

**Fifth Letter of the General Minister  
COVID-19**

Prot. N. 00339/20

To all the Major Superiors  
To all the Friars  
In their locations

Dear Brothers,

*May the Lord give you peace!*

Once again, I'm delighted to reach out to you all. I believe this is an effective way to remain connected and to share with you all that is happening in the Order during these times when we are forcibly restricted to our respective locations and obliged to have cancelled for long months a packed calendar of visits, chapters, appointments with you, both on my part and on the part of the General Council, as well as by those in charge of other Curia offices who contribute greatly to the life of the Order.

First of all, I'd like to once again call to mind the friars who have experienced first-hand contact with the new virus, and above all to honor the memory of those who, because of it, have concluded their earthly existence. The deceased now totals about thirty friars in various locations. With no intention to slight anyone, we share our sympathies in a particular way with our brothers from Quebec today, who, as I think you are aware, have already seen eight pass away in a short time. Here at the Curia, as always, we commend them of the Lord one by one.

Through your newsletters, or by bits of information from other sources, we've become aware of the many charity activities that the friars have managed to start in various places, where more than anything else the illness has created conditions of hardship and hunger for the poor. With remarkable creativity, many of us have also managed to activate different modes of digital communication, which have certainly reached many people in various ways and have brought so much consolation. I can only rejoice with you and bless your work.

Now in Italy and in Europe, conditions are rapidly improving and we see a clear path toward being able to resume getting around freely and safely again. This is not yet the case for vast parts of the world, indeed, as you well know, for entire continents. We will still have to wait to understand how we will need to adapt in these unusual circumstances. But with the General Council, we have together already tried to figure out some working strategies.

As for the numerous postponed chapters, each councilor is responsible for considering the state of affairs within the various circumscriptions of his region:

- it is first of all necessary to determine whether it's possible to come up with alternative dates for the celebration of the chapters that fall within a reasonable timeframe and are fundamentally consistent with the possibilities offered by our Constitutions (six months

postponement). If this can be done, taking into account the local state of affairs, then the chapters will be celebrated, in general, under the presidency of the Councilor of that region or of a specially delegated friar.

- case by case, the model being proposed by some provincials might also be considered: if reasonable times cannot be determined for the celebration of an entire Chapter, it might be easier to gather the capitulars for a single day for the triennial reports and the elections of the new superiors, and then postpone to a subsequent extraordinary chapter the discussion of the other issues affecting the Province. It is certainly a viable track, although not for everyone.
- We are already receiving various requests because of the extraordinary situations, that new superiors are appointed in accordance with No. 133 of the Constitutions. I would like to leave this as the last possible resort, although I am well aware that in some cases it is already presenting itself, all things considered, as the only convenient and possible option in order for life in the fraternity to continue serenely.

I would therefore ask you to keep in constant dialogue with your General Councilors, who are each disposed to promptly informing myself and the General Council at large of any necessary decisions. Lastly, I remind you that the Provincial Ministers can act in the same regard towards the various custodies under their care, after first informing me personally.

Although it's still several months away, given the situation we are currently enduring, we decided it prudent to postpone the pan-American meeting in Panama, scheduled for early October. While indeed some individual circumscriptions might find it easier to start the meeting earlier, it does not seem that it would be suitable to organize a meeting at the continental level, not knowing what the situation will be like among so diverse and so vast a domain by that time. More precise information will be given to you by the appropriate preparation commissions. But let me express my praise for the intense and extensive work that has been achieved so far. It will not be lost; on the contrary, it will be valued even more when we can finally get together. Thanks to all the friars for their active participation!

These strange times will pass for everyone. And if we've succeeded in entrusting with greater faith our own selves, our journey and our good works to the provident hands of the Lord, we will all without exception find an unexpectedly beneficial result. I wish this for everyone, in particular for those who are still in the eye of the storm and in a spirit of hope are awaiting better days; for them and especially for all those people who suffer.

And, as is my privilege, I heartily bless you all.

Rome, 31 May 2020  
Solemnity of Pentecost



Br. Roberto Genuin  
General Minister OFM Cap.