



Letter of the General Minister  
fra Mauro Jöhri OFM Cap

**PROGRAMMATIC LETTER  
2012-2018**

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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](http://www.ofmcap.org)

Ufficio delle Comunicazioni OFMCap

[info@ofmcap.org](mailto:info@ofmcap.org)

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*Dear Brothers,*

*“May the Lord give you peace!”*

It has been four months since the end of the General Chapter and now it is time to share with you what the new General Definitory intends to put in place for the animation of the Order in the new sexennium, 2012-2018. Because of the work on the Constitutions and Ordinances, the General Chapter was a challenging moment for all who participated. Being together for a good five weeks, working intensely above all on the texts, is certainly no small thing. They were weeks rich with fraternity! Let us give praise to God for having given us this gift! At the end of the General Chapter, the newly elected General Definitors, eight of nine, returned to their Circumscriptions for a time to prepare for their definitive move to Rome. This allowed us to have the first two weeks of Definitory meetings at the beginning of November and another two weeks after the feast of the Epiphany. These meetings also allowed us to get to know each other better and to seek together what we intend to propose to the Order for the next six years.

1. We consider paramount the convocation of a **Plenary Council of the Order** (PCO VIII) which will have the theme *“the grace of working”* (*Later Rule*, V). The Plenary Council will first of all foster open and constructive dialogue around work as a central value of our life. Perhaps some will find the theme banal, but we are convinced that it is something that regards all of the friars and that it is also very timely. It will be the first Plenary Council of the Order that will reflect on this aspect of our life. In practical terms, we will ask ourselves about manual work, the work of study, the many activities carried out by the friars, pastoral work, and even simple housework. We also believe that this theme should be addressed by placing it in relation with other aspects of our life: work as a source of support; work and fraternal life; work and the life of prayer; work and the sense of belonging; work and the temptation to individualism. These are some of the areas that we should explore as we approach this theme. Stopping to reflect will allow us to bring attention to one of the vital aspects of our fraternal life. Not in the least it will be an opportunity to find a new, common impetus to be responsible to each other in the living of poverty. After the usual time of preparation, the celebration of the Plenary Council of the Order will follow, which we foresee for 2015 in a place that we will determine in due time. A letter will be sent soon to indicate with greater detail the precise dates and ways to prepare ourselves to celebrate the VIII Plenary Council of the Order.

2. With the end of the General Chapter, the Synod of Bishops on the **New Evangelization and the Transmission of the Faith** began. By participating in the Synod I learned how to approach a topic which is of interest to the Churches of all the continents. While there are, on the one hand, those who are turning away from the faith, on the other hand there are also those who have recently received the faith and who realize the necessity of a strong commitment to ensure that the gospel message goes deep. We also recognize that one cannot evangelize without also letting himself be evangelized. Only a Church in an ongoing state of conversion will be able to offer a credible witness. Clearly this goes also for us Capuchin Friars! Therefore we ask all the Circumscriptions of the Order to ask themselves in what way

they can listen anew to the Good News and be transformed by it. Listening in common to the Word of God should become a common practice in all of our fraternities in their path of ongoing conversion.

3. We hope to be able to present soon the text of the **Constitutions** discussed and enriched by the last General Chapter. In these days we will present it to the Holy See so that it might be confirmed. We will then commit ourselves to providing official translations in the different languages and confirmed by the General Minister. After the approval of the Holy See begins the important work of making the new text of the Constitutions and the Ordinances of the General Chapters known and valued by the friars.

#### 4. **The decisions of the General Chapter**

4.1 The stance adopted by the Chapter for ensuring the “Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults” in our ministries and places waits to be taken up again and further specified before it is made known to all the friars of the Order, taking particular account of the various aspects of initial and ongoing formation.

4.2 The General Chapter preferred to speak of “Guidelines for Fraternal Collaboration between Circumscriptions” rather than “Solidarity of Personnel” and adopted a text with many practical guidelines in this regard. It is our strong desire that collaborations between Circumscriptions continue and, at the same time, be intensified. This will characterize our presences in a new and significant way and overcome the evil of provincialism.

4.3 The text of the Recommendations on “Our Fraternal Identity” reaffirms an issue that has been of great concern for a long time. We do not want it to be forgotten. However, while we strive to submit in due time to the request made to competent Authority in accordance with the General Ministers of the First Order and of the TOR, on the other hand we cannot dispense with animating the Order such that it truly adheres to its fraternal identity and lives it serenely.

5. The General Secretariat of Formation, assisted by the International Formation Council, will be asked to develop a draft of a “**Ratio Formationis Ordinis**”, which, once studied by the General Definitory, will be presented to the Conferences of the Order so that they can present their observations and advance proposals for arriving at a shared draft and broad consensus.

6. Fifteen years after the institution of the Office of **International Economic Solidarity**, we believe it opportune to look again at the Statute. The developments that the Order has seen in these years, the numerical diminishment of many Circumscriptions of the northern hemisphere and the strong increase in those of the south, are a call to reflect and find a new structure to give to the Office. International Economic Solidarity is a vital aspect of the Order but must be first of all a sign of sharing. In this way the connections and the relationships will be truly fraternal.

7. We intend to continue to gather the **New Ministers** at Rome for a week of introduction to their service and to get to know the General Curia and its services and offices. For various reasons, we believe that the most opportune time is in the month of June. We have decided, however, not to continue the custom of the meetings *in loco* of the whole General Definitory with the individual Conferences. We believe it more valuable to intensify the meetings with the Presidents of the Conferences, and we have decided to plan three of them in the sexennium, that the General Minister may also be present in the meetings of the individual Conferences. In a moment of economic crisis, such as the current moment, it seems only fair to cut our spending.

8. The last sexennium saw the new beginning of the house in Jerusalem and, little by little, thanks to the hard work of the local fraternity, it begins to be visited by groups of friars of the Order for moments of biblical formation. We commit ourselves to increase the use of the house by the friars, seeking to also offer opportunities for formation. The challenges before us are basically two: how to make use of those parts of the property that are not already renovated and how to build the economic fund that allows the offer of courses of formation to be extended to all the friars of the Order, especially those brothers who belong to those Circumscriptions that are not prepared for the expense of a stay in Jerusalem.

9. In the last sexennium **Economic Visitations** were carried out in all the Circumscriptions of Italy and in various Spanish-speaking Circumscriptions of Central and South America. We intend to continue this practice, arranging visitations for the Circumscriptions of those Conferences not yet involved in this type of exercise. This will entail the preparation of a certain number of friars to be ready to assume the responsibility of such a service.

10. In these times of economic crisis the many soup kitchens of our friaries see a notably increased turnout. In addition to the soup kitchens there are many other charitable activities promoted by the Circumscriptions or by individual friars. We aren't as aware of these good works as we should be. We will call upon the Office of **Justice, Peace, and the Safeguarding of Creation** to make a proper census in order to have in hand a map of what we are already doing and to see how to improve our service.

11. During the General Chapter, Br. José Angel Echeverria, coordinator of the **Lexicon Cappuccinum Project**, personally contacted many of the Ministers who had done little or nothing in providing the forms for their Circumscriptions in order to provide the new edition of this important work, first published in 1951. We hope that the appeal does not come to nothing. It is our firm intention to bring this work to a conclusion during this newly begun sexennium and to do it we need a greater effort on the part of all.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this letter, the new General Definitory has begun its service to the Order aware of being called to keep alive "the flame of our charism" as Capuchin Franciscans. We want to be walking next to each of you, dear brothers!

During these first months of the new sexennium, we have also begun to renew the fraternity of the General Curia, allowing the brothers who have offered their service for many years to return to their Circumscriptions, and, at the same time, letting other brothers have the experience of an international fraternity at the service of the Order.

A new sexennium represents a unique opportunity for all of us to renew ourselves and begin again with new momentum. Dear brothers, let us not fail to grasp this beautiful opportunity.

Certain of the protection of the Immaculate Virgin, Patroness of the Order, and of the benevolent gaze of our Seraphic Father St. Francis and of all the Saints and Blesseds of the Order, let us continue, peacefully and confidently, on our way of consecration.

To all of you I send my fraternal greeting!

Br. Mauro Jöhri  
General Minister OFMCap

Rome, February 2, 2013  
Feast of the Presentation of the Lord



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