

General Curia of the Capuchin Friars Minor

Via Piemonte, 70 • 00187 ROME, Italy • ☎ +39 06 4620121 • 📠 +39 06 4828267 • www.ofmcap.org

Prot. N. 00535/04

June 29, 2004

To all Major Superiors of the Order

Dear Brother Ministers,

We are living at a time when “updating” and renewal are the order of the day. Urged on by the Church and the Council, we understand why change is necessary, and have revised and updated the Constitutions – a delicate and painstaking task which is still not complete. The speed of change affects cultural realities too, and this makes a new edition of the *Capuchin Lexicon* both necessary and urgent. It needs to be brought up-to-date, corrected and fully attuned to the needs of an Order that is now truly a world-wide presence.

1. Updating the old *Lexicon Cappuccinum*

The 1951 edition of the *Lexicon* was the fruit of over twelve years of work, but the first attempts to launch the project had begun in 1911. Praised by other religious Orders, it has rendered enviable service to our Order for more than half a century. Unique of its kind, it is still consulted by scholars and researchers. But, for some time now, the need has been felt for a thorough revision and updating of the old *Lexicon*, both because of its many errors and omissions – especially of notable religious (cf. e.g. Cassianus da Oberleutasch, *De opere quod “Lexicon Cappuccinorum” inscribitur*, in *Coll. Franc. 23 (1953) 265-284*), and because its bibliography needs to be brought up to date to reflect the enormous ecclesial and institutional events of the last 50 years, which have brought new structures and new jurisdictions into the Order. During that time the Order, as we know, changed profoundly in so many ways – new legislation, beginning with the new Constitutions; and particularly, new jurisdictions, Conferences, provinces, vice-provinces, custodies, local fraternities, delegations, houses of presence, etc. Many a historical friary has been abandoned or closed. There are new Saints, Blesseds and Venerables, bishops and personages who deserve to be remembered by history. Then there is the fact that the old *Lexicon* was written in Latin, a language that is little studied today and almost totally neglected, even in the Order. This is hardly an advantage if the *Lexicon* is to be a modern reference work. Latin, to be sure, would have been ideal for its conciseness, precision and clarity, even in a new edition.

The work of revision will be an enormous task requiring the collaboration of many competent brothers. Because of this, the General Minister and his Definitory decided to institute a small committee to study the question of whether it was appropriate to revise/update the old *Lexicon* (cf. Letter of April 10, 2001; Prot. N. 00286/01).

2. Purpose and aim of the new *Lexicon*

The Committee has already met twice, from 11-13 December, 2003 and 28-30 April, 2004. The updated *Lexicon* will continue to be, first and foremost, a tool to initiate scientific and cultural research. It will also serve the administration of the Order in the general and provincial curias, and promote the unity of the Order in pluriformity, since it will include, in particular, all the renewal that has taken place in the Order since Vatican II up to the present day. It is also intended to raise awareness of our Capuchin history both within and outside the Order, since scholars in the historical and religious fields – in other words,

representatives of the universities and the world of culture - will certainly be among its main users. It will easily be understood how useful the *Lexicon* will be in the area of formation also. In fact, we believe that the brothers themselves will be among the first to consult the new volume, even those in initial formation, for whom it could become a particularly useful resource. These and many other reasons demonstrate the importance of this work, which deserves to be undertaken with decisive courage.

After long discussions it has been decided that the *Lexicon* will appear simultaneously in two editions: Italian and English. Why? Because these are the two most widely known languages in the Order, and certainly the two that are best known by Capuchin scholars. Future editions could well appear in other languages too.

As far as the organisation of the project and the overall responsibility for its structure are concerned – e.g. the list of entries, criteria for inclusion, bibliography etc.- the General Minister and his Definitory will closely follow and supervise the progress of the project and will animate the new *Lexicon* Committee, which will draw on the expertise of the various offices and institutions of the Order to co-ordinate the work. For example, a permanent Office for the Capuchin *Lexicon* is being established at the International College, with a co-ordinator, a full-time executive secretary and an executive vice-secretary. Their task will be to receive the contributions from the Order's various provinces and circumscriptions, from archivists and librarians, provincial secretaries, historians and experts in the various fields, and from the various curial offices. A group of experts will then have to examine the individual entries or groups of entries. An editorial committee will work on the drafting of a definitive text for each entry, examining the length of the text, its lexicon and language, reworking it where necessary with more concise expressions, ensuring consistency with other entries and adding the necessary links and references to other entries. As you can imagine, all of this represents an enormous task, which will take much time, patience and hard-headed application.

The following brothers have been appointed as members of the Capuchin *Lexicon* Office:

- Br. Gandolf Wild (Province of Tanzania, member of the General Curia), Co-ordinator;
 - Br. Roberto Cuvato (Province of Syracuse), Executive Secretary;
 - Br. Paul Hanbridge (Province of Australia), Executive Vice-Secretary.
- The Office will begin work in September of this year.

The Capuchin *Lexicon* Office will be based at the International College and can be contacted at the following addresses and numbers:

Ufficio *Lexicon* Cappuccinum, C.P. 18382 – G.R.A. Km 65.050, 00163 Roma – Italy
Email: lexicon@ofmcap.org

Telephone:
Fax:

3. The need for collaboration

This project will require many years of hard work. It is right, therefore, that all the circumscriptions of the Order should be ready to work with the Committee and the Office for the *Lexicon*. **With this letter I am strongly urging all the brothers to give their co-operation, which is indispensable if the work of updating the *Lexicon* is to be completed. And so, each province and circumscription will need to inform the *Lexicon* Office of the**

names of brothers who will be collaborating (archivists, librarians, provincial secretaries, and other capable and available brothers), plus the name of one brother (who can be one of those previously mentioned) to act as a link with the secretary of the Lexicon Office. These names should be accompanied by the respective addresses, and any telephone and fax numbers and email addresses.

We ask you to send this preliminary information by September 20, 2004.

I ask the provincial and vice-provincial ministers, and the various circumscriptions of the Order, including mission areas, to assist and support this collaboration, without which a new, updated edition of the Capuchin Lexicon will never see the light of day.

We entrust this work to Mary Immaculate, Patron of our Order, so that this new record of the Order's history and life may flourish in the renewed unity of charity and contribute to the spiritual and cultural renewal of our entire brotherhood.

General Minister
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