



the image of the Godhead

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“...transform your entire being into the
image of the Godhead itself ...”
(III Letter to Agnes of Prague)

“Those who draw near to God do not withdraw
from people, but rather become truly close to
them” (Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 42)

To the Capuchin Poor Clare Sisters,

1.1 The *International Meeting of the Presidents of the Federations of Capuchin Poor Clare Sisters* was held in Mexico City at our Monastery of St. Veronica Giuliani, 15 - 23 May 2006. With this letter I also send you the summary of the discussions and the resolutions adopted at the conclusion of the meeting. I am grateful for this occasion to express my deep appreciation and admiration for the witness to prayer, simplicity and sisterhood which I experienced in Mexico City and in the many monasteries which I have visited during the past twelve years. At the same time, I wish to reflect with you on the challenge of living our common Franciscan charism in the world today.

Living as brothers and sisters
A Life Patterned on the Holy Trinity

2.1 The writings of St. Francis are filled with the mystery of the Holy Trinity. The *Earlier Rule* (Rnb) begins “*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*” (ER, Prologue, 1) and ends, “*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit*” (ER, XXIV, 5). Announcing his purpose in writing the *Letter to the Faithful*, St. Francis says:

“I decided to offer you ... the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Word of the Father, and the words of the Holy Spirit, which are spirit and life” (2LtF,3).

His writings overflow with praise for the Holy Trinity:

“*Let all of us truly and humbly believe, bold in our heart and love, honor, adore, serve, praise and bless, glory and exalt, magnify and give thanks to the Most High and Supreme Eternal God Trinity and Unity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Creator of all, Savior of all who believe and hope in Him, and love Him, Who without beginning and end, is unchangeable, ineffable, incomprehensible, unfathomable, blessed, praiseworthy, glorious, exalted, sublime, most high, gentle, loveable, delightful, and totally desirable above all else and forever*” (ER, XXIII, 11).

2.2 Francis experienced the Holy Trinity as “*Relationship of Unspeakable Love*” revealed to us in the mystery of the incarnation:

“*The most high Father made known from heaven through his holy angel Gabriel this Word of the Father...in the womb of the holy and glorious Virgin Mary, from whose womb he received the flesh of our humanity and frailty.*” (2LtF, 4)

We have been drawn into this “*Relationship of Unspeakable Love*”:

“*O how glorious and holy and great to have a Father in heaven! O how holy, consoling, beautiful and wonderful to have such a Spouse! O how holy and how loving, gratifying, humbling, peace-giving, sweet, worthy of love, and above all things desirable it is to have such a Brother and such a Son: Our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (2LtF, 54 - 56).

2.3 Francis understood with amazing intuition the words of Jesus, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me*” (John 14:6). He set out to follow Jesus, not only in what He did, but, especially, in the relationship which Jesus has with His Father. Francis understood that in Jesus, we are all sons and daughters of the Father. Imitating His relationship with the Father, we too are drawn into the “Relationship of Unspeakable Love.” Clare understood this with equal clarity and tells Agnes: “*Gaze, consider, contemplate, desiring to imitate your Spouse*” (II Letter to Agnes of Prague).

2.4 The same spiritual clarity caused Francis to establish his Order as a fraternity. The Seventh Plenary Council states: “*fraternal evangelical life draws us into the intimate relationship of the Trinity*” (CPOVII, 1c). Francis chose fraternity, a life in relationship as brothers and sisters, because our Trinitarian God is relational by nature. “*God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them*” (Gen. 1:27) We were not created in the image of a solitary, isolated and autonomous God, but a personal, relational and Trinitarian God, who is Father, Son and Spirit. Therefore, we image God only insofar as we live in relationship. Fraternity was the foundational experience of his conversion: “*After the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what I had to do...*” (Test.14). Fraternity also became his mission:

“Francis embraced the plan of God for his creatures as a family of sisters and brothers: brother Sun, sister moon, etc. (see *CtC*). He never referred to himself simply as “Francis” but always as “Brother Francis.” “Brother” revealed the relationship with every creature to which God called him. “Brother” also revealed his mission to heal relationships through submissive humility” (CPOVII, 1c).

In fact, Francis uses the title “brother” more often (306 times) than any other title except “Lord” (410 times).

2.5 Fraternity was his gift to the Church, his response to the invitation of the Crucified, “*Go repair my church ...*.” The Vatican Council gives the explanation telling us that the Most Holy Trinity is the “fraternity” which creates Church: “The universal church is seen to be a people brought into unity from the unity of

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” (LG 4). Francis purified the Church by inviting all to live as sisters and brothers. This is also our mission today. Every monastery must form the church by imaging Trinitarian relationship.

Redeemed relationships

Living according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel

3.1 The Seventh Plenary Council helps us to understand the essential link which Francis perceived between “living as brothers and sisters” and “living according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel” (Test. 14).

“Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home in them” (Jn 14:23). Zeal to keep the word of Jesus inspired Francis to make the Gospel the very foundation of fraternal life (*RnB I 1; RB I 1*). **Established on fidelity to the Gospel, fraternal evangelical life draws us into the intimate relationship of the Trinity.**” (CPOVII, 1c)

“Living according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel” (Test. 14), purifies, “redeems”, our relationships and creates on earth relationships patterned on the Holy Trinity, without domination, without subordination ... a unity of love. St. Francis indicates this at the end of the Letter to All the Faithful, “*I ... beg and implore you in the love that is God, to receive, to put into practice, and to observe, as you should, these words and the others of our Lord Jesus Christ with humility and love*” (2LtF, 87).

3.2 Francis discovered the “marrow”, the substance of the gospel in the poverty and the humility of God. In his “Praises of God” Francis exclaims, “*You are humility!*” (PrsG, 4). The turning of the Father toward the Son is the Father’s humility. Francis had a deep appreciation of this mystery: The “**Word of the Father... received the flesh of our humanity and frailty.**” (2LtF, 4) Humility is not a quality of God, it is the essence of God as love. According to St. Bonaventure, the one and same embrace of the Father which reaches out to the Son, reaches out to us as well. He tells us that in the Incarnation, “God humbly bends down to lift the dust of our nature into unity with his own person”. God bends low

to embrace all of creation in humility. In the Franciscan view, the incarnation occurred not because of sin, but because of the overflowing, abundant and humble love of God.

3.3 Humility reaches out to embrace the other. Humility expresses the relational nature of God. Humility, likewise, expresses the relational nature of our humanity. To be humble is to glory in the fact that we were created in love and redeemed through love in order to have a loving relationship with the Triune God who created and redeemed us and with all creatures with whom we share life. To be humble is to love like God.

3.4 To live in fraternity after the manner of the Holy Gospel is held in common by all Franciscans. This manner of living makes us present among men and women to serve them in humility. This causes us to place at the heart of everything we do the contemplation of Him, the Lord Jesus, who out of love for humanity came among us and made His home among us, in order to create a new way of living together.

Poverty and contemplation

4.1 *“Look, I say, at the poverty of Him who was placed in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes. O marvellous humility, o astonishing poverty! The King of Angels, the Lord of heaven and earth, is laid in a manger”* (IV Letter to Agnes of Prague).

St. Clare saw the vital connection between poverty and prayer/contemplation. Clare stands in amazement at God’s action in making Himself poor and humble enough to lie in a stable, but even more so at the humility of the *Word made flesh*. She invites her sisters to throw open the horizon of their prayer, simply and purely, with love as their only motive. Once again, she writes to Agnes of Prague:

“Most noble queen, gaze, consider, contemplate your Spouse who, though more beautiful than the children of men, became, for your salvation, the lowest of men, was despised, struck and scourged untold times throughout his entire body and then died amid the suffering of the cross.
Gaze, consider, contemplate, desiring to

imitate your Spouse”

(II Letter to Agnes of Prague).

“Gaze, consider, contemplate, desiring to imitate ...”. These words express the “how” of prayer, which is not just asking God for something or begging Him or praising Him; it means seeing things with the very eyes of God. Contemplative prayer places us in the same space as God and drives us out to do as God did! When Francis contemplated Jesus, he set out to imitate the relationship which Jesus had with His Father. He set out to imitate in humility the relationship of service which Jesus had with His brothers and sisters. Contemplate Him in the mystery of the cross! In the cross, Humble Love reaches out to embrace us even in the depths of our sinfulness, alienation and broken relationships. The cross is the infallible sign planted in history which indicates that no expression of our humanity is alien to or separated from God’s redeeming love.

4.2 How does God see and contemplate? How does God act? How (to follow Francis and Clare) does He who is Most High, All-powerful, glorious, Most Holy and supreme God, look at mankind and His creation? By bending low to embrace us in the **poverty of the Incarnation**, in the flesh of Jesus Christ. God enters man’s space, the space of the finite, so that what is Infinite might become accessible, visible and enjoyable. This is a Love that is not given as reward, or in exchange for something else, but is a free gift:

“Were a man to offer all his family wealth to buy love, contempt is all that he would gain” (Song of Songs, 8,7)

How do we see and contemplate:

*“Place your mind before the mirror of eternity!
Place your soul in the brilliance of glory!
Place your heart in the figure of the divine substance,
and, through contemplation,
transform your entire being into the image of the Godhead itself ...
May you totally love Him, who gave Himself totally for your love”* (III Letter to Agnes of Prague).

4.3 In her following of Francis, Clare intuitively that in order to see Love at work, to recognise what God does for all people, it is necessary to

live in poverty. **God has made Himself poor!** Entering into God-space, seeing as He sees, means entering into the poverty assumed by Christ, and leads to new relationships marked by a single interest, namely, the good of the other.

Pope Benedict XVI affirms in the Encyclical *Deus Caritas est*: “Only if I serve my neighbour can my eyes be opened to what God does for me and how much he loves me”. Prayer alone, or action alone, do not create God-space, the space where the God of Jesus Christ dwells. In prayer I understand what love of others is, and in action for others I understand more deeply the love of God for me.

4.4 We can see the reciprocity between the contemplation of Christ and the contemplation of the poor in the privilege of poverty which Pope Gregory IX granted Clare and her sisters in written form on 17 September, 1228. The poverty of the Poor Clares means *living with nothing of one's own*. It implies having no free disposal even over one's own life, except in the firm decision to follow Christ, to imitate Him in His obedience and in His poverty, expressed in the mysteries of the Incarnation, the Cross and the Eucharist.

4.5 The privilege of poverty also changed, in a radical manner, the relationship of the Poor Clares with the people around their monastery. Just as Francis contemplated the Crucified One in the broken body of the leper, so Clare and her sisters contemplated the image of the poor and humble Christ in the poor surrounding their monastery. Clare and her sisters insisted on the “privilege of poverty” that excluded the sisters from any domination over tenants and servants who were an essential part of the economy of every other medieval monastery of women. Not only that, Clare made her sisters very survival dependent on the same poor people. Unlike the brothers who followed Francis, the sisters who followed Clare could not exit from their cloister to beg. Their total dependence on Divine Providence was expressed in a total dependence on the poor! This radical choice was at the heart of her long spiritual struggle with Cardinal Ugolino.

4.6 Clare discovered the poverty of a God who had no power, not even a place in which to be born. She discovered a God who died

outside the city wall, on a high place, a vantage point that enabled him to see and be seen and to embrace all in humble forgiving love. She discovered a God whose only power is love, and who changes the way in which people relate.

The Poor Clare Gift to the Order and the World

5.1 During the meeting in Mexico City, attention was drawn to the Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* which the Holy Father wrote at the conclusion of the Jubilee Year of 2000. NMI had as its purpose to launch a reflection throughout the Church on “what the Spirit has been saying to the People of God...from the Second Vatican Council to the Great Jubilee,” and to offer “the contribution of [his] Petrine ministry, so that the Church may shine ever more brightly in the variety of her gifts” (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 3). It was noted that for our Order, the newness of *Novo Millennio Ineunte* is found in the Pope's discussion of a **spirituality of communion**:

“We need to promote a spirituality of communion, making it the guiding principle of education wherever individuals and Christians are formed. ...A spirituality of communion indicates, above all, the heart's contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us” (NMI, 43).

The Pope saw this “spirituality of communion” as the essential link between the identity of the Church as a communion of love, and the mission of the Church as “sign and instrument...of the unity of the human family.”

5.2 The traditional Capuchin spirituality of both the First and Second Order is an **ascetical** spirituality, a spirituality of personal perfection. The austere simplicity of our poverty, our spirit of penance, dedication to meditation are essential if we wish to configure our lives on the poor and humble Christ. However, Pope John Paul II indicates that this alone does not suffice. Our poverty, humility and contemplative prayer must redeem and purify our human relationships as well: “the heart's contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers

and sisters around us (NMI, 43). The Sixth and Seventh Plenary Councils have opened our eyes to the power of evangelical poverty and minority to transform and redeem relationships among ourselves, within the church and in the world. It is important that the Second Order make its unique contribution to this Franciscan spirituality of communion.

5.3 The secular world in which we live believes that its own technologies contain within themselves all that is necessary for human progress and liberation. It proclaims that own technologies, products of our human genius, contain within themselves all that is necessary for a complete human life. We ourselves are omnipotent, we do not need God. There is an element of truth in the omnipotence of our human technologies because they obviously can do much. However, these technologies fail in the face of human greed and domination. The technologies are used for the benefit of the few against the good of the many. Technologies can multiply the loaves and fishes, but they cannot touch the heart of the young boy who made the miracle possible by offering all he had (cf. John 6:9)! Our secular world has become a world of alienation, isolation and broken relationships.

Every Poor Clare Monastery is an eloquent reminder to our world that poverty and contemplation transform relationships:

*“Place your mind before the mirror of eternity!
Place your soul in the brilliance of glory!
Place your heart in the figure of the divine substance,
and, through contemplation,
transform your entire being into the image of the
Godhead itself ...
May you totally love Him, who gave Himself totally
for your love. (III Letter to Agnes of Prague).*

Such a monastery is a haven of healing and peace.

5.4 The witness of the Poor Clares is important to the brothers of the First Order. In the Sixth and Seventh Plenary Councils we have discovered that poverty and minority build communion in the Church and in the world. The writings of Sister Clare carry a vital warning to the brothers: *“Gaze, consider, contemplate, desiring to imitate your Spouse ...”*. When “imitate” is cut off from gaze ... consider ... contemplate, it is reduced to social

activism. The Sixth Plenary Council (prop. 17) warned against such activism. Activism is more than an excessive dedication to work. Activism causes us to live in such a superficial and frantic manner that it renders us incapable of reflection and equally incapable of experiencing the depth of our own humanity. Unless the reflections of the Sixth and Seventh Plenary Councils are rooted in contemplation, they will lose their force to renew relationships and to build the Church. The Poor Clare dedication to prayer stands as a constant reminder to the brothers that one cannot truly imitate unless one also is dedicated to gaze, consider and contemplate!

5.5 Quoting Pope Benedict once more, we can say of Clare, too, that “Those who draw near to God do not withdraw from people, but rather become truly close to them” (Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 42). The spiritual vitality of Clare reached beyond the cloister walls of San Damiano to touch the life of Agnes and her sisters in Prague and to transform the relationship of her sisters with the poor of Umbria. St. Clare, enclosed in the God-space of her cloister, attracted men and women who recognised that her prayer had but a single power, that of love, the only power that creates life. May the meeting in Mexico City serve to inaugurate a prayerful reflection in your monasteries and your federations which will allow the spirit of St. Clare to give new life to her charism in your monasteries so that you, in turn, may give new life to the Church.

Your brother,

br. John Corriveau
General Minister, OFMCap.

11 August 2006
Feast of St. Clare

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL MEETING OF THE MOTHERS PRESIDENTS OF THE FEDERATIONS OF THE MONASTERIES OF THE CAPUCHIN POOR CLARES

Cuautitlán Izcalli, Mexico, May 15-23 2006

SYNTHESIS OF THE GROUP WORK

FIRST THEME

“How are we living our charism as contemplatives in today’s world?”

Our real task is to transmit the charism of the Capuchin Poor Clares to future generations and to work so that the charism can continue to thrive in the countries where we are located.

Work in the European context is not easy. The young sisters that enter have to be concerned with the cleaning of the house because there are many sisters of advanced age and for this reason there is no time to find a paying job.

Furthermore given that in many monasteries the sisters are an only child with parents that are elderly or sick, we ask ourselves about how to find a solution to these problems: Should we bring the parents to the monastery? Or should the sister leave to take care of their parents? Or should we leave the parents to be cared for by a religious congregation whose ministry is the care of the elderly? Or build a house where they can be received and taken care of by some religious?

SECOND THEME

“The statistics and what they mean.”

Through the statistics we can see the history of the Order, a history that belongs to God who is the Lord of history. All times are moments of grace; every moment is the hour of God.

In this context we can say that the lack of vocations (in some places in the world) should be seen with the eyes of faith and confidence, without feeling desperation, with serenity and abandonment, since this type of death can bring about a new opportunity for life.

To look at the statistics and the decrease in the number of vocations in some countries is an invitation to live our life more authentically, but it doesn’t mean that the charism is disappearing

because we see it flourishing in Asia, Africa and America.

THIRD THEME

“The changes in the focus in spirituality in the last twenty years.”

We focused on the question that the Minister General has asked concerning the needs of the Second Order that ties in with the theme of spirituality.

The vision of the Capuchin brothers and their mission concretely in Mexico has opened new horizons because of their universal vision of inculturation. This has provoked an answer of solidarity on an international level including help by way of personnel.

We ask the First Order to help us to create an international commission for study ,in other languages, various themes and so create a method for greater communion among us.

FOURTH THEME

“The autonomy of the Monasteries”

1. From the experience of the Mothers Presidents of the Federations or representatives of the monasteries, historically when has the idea of the autonomy been nourished according to your personal and lived experience?

Answer: The majority answered that the present moment but following tradition there are areas that must be worked to achieve a greater coherence and openness to what the Second Vatican Council has proposed and preconiliar ideas.

2. In the monasteries under your care, do the ideas of the Council of Trent or the Second Vatican Council prevail?

Answer: In some monasteries of Europe the ideas of Vatican II are followed, however, there are some monasteries that prefer their autonomy and do not respond to the suggestions of the federation. Even though there exist common novitiates and courses, they do not participate.

3. Autonomy is good in itself but sometimes it can be a barrier for taking initiatives that are blatantly urgent: What do you think about this? What is your experience in the federation on this point?

Answer: We see this as true. There are many initiatives that cannot be pursued because some abbesses will not lend sisters who are capable for different activities of the federation. We must learn to walk together in solidarity.

4. Is the idea of autonomy the only reason that some monasteries do not accept the help of the federation or is it that they do not wish to be federated?

Answer: To answer one would have to examine the goals of the federation. Some monasteries accept the federation very well, others no, but we must be respectful of each.

FIFTH THEME *“Unity with Diversity”*

1. What does the spirituality of international communion add to our charism in the Church and the world?

Answer:

- It helps us to reflect on our charism
- It helps us to maintain and support one another
- It helps us to define our mission in the Church and the world
- The Capuchin Poor Clares need to experience a wider universality of their charism. How can we help to create this?

The universal vision of a charism is the way by which the Church can ask us to travel. We should do it by means of a greater communion. This

experience that we are now living is a moment of grace. It will bear fruit but we must make sure that in the future it will bear even greater fruit. Our charism invites us to seek the essential, i.e., that which unites us, that which is central and at the same time that which makes us different because of certain cultural differences.

Adding a sense of family and fraternity it opens us to discover new realities. Permanent formation opens horizons so that we can see that Capuchin life can be lived in different ways and that there can be different but valid ways of formation.

It is hoped that in the future there will be a second international gathering of the Mothers Presidents of Europe.

We invite the Minister General to write a letter to all of the sisters encouraging them to continue to develop these points and that it be sent to all of the communities and serve as a reflexion about these ideas. It would be good to also write a letter to the Capuchin brothers to make them aware of these developments so as to be able to help the sisters to live their way of life.

2. How to prepare formators? What help do you need?

Answer: In Spain they participate in inter-federation projects and there is a federation formator. In Mexico there are courses but there is a need to make the courses less theoretical and be accompanied by the practical.

In South Africa the sisters take advantage of courses for the people in formation. The Minister General has sent a brother from Eritrea to give a course for two weeks since the sisters of South Africa are few and the two monasteries are quite distant one from the other.

3. What can we do to create solidarity with the sisters?

Answer: That the Capuchin brothers maintain brothers as spiritual assistants to the federations and local communities. That the General Assistant of the Order continue to be a general definator so as to maintain a relationship between the brothers and the sisters.

4. What are the requirements due to cultural differences in the behavior of the personnel in different regions of the Order? Does the Clarian charism have a missionary dimension? How do you prepare sisters going to other cultural regions and how to prepare the regions to receive sisters from culturally diverse regions?

Answer: The Mexican sisters who recently went to Garbatella in Italy first lived together for some time and studied the Italian language and customs. We know that the Mother President of Italy has visited them several times to insure that the sisters feel comfortable in their new surroundings and are adapting well.

5. Can the General Curia, through the Office of Statistics, help the Second Order?

Answer: We ask the Minister General to help us to keep the statistics of the sisters as well as of the monasteries.

SIXTH THEME

Economic Solidarity and Solidarity of Personnel

1. Could there be a general chapter or assembly of the sisters every six years?

Answer: We are in agreement that there be an international gathering for the revision of our constitutions. However we cannot speak about a general chapter nor assembly due to the fact that there is no juridical organization on the general level. It would be possible to have an assembly such as this one every two or three years. Also it would be advisable to have a continental meeting of presidents of federations and representatives of monasteries that are not federated in preparation for such an international assembly.

2. Should there be common novitiates and post novitiates with a team of formation personnel?

Answer: In many federations these already do exist.

3. Should the centers of formation be supported

by competent formation personnel?

Answer: It is very necessary, in fact indispensable that these programs have qualified people who can offer their service.

4. Should there be sisters trained to give retreats, workshops on prayer, on scripture, on adoration with the laity, spiritual direction, and as vocation promoters?

Answer: The possibility to prepare sisters for these diverse ministries should exist but not to the extent of preparing a sister for a profession but requiring the support of the entire community. The sister who is involved in these ministries should not do so to the detriment to her commitment to the community.

5. Should sisters be prepared to form teams on a federation or inter-federation level that would be dedicated to vocation promotion not only for one's own monastery but also for the other monasteries? This would imply the possibility of organizing vocation retreats and gatherings.

Answer: There was no time to adequately address this issue.

6. Should there be more knowledge and interchange between monasteries on the level of retreats, festive celebrations, rest days, etc?

Answer: There was no time to address this issue

SEVENTH THEME¹

"The role of the religious assistant"

EIGHTH THEME

"Programs of Formation (initial and permanent) in the Federations"

After this conference we had a discussion about the various points and came to the following conclusions:

- Due to the fact that the novices and junior

¹ See below: *Other Suggestions Raised During the Dialogue.*

sisters have a better formation because of the courses that they have taken, it has been noted that all of the sisters have adapted well to their own monasteries upon returning and can better evaluate the fundamental principles of their community because of a much broader vision of the life..

- The same formation of the sister in formation helps the community with its formation
- In other countries there are plans for an initial and ongoing formation program such as exists in Mexico, Italy, etc.
- According to the Minister General every sister should have training in theology, scripture, liturgy, etc. since this is appropriate for the growth in her vocation.
- Together with the idea of a positive formation program, there is the difficulty of finding professed sisters that are qualified so that there is an urgent need to have sisters who are prepared not only to take charge of initial formation (novitiate and juniorate) but who are also qualified to give classes in theology, scripture, liturgy, etc...

NINTH THEME

“The Cloister”

This was the theme that has been the most discussed. There were contrasting opinions that come together and show the necessity to delve more deeply about the value of the contemplative life and therefore, 1) be able to correctly form the sisters, and 2) be able to concretely state the possibilities according to the realities of different ecclesial contexts.

TENTH THEME

“Is it time to renew the Constitutions of the Capuchin Poor Clares ?”

In the conference that was given there were some changes proposed to some of the texts of the Constitutions. The group indicated the following in the light of these observations:

1) That is would be better to elaborate on the three evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience that are spoken about in article No. 1

2) It was not deemed acceptable to invert articles No. 1 and No. 2 because we are first called to a vocation of perfection within the Church and then only specifically to the Capuchin Poor Clares;

3) It should be specified in article No 2 referring to a religious in perpetual vows of another institute that wished to enter our Order that there should exist a period of probation. Some sisters suggested that the conventual chapter be consulted first so as to give greater responsibility to the community even though the deliberative vote be retained by the abbess and her council.

4) In article No 20 the concepts of human and spiritual maturity of the person in formation should be clarified so as to be verifiable. No 23 of the Constitutions speak about the very same thing.

5) In renewing our Constitutions we should tend to emphasize our original charism

OTHER SUGGESTIONS RAISED DURING THE DIALOGUE

There were many indications of the Minister General, John Corriveau, that all point to a greater understanding of the idea of communion.

After some of the expositions there was no group work but rather an open dialogue. We note the results of this dialogue in the following observations:

- The lack of vocations in some countries is not a sign of a crisis in the Order
- It is necessary to desire the Spirit of the Lord and his holy operation to be
- able to advance toward a theology of communion and minority.
- We need to create bonds of union in domestic programs on a universal scale creating formation themes that would help us to unify criteria.
- We should edit a bulletin like BICI but with

contributions from all of the communities of Capuchin Poor Clares with the help of the First Order

- Through the First Order channel a fund, “St Veronica Giuliani”, for the economic aid to communities that need it. The solicitation of funds would be done through the presidents of the federations. We invite the monasteries with greater resources to contribute to this solidarity fund.
- With regard to the role of the abbess it was considered necessary that she be very firm with sisters whose conduct is questionable and not permit these same to condition all of the community.

GENERAL PROPOSALS:

All these proposals were approved either unanimously or by a very large majority. There were 31 sisters with the right to vote. All were present for the vote on the following proposals:

1. We encourage the creation of Federations where these do not exist.

Approved by a very large majority.

2. We encourage the creation of confederations in places where there are already federations, and that the statutes clearly define the role of the President of the Confederation, including the practical aspects.

Approved by a very large majority.

3. Before the international meeting on communion and solidarity in the Order (cf. Topic 6, l. 1), we propose that an assembly be held in each continent, with the aim of creating communion and solidarity in the Order, and that this assembly decide on the number and cultural representation of those attending the international meeting.

Approved by a very large majority.

4. A revision of the Constitutions in the light of the theology of communion, without forgetting the missionary dimension of the Capuchinesses, and highlighting the ecological aspects of justice and peace as well as ecumenism.

Unanimously approved.

5. The creation of an International Commission for the revision of the Constitutions, composed of one sister from each continent. Each Federation should elect one sister as representative on the International Commission, and, in places where there are no Federations, one representative per country will be elected. The General Assistant will elect sisters from among all those proposed.

Unanimously approved.

6. The BICI newsletter from the General Curia should include news about the sisters, in order to create bonds of communion. We need to become more aware of the need for each monastery to provide news so that the newsletter can be published every 3 or 4 months and sent to each community by ordinary mail.

Unanimously approved.

7. We support the proposal for an international economic fund (the “Santa Verónica” fund). The Federations will determine the amount of the annual contribution. Non-federated monasteries will send 0.50% of their annual income to the international fund each year. If any Federation or monastery wishes to contribute more, this will be gratefully received. The General Assistant undertakes to write a letter to each community to inform and motivate them to contribute to this international economic fund.

Unanimously approved.

8. Resume study of the topic of the enclosure. It is necessary to have clear, practical concepts so that spirituality underlies our living of it.

We should form a commission of experts to examine the juridical and practical concepts of the enclosure. This commission will be appointed by the General Assistant and will be in contact with the international commission dealing with the review of the Constitutions.

Approved by a very large majority.

9. Formation in the spirituality of communion is to be encouraged in the Federations. We advise communities to study the texts of the Plenary Councils and the letters of the General Minister, the Instructions on “Fraternal life in community” and “Starting afresh from Christ”, and that initial and ongoing formation plans be drawn up in countries that do not yet have them (Ratio Formationis).

Unanimously approved.

10. The monasteries should be formed in sound autonomy according to the spirituality of communion.

Unanimously approved.

11. The General Minister should foster communion among the two Orders, assisting the sisters in the implementation of these projects and providing brothers for the spiritual assistance of the monasteries.

Unanimously approved.

