

EMBODYING AND
STRENGTHENING THE VALUES
OF OUR CHARISM

THE RATIO FORMATIONIS ORDINIS

ROME, DECEMBER 8, 2019

SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF
THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY PATRONESS OF THE ORDER

Prot. N° 01066/19

DEAR BROTHERS, MAY THE LORD GIVE YOU PEACE!

It is a great pleasure for me to anticipate the publication of the *Ratio Formationis* by sharing with you a few words about it.

1. There are two passages in the Gospel which, if placed side by side, explain perfectly what constitutes the Incarnation: John 1:14 and Mt 25:31-36. It's much like a diptych, with its two panels complementing one another. In the Prologue of the fourth Gospel, it says that the Logos became flesh and set up his tent among

us.¹ And Matthew, in a scene which inevitably challenges the reader, makes it clear what kind of flesh the Logos has chosen: that of the hungry, the thirsty, the migrant, the naked, the sick, and the prisoner.² The Spirit reveals to us through these two texts that the human response to the Incarnation is manifested in the way that we tend to the weakest part of humanity.

2. As Christ, the Incarnate *Word of the Father*, becomes present in the human persons we

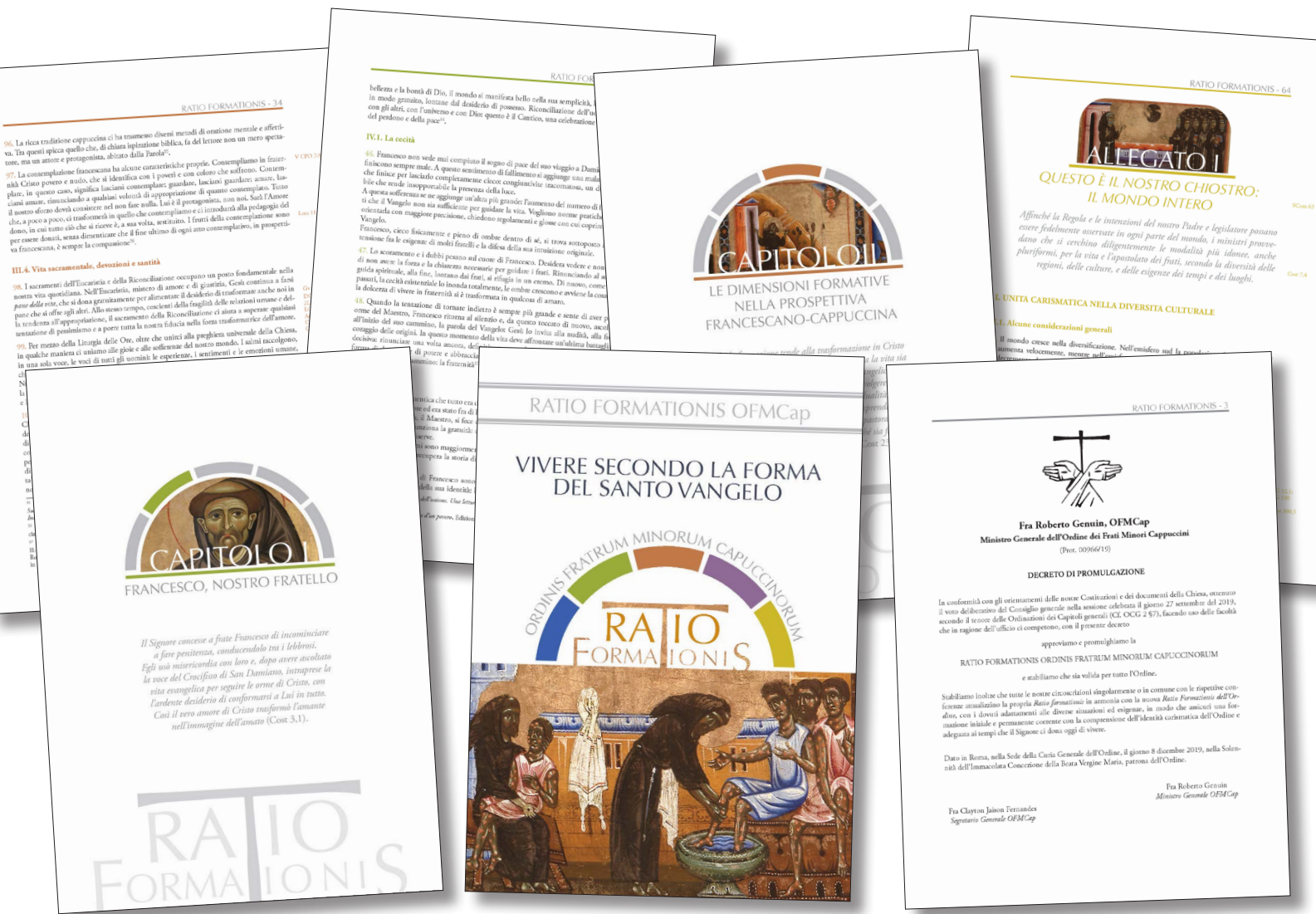
¹ "And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth."

² ³¹When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, ³²and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. ³⁴Then the king will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me."



encounter in our lives, so it is up to us to embody in our everyday lives the values that we share and that characterize our charism as lesser brothers. We must be attentive to finding different expressions for these common values in response to the diverse situations and cultures in which we find ourselves. Our challenge is to be faithful witnesses of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in different cultural contexts.

3. We give thanks to God, because, as I announced in my letter at the beginning of the current sexennium, the official text of the *Ratio* is ready and can be published. We must consider this a grace. Therefore, it follows, according to the principles of Franciscan spirituality, that we must return it, that is, hand it over to others without reserving anything for ourselves. We are called to be personally attentive to the continual building of our fraternal identity wherever we are. Thinking about how St. Francis describes the true friar minor (FF 1782; EP 85), I recall the faces of so many brothers who even today live our unique identity in the most diverse places in the world: the joy and hospitality of the African brothers; the proclivity toward meditation and the sensitivity of the brothers in Asia; the attentiveness toward justice and the dignity of the poorest of the poor among the brothers in America; the solidarity, love for freedom and respect for every individual as found among the brothers of Europe. We are all responsible, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to continue forming the beautiful face of our Order.
4. The *Ratio Formationis* has come a long way after much listening, reflection and discernment. The *Instrumentum laboris* was presented, discussed and voted on by the General Chapter, which then proposed some changes and improvements. These were in turn studied and supplemented further by an *ad hoc* commission. During the ordinary session of the General Council last September, after a careful reading of the final text, and with the consent of the entire General Council, the text was officially approved, and then finally supplied with a decree of promulgation on December 8, 2019 – the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.
5. With this promulgation, the *phase of development* and the intensive yet profitable work of deliberation – which absorbed the attention of the Order over the past six years – has finally ended. Now, the new *phase of application* and implementation must begin. Yet first, one needs to know well the text, understand its charismatic character and grasp and appreciate its contents; our *Proprium* is presented with creativity and must serve the whole Order as a valid tool for continuing to reflect upon and grow in awareness of our identity. In this way the *Ratio* constitutes a common frame of reference, which guarantees the transmission of the values that characterize us as Capuchin friars. Meanwhile, it promotes creativity and flexibility when it comes to realizing these things in different cultural contexts, valuing all the good aspects and highlighting those aspects that need further strengthening or even correction. I am convinced that knowing and living the charismatic values of our Order in a more coherent way will help us overcome many of the things that are now concerning us.
6. The current General Council unanimously concurs with all the arguments presented in the *Ratio*; it is primarily their responsibility to promote and oversee its implementation in their respective geographical areas. Now, in accordance with Appendix I, No. 34, the development of a protocol that effectively guides the implementation/application of the *Ratio* must be taken into account. First of all, the friars responsible for overseeing implementation at the level of Conference and Circumscription should be properly trained, and then the medium- and long-term impact



of the document needs to be assessed. It is the responsibility of the General Secretariat of Formation to stimulate and coordinate these processes.

7. The General Secretariat of Formation is assisted by a corresponding *International Formation Council* (CIF), which has already met during the week of November 18-24. Their aim was to look closely at the text and devise strategic ways of making the finished product as accessible as possible for the friars of the order. Clearly, the International Council for Formation (CIF) played a very important role in the process. Together with their General Councilors, the members of the CIF in their particular conferences will need to act as point persons for major superiors and formators in matters of formation. Then,

in order for the process to be successful, the major superiors must in turn cooperate with and support the work of these councilors, aim to oversee and promote the new Ratio, and reevaluate their formation programs in light of it. The members of the CIF are also responsible for maintaining constant communication between their conferences and the General Secretariat of Formation.

8. Our Constitutions (No. 25:8) emphasize the importance and the necessity for every circumscription – or group of circumscriptions – to have a secretariat for formation. I ask the major superiors to ensure the installation of this office in their circumscriptions and to support it for the sake of formation. The secretaries (or *prefects*) of formation in provinces or custodies have the task of

animating guardians of local fraternities and, in a special way, the leaders in houses of formation.

9. A new window of opportunity is now opened for the reevaluation of all our formation programs, and for their adaptation to the new needs of today's world, as expressed in the tenets of the *Ratio Formationis*. All of this points to a raising of awareness; and overall, it will be necessary to qualify the pressing problems and the primary concerns of formation in each and every geographical area of the Order. We can thus take this opportunity to reexamine the values we stand by and the ways in which we carry them out: how we do formation in our circumscriptions, how we foster personal and spiritual growth, what works and what doesn't work in our structures and our approaches to formation.
10. Among all the current issues, there is one that is particularly important: the configuration of the formation fraternities, which must have sufficient numbers of friars, of formators and suitable formation programs. Even though there are some problems regarding relationships, the experience of interprovincial formation fraternities is producing good results with positive feedback coming from both the formators and the friars in formation. Without such formation structures in place, personal accompaniment and fraternal discernment are not possible.
11. The timeframes for adapting our formation structures and programs to the principles and spirit of the *Ratio* are necessarily flexible, since rhythms vary throughout the Order; and, all the requirements cannot be set in motion with the same intensity. At any rate, it is advantageous to prepare a timetable that is periodically reviewed and which makes clear the objectives, priorities and the planning of activities that are to be carried out.
12. I want to insist once again upon the importance of "mission". I would like that


our formation programs have a more distinct missionary imprint, helping to sustain in our young brothers the desire to go; to go out to the peripheries; to always remain open and available to mission, to working generously toward building peace, justice, solidarity and care for our common home. All these things seem to me to be excellent ways of keeping our charism alive during these present times.

13. I place under the protection of Mary Immaculate, patroness of our Order, all the steps and measures that will be taken to carry out our *Ratio Formationis*. May the Mother of the Incarnate Word, during this time of Advent, bring a fullness of hope and genuineness to our lives.

FRATERNALLY,



BR. ROBERTO GENUIN
GENERAL MINISTER OFMCAPO



ROME, DECEMBER 8, 2019
SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE
CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
PATRONESS OF THE ORDER