this Chapter and at times also give it encouragement by their presence.

45. The local Chapter admirably provides for the expression of "obedience in charity", a characteristic feature of our fraternity, whereby the friars serve one another; it encourages creativity and co-responsibility in all the friars, and occasions the unfolding of the gifts of each one's personality for the service of all. To discover and carry out the will of God, the fraternity needs the creativity and personal gifts of each of its members.

CHAPTER III°

WITNESS TO POVERTY IN THE USE OF THINGS

46. We believe that poverty, as an evangelical and Franciscan virtue, is a participation in the self-emptying of Christ and refers primarily to persons rather than to things. Adherence to all the norms in the use of personal and communal goods would not necessarily make the friars truly poor. Our poverty, as proposed to us by Saint Francis in Chapter VI of the Rule, does indeed make us rich in all the goods of the Kingdom of God, but as far as it frees us, in spirit and in fact, from temporal goods, it leads us to place all our goods at the service of the Church and society.

47. We believe that, since poverty is our special charism, renewal will not be true and genuine renewal unless our individual and communal poverty is immediately visible as a manifestation of an interior reality and is so explicit that it needs no explanation or excuses.

48. The criteria for the necessary revision of the use of goods are the following:

a) The first criterion is the principle of human morality and social justice, by which all men are obliged to the social use of goods; goods cannot be regarded as only for the benefit of some person or particular groups but for the benefit of all men.

b) Another is evangelical poverty, “which is our special way of salvation” (Const. n.2), leading us not only to distribute our superfluous goods but to share even those which are necessary to us.

c) Still another is the re-structuring of our presence and our activities according to the demands of the apostolate and the ministry to be coordinated with the pastoral programme of the local Church.

A. PERSONAL WITNESS TO POVERTY

49. Recent and present-day social and economic developments, and their influence on the outlook of religious, place personal poverty in a new perspective and demand greater and more conscious responsibility in the giving of oneself.

a) An honest and hard day’s work is a pre-eminent sign of poverty by which we can be identified clearly with the poor.

b) The use of one’s talents is a true gift of oneself and a sign of genuine poverty; laziness, on the other hand, and negligence in the use of one’s talents is against poverty.

c) Also, it is an expression of poverty to carry out some work for the common good, even against one’s own inclinations, for talents are not given for one’s own personal use and enjoyment, but for the good of the fraternity and the whole Church.

d) Service for the benefit of one’s own fraternity, within our own houses, is a true exercise of poverty.

50. A friar who makes no effort to observe personal poverty, especially with regard to stipends and wages for work, which should be handed over to the fraternity, must be questioned by the Superiors concerning the genuineness of his Franciscan vocation.

B. COMMUNAL WITNESS TO POVERTY

51. It is part of the pastoral duty of chapters and superiors to form the conscience of the friars and of fraternities with regard to the requirements of poverty. Also, the religious themselves should responsibly increase their own awareness of poverty through personal study, dialogue, local and provincial meetings, etc.

52. Since the immovable goods of the Order must be considered as goods of the ecclesial community, the re-examination of the use of our goods is not merely an internal affair of the Order, but should be seen as an ecclesial matter. Therefore, in reviewing the use of our goods, we should prudently dialogue with the community of the local Church in order to arrive at a common solution for the good of the Church and of the local civil society.

53. All the Order's possessions, particularly land, gardens and buildings that are no longer necessary, and anything else that is not appropriate for us, should be disposed of or put to social use. Any such possessions, however, that are still necessary should conform to the principles and requirements of Franciscan poverty, with due regard being had for the social conditions of the region and of the people to whom we must give our witness to poverty.

54. Since material insecurity is an element of poverty and is today a special sign of solidarity with the poor, the friars, and especially those who form the new fraternities, should, as far as possible, try not to have the ownership of houses or land.

55. Goods which we do not need and which cannot immediately be used to help the poor or the Third World are not to be accepted even as spontaneous gifts.

56. The fact that we are brothers should be manifested or proved also by financial cooperation among fraternities of the same province or among the provinces themselves (in the form of gifts or loans, with or without moderate interest). The goods of a province and of individual fraternities should be fairly made available for the needs of the province, vice-province or mission.

57. Where possible, the assistance of lay experts should be sought in the administrations of the Order's goods so that these may be put to better use and the friars themselves may be trained in a better and more responsible administration of the Order's goods.

58. Concerning shrines (places of pilgrimage) in our care, the real need for our presence there should be verified; if such a need is lacking, the shrine should be given up. In the future, we should not build any shrines or accept any that are offered to us, since they occupy too many religious who could give their service especially to the missions and the poor. We should avoid ways of raising money unbecoming to our spirit of poverty; and our apostolate should be integrated with the pastoral plan of the local Church.

59. In the Order, we should avoid the unjustifiable spending of money on the erection of monuments, the construction of works on a monumental scale, or the restoration of friaries for the sole reason that they are historical. We should also strive to educate the people to understand the concepts and requirements of social justice and poverty.

60. In virtue of the Constitutions, it belongs to the local fraternity, in compliance with the norms given by the Provincial Chapters for the use of goods, courageously to correct abuses against personal and communal poverty, e.g., in recreation, the accumulation of clothing and personal gifts, travelling, the use of cars, etc. This should be done through the local Chapter.

61. The Major Superiors shall see to it that the local Chapters of their fraternities assume their responsibility with regard to the following questions:

- a) deciding the budget for the ordinary needs of the fraternity;
- b) determining the sum of money to be given over for the needs of the province, the missions, the sick and the education and training of the friars (Const. 52);
- c) setting aside a part of their income (a percentage imposed on the friary's income) for the needs of the poor (Const. 54) or to undertake some work in favour of the poor (Const. 69).

CHAPTER IV° CIRCUMSCRIPTIONS OF THE ORDER IN GENERAL

62. In view of the difficulties of the present time, the Plenary Council of the Order commits to the General Definitory the work of preparing concrete proposals on the erection, division, or union of provinces, according to criteria to be proposed by the Definitory itself, and also the task of making decisions about these things, with due observance of n.98 of our Constitutions.

63. We should not only seek solutions that are in accord with present structures, but also leave the way open to find other structures, even extraordinary ones in a creative sense, that meet the needs of modern-day society and of our renewed way of life, in ways that foster the unity of the Order and its incorporation into the local context.

64. Hence, a sense of unity should be promoted, so that through frequent contacts and joint efforts in initial formation and pastoral activity, union may be achieved even on the juridical level, where circumstances and the good of the Order make it desirable. When a union or establishment of circumscriptions is to take place, it should not be done through imposition without any previous preparation of minds or without the prior consent of the majority of friars.

65. A thorough scientific study is to be made by the General Superiors together with the Conferences of Major Superiors and all the circumscriptions concerned, so that the implantation of the Order in the various regions may proceed well and in orderly fashion.

66. The following criteria should help the General Definitory to proceed in a more prudent way:

a) our availability should lead us to whatever place our forces, personnel, and the witness of Franciscan life show there are valid reasons for our presence; no foundations should be made on the impulse of external or superficial reasons;

b) with regard to territory, this should not be considered only geographically but also as continuous demographic centres (on account of fraternity) in which the friars work (Const. n.98);

c) the criterion of sufficient quantity and efficiency, i.e. the primary element, is not the number of friars but rather the internal and external vitality of the group and the nature of the needs that exist for a new province;

d) in each nation attempts should be made toward unification, especially where there are circumscriptions originating from the same Mother Province. Therefore, the question could be asked whether in one or another nation or region only ONE province would suffice, except in extraordinary circumstances;

e) the criterion of witness in the local Church is important. For this there needs to be a sufficient number of friars who are truly giving efficient assistance to the local Church;

f) as a manifestation of vitality, the first thing to be considered is missionary activity, domestic or foreign, since ours is a missionary Order;

g) in the event that a province is to be established, a further requirement is that in general it should be economically viable, spiritually vigorous, able to ensure a good distribution of

human resources over the different activities, and capable of offering candidates a true picture of our life.

CHAPTER V°
PREPARING FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL CHAPTER

67. To prepare properly for the General Chapter in so far as its object is the correction and amendment of the Constitutions to obtain definitive approval of them from the Holy See, a Pre-Chapter Commission is to be set up by the General Definitory as soon as possible.

68. The Pre-Chapter Commission is to be made up of not less five and not more than seven members.

69. The members of the Pre-Chapter Commission should have competence in the main topics of our life (spiritual life, formation, apostolate, government, etc.), but combined with an overall vision of our life. The Commission is to be functional.

70. In choosing the members, a certain proportional representation of regions is to be observed.

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