

Prot. N. 00568/22

Rome, 11 August 2022
Feast of St. Clare

To the Presidents of the Conferences
To Ministers Provincial, Custodes and Delegates
To all the Friars of Europe

Dear Brothers,

I imagine for many, that this is a suitable time to taking a period of rest and recovery of strength. My wish is for all of you to experience it well and in companionship with the Lord.

At the same time, I think it is important to follow up on the journey we have made so far together, starting with the letter *“I dream of a Europe that is a family and a community. I dream of a Europe that is inclusive and generous”* of November 2020 (Prot. N. 00844/20).

This was followed by several online discussions (continually involving aspects of formation); the Czestochowa meeting of October 11-16, 2021; the *“Letter to the Brothers of Europe”* of December 2021 (Prot. No. 00907/21) and the meetings with the ministers in Rome on March 14-15 and June 25, 2022; also there were the two convocations in Rome at the College of St. Lawrence of Brindisi in July 2018 and 2022 for the post-novices and Capuchin students of Europe.

The commitment to sharing has certainly been rich and fruitful, much broader than what is strictly required by the Constitutions, and now it allows us to draw some lines, in view of the resumption of activities after the summer break and to be able to plan coherently for the future.

I. THE CONFERENCES

In view of the valuable discernment we have made together, and in view of the realities we are facing and the future that lies ahead, the agenda we will implement during 2023 is to replace the current four Conferences of Europe with two: the Mediterranean Conference and the Northeastern European Conference.

The current Provinces¹ of Catalonia, Croatia, France, the Italian provinces, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia, and Spain; the Custodies of Romania, Ticino, and the Near East (Lebanon and Syria); the Delegations of Albania, Greece, and Turkey; and the presences of Algeria and Jerusalem will all be part of the Mediterranean Conference.

¹ In the near future there will be more 'unification of provinces' so the composition of the Conferences will be seeing some adjustments.

The current Provinces of Austria-South Tyrol, Belgium, Krakow, Germany, Ireland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Switzerland, Warsaw; the Custodies of Belarus, Ukraine; the Delegations of Bulgaria, Great Britain, Holland, Sweden, Hungary; and the presences in Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Georgia, and Russia will be part of the Northeastern European Conference.

I think it is important to take note of the above, so that the ministers can begin meeting right away. I therefore urge all of you to coordinate with the General Councilors and plan your future meetings within the new framework of these two conferences. Some of the current conferences have already gotten their schedules set in place, which could perhaps be a useful advantage.

II. FORMATION PROGRAMS

Having waited purposely in order to allow for enough time for as many as possible to give their input, we now find ourselves pressed from all sides for our direction on how to conduct the formation programs. Here, then, is a general set of guidelines that emerged from our meetings along with some input shared by the General Council.

A. *Mediterranean Conference*

1. From next year, 2023, there will be only two novitiates, taking advantage of the formation settings already in existence in Italy (two candidates from Portugal are already set to begin novitiate in Morano Calabro in September of 2022). It will be the task of the ministers to seek out the most appropriate facilities starting with those that already exist. The general leadership of the Order limits itself to pointing out the opportunity of considering our location in Camerino, with all its significance.
2. It is the commitment of the ministers concerned to ensure that the candidates have as sufficient a language preparation as possible prior to novitiate, so that their experience can be entirely fruitful.
3. The issue of postulancy will also have to be addressed soon. There is no doubt that it would be favorable for the candidates if they have already shared in a common postulancy as well, allowing them to integrate before the start of novitiate (this has been the experience of those who have already been sending their candidates to the Italian formation programs for several years). There are currently three locations for postulancy in Italy, but given the small number of candidates, perhaps it is reasonable to consider activating only two in the years to come.
4. The post-novitiate also plays an absolutely crucial role in the quality of formation and must have the assurance of an effective continuity of formation fraternities. Taking into account the actual numbers of professed, there is no immediate need to reduce locations, and the matter can be addressed with further exploration and discussion. Underlying everything must be the criteria of the *Ratio Formationis*.

5. **It is utterly important that all ministers identify brothers who are suitable and make them available to participate in the formation fraternities and/or on the formation team. The goal is to make the formation fraternities truly international for the good of the formandi and for a richer formation program.**
6. The circumscriptions that are members of the Northeastern Conference who are already involved with formation programs in Italy, may continue to avail them, without prejudice to the criteria of collaboration and not delegation.

B. *Northeastern European Conference*

1. Considering the diverse reality of the Conference, the ministers are invited to explore the issue of formation programs together, with a view toward a more collaborative future.
2. The General Council suggests also considering the possibility of setting up an English language formation program, which would become an asset for all of Europe.

So, here it is brothers! I hope that this information can help you plan well for the future of our beloved Europe and of the friars therein who bear witness to God's love.

Of course, there are some major challenges we will have to face, but I am sure that if we all work together for the same objectives, without yielding to our inhibitions but dealing with each other openly, then we will continue to find ways – as we have been striving to do even until now – to respond well to the changing needs of our circumscriptions and the needs of our brothers in initial formation.

Above all, we ask for the protection of our Seraphic Father St. Francis, whose inspiration, which he received from God is the same engine that drives us to be confidently active today.

With my blessing,


Br. Roberto Genuin
General Minister OFMCap