



CPO

MISSION, COLLABORATION

and San Lorenzo Fraternities

IX Plenary Council of the Order 2026

Rome, 01 October 2025

Prot. N. 00622/25

Dear Brothers,

May the Lord give you peace.

The General Chapter of 2024 asked us to organize an event involving all the brothers of the Order, to reflect together on Mission, Fraternal Collaboration and the San Lorenzo Fraternities. These are three related topics, although they are not of the same importance, the last one - the San Lorenzo Fraternities - being a particular attempt to integrate the other two, without any claim to be the only one. In any case, the General Council welcomed this proposal and decided to convene a plenary council of the Order (PCO), scheduled for October 2026.

A preparatory commission was appointed in July, which was also entrusted with the task of polling the entire Order in order to collect, in an *instrumentum laboris*, the reflections on these issues. This document will thus provide experts and delegates at the PCO with a rich and meaningful basis for further study, in tune with the feeling of the Order.

The commission began its work immediately, and I am now pleased to send to all the brothers, fraternities and circumscriptions the texts it has prepared. They are intended to introduce and initiate reflections on the three proposed themes, accompanied by some guiding questions. The intent is for each fraternity, or a joint assembly of the circumscription, to reflect on these insights and gather their contributions, sending a summary by circumscription to the General Curia.

We ask that the summaries include even the most diverse thoughts, without excluding even those that might seem uncomfortable. In addition, brothers who wish to offer a personal reflection, in addition to that already shared in the fraternity or assembly, are strongly encouraged to do so by sending it directly to the General Curia.

Therefore, I ask all conference presidents, provincial ministers, custodes and delegates to commit to promoting participation so that every friar can reflect and respond in the best way possible. Please also make sure that the responses are actually collected and sent out.

Summaries offered by the circumscriptions and personal reflections should be sent, by December 31, 2025, to the following e-mail address: ixcpo2026@gmail.com

We know that a PCO is a valuable opportunity to promote throughout the Order a strong time of synodal animation and discernment, in which the Spirit of the Lord guides us to discover his will.



For this reason, in addition to asking for the commitment of the superiors to animate this process, I invite each friar to freely offer his own ideas and inspirations.

I hope that these preparations for PCO IX, along with many other ongoing initiatives, may “enlighten the mind and inflame the heart” of each of us along this journey that will lead us to the celebrations of the 500th anniversary of the presence of the Capuchin charism in the Church.

We have chosen to send this material on the very day of St. Therese of the Child Jesus, patroness of the missions, at the beginning of October, missionary month and the month of our Seraphic Father St. Francis. May their example and intercession accompany us on this journey.

Pace e bene.

Br. Roberto Genuin
General Minister OFMCap



Mission in the Capuchin Order

The Franciscan charism is rooted in listening to Jesus' missionary sending to his disciples: two by two and without any economic security.¹ An exultant Francis of Assisi allowed himself to be transformed by this Word and thus began his missionary life. When the Lord gave him brothers, as soon as he reached the number of eight, they too set out two by two "for the various parts of the world" (1Cel 29). In his Rule of Life, Francis was the first founder to emphasize the need to send among the unbelievers "suitable brothers" who, by divine inspiration, feel this call.

1Cel 22-23

RnB 16
RB 12

From the very beginning of our reform, the first Capuchins wanted to emphasize that we are a missionary Order: sending "good brothers" to evangelize must be part of the life of every circumscription, even those with few brothers. Indeed, the Capuchins have been great collaborators with *Propaganda Fide*, generously sending many brothers to countless missions around the world for centuries.

Const. St.
Eufemia 143
Const. 178

With the General Minister Br. Bernard Christen of Andermatt (1884-1908) and the motto "Each Province, One Mission," our Order experienced a new missionary momentum. Although many European provinces were fragile because of the suppressions that had taken place in several countries, they summoned strength of faith and conviction in their charism and launched forth with courage, slowly beginning a process of "*implantatio Ordinis*" in many new presences.

Jöhri,
Mission at
the Heart
1:2, 2009

It is important to note that, for many centuries, Capuchin missionaries almost always left for their entire lives, without taking economic resources with them or receiving external support. They worked hard and, with local means, slowly built the missions.

Since the Second Vatican Council, with the development of mission theology, the updating of the Constitutions, the cultural and economic transformations of European and North American countries, and the reduction of vocations, the missionary spirit of the Church and our Order has gone through a great and complex change. The popes have sought to revive the missions with important documents,² as well as our general ministers.³

CPO III, Cap.
II
Jöhri,
Mission at
the Heart
1:4, 2009

However, more needs to be done: on the one hand to awaken across the board in our Order the missionary spirit as a desire to bring the proclamation of the Gospel to all, and on the other hand to reset our missions in the light of the Franciscan charism and the new concept of evangelization-mission in the Church.

¹ Cf. Mt 10,7-10; Mk 6,8-9; Lk 9,1-6.

² Pope Paul VI - *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975); Pope John Paul II - *Redemptoris Missio* (1990); Pope Francis - *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013).

³ Let us recall some of the circular letters: Br. Paschal Rywalski - "The Missionary Dimension of the Order Today" (25/03/1974); Br. John Corriveau - "He sent you throughout the world..." (02/02/1996); Br. Mauro Jöhri - "At the Heart of the Order is Mission" (11/29/2009). And Mattli's PCO III in 1978 - *Missionary Life and Activity*.



Mission is an integral and fundamental part of our charism: we are a missionary Order. For this reason, neglecting it, because there are few friars, because “there is still so much to be done in our territory,” or because we feel we do not have the “necessary” resources to maintain a mission, as unfortunately often happens today, requires on the part of the Order a profound reflection in the light of the Gospel and our sources, which will help us to start again. Mission is ultimately an expression of our charismatic identity and a consistent witness to our way of living the Gospel.

Const XII, § 01
CPO III
Jöhri, Mission
at the Heart
2009

Genuin,
Altissimu,
29, 2025

The next PCO has this task: to identify the profound reasons why today’s friars may feel called to the most demanding missions, to the total gift of self; to find ways to stimulate circumscriptions for missionary commitment; and finally to propose effective ways to transmit to the new generations of friars, in all circumscriptions (old and young), that missionary and apostolic generosity that has always distinguished Capuchins in the five centuries of our history.

Evangelization/mission is still urgent today! So many people are still waiting for the proclamation of the Gospel even in countries of Christian tradition; there are many countries where we are not yet present and there are just as many requests for our presence, especially in contexts of poverty, in fragile local Churches or in regions where Christianity exists as a religious minority. There are also historical presences that are in danger of disappearing due to the lack of local friars. Losing missionary vigor would disfigure the very face of our Order.

Jöhri, Mission at
the Heart, 2009.
Genuin, Let Us
Give Thanks,
2019.
Genuin,
Altissimu, 2025.



Questionnaire

*Questions for fraternal reflection
in light of Nos. 176, 177 & 178 of our Constitutions:*

1. To what extent do I have a desire in my heart for the Gospel of Christ to reach all people?
2. What is the real place of the missionary dimension in the life of my fraternity and my circumscription today? Is mission understood as an essential part of our charism or as a secondary or a solely personal option?
3. What are some personal or fundamental threats that limit missionary enthusiasm and availability among us Capuchins today? Lack of zeal? Fear? Reduced number of brothers? Scarcity of economic resources? Lack of missionary formation and experience? Other reasons?
4. How can our initial formation and the daily life of fraternities convey to young brothers the value and beauty of missionary openness and total self-giving?
5. How can we awaken missionary passion in our circumscription and the entire Order in a concrete way today? What steps should we take?
6. Other suggestions?



Fraternal Collaboration in the Capuchin Order

Fraternal collaboration has been a cross-cutting theme at the most recent General Chapter, during which the general guidelines for its implementation were updated. Two of the four motions approved by the capitulars explicitly refer to fraternal collaboration, while the other two presuppose the concept. The current situation of the Order, set in a context of increasing globalization and internationalization, requires us to understand what fraternal collaboration means from our charismatic identity, how it can be structured, organized and regulated, and what its fundamental purposes are.

CPO V 97; CPO VIII 13; Const. 12:4; 178:6; OG2/5; Genuin, 2022.

The Constitutions, several plenary councils of the Order and some letters of the General Ministers insist on the importance and necessity of fraternal collaboration. Fraternal collaboration refers to the ability to respond in an organized and articulate way to the challenges and needs of evangelization in today's world, starting from our charismatic identity, taking into account the Order's structures that foster cooperation among circumscriptions and guarantee the charismatic and juridical unity of our universal fraternity.

CPO I 64; CPO III 39; 41; CPO V 27; 57; CPO VII 39; Const. 25:7; 100:2; OG 8/31; Jöhri, 2008.

Fraternal collaboration is a feature that is proving to be very important for our way of life, since it has the task of sustaining and revitalizing some important dimensions of our charism, namely: *initial and ongoing formation, evangelization and mission, international fraternities, culture, education and communication, justice, peace and care for the common home, Franciscan family and social or charitable projects*. It is, likewise, an effective way of revitalizing and implanting the presence of our charism in those places that, for cultural, political, economic or religious reasons, require greater attention on our part, all lived out in a spirit of generosity and gratuity.

CPO I 56; CPO III 32; CPO VII 13; CPO VIII 55; Const. 39:3; 72:4; cf. Mt 10:8; Corriveau, 2002.

Fraternal collaboration, according to the documents cited and the insistence of the brothers gathered at the last General Chapter, appears to be an important quality for articulating not only the missionary dimension of our way of life (or the project of the St. Lawrence of Brindisi Fraternities), but also other dimensions of our charismatic identity. The celebration of the next PCO will be an opportunity to reflect on the importance and necessity of fraternal collaboration, a reflection that will serve as a basis for its structuring, organization, regulation and consolidation.



Questionnaire

1. What is my idea about the meaning of fraternal collaboration in the Order? Explain in a few words.
2. What are the benefits, challenges, risks, and implications of fraternal collaboration? Explain in a few words.
3. How is fraternal collaboration organized and managed in my circumscription and in the conference to which I belong? Briefly explain.
4. What are the fundamental aspects to be considered in order to structure, organize, regulate and accompany fraternal collaboration in the Order?
5. Am I willing to participate in the processes of fraternal collaboration promoted by the Order? Explain your answer.
6. Other comments.



St. Lawrence Fraternities in the Capuchin Order

What are the St. Lawrence Fraternities (FSL)?

The General Minister in his initial letter for this sexennium writes:

One way in which the Order is trying to live out its charismatic identity is through the project of the Saint Lawrence of Brindisi Fraternities. In them we propose, in the light of the Gospel and our Constitutions, to live prayer, fraternal life and mission authentically and consistently, as minors and the poor, with the important resource of interculturality.⁴

One of the ways. The FSLs are, therefore, a modest initiative - by no means exclusive - to animate the flame of our charism in the Order. They are neither “pilot fraternities” nor “model fraternities.” They are simply friars who, convinced of the beauty of our vocation and its value for our society, endeavor to trace with simplicity and confidence the path of a living and evangelically significant presence. Incidentally, we must point out that many other fraternities live out this ideal with the same strength and intensity, thank God. Therefore, on the part of the FSL, there is no claim to exclusivity.

There are two particularities that characterize the FSL project.

1. In the FSL, we seek to live authentically and consistently the four essential aspects of our life: prayer, fraternity, minority/poverty, mission, according to the guidelines common to the whole project.⁵
2. FSL has an international and intercultural character. In a world that is globalized and interconnected and at the same time given to individualism, the witness of a fraternity in which different cultures are present offers a valid and timely option as a response to the signs of the times. Of course, it is also a real challenge. But experience shows that the sign of an international fraternity nevertheless speaks to today's world.

The first particularity differentiates FSL from other international fraternities where brothers do not focus explicitly on the above guidelines. The second particularity differentiates FSLs from fraternities that live this way of life within individual Circumscriptions but without the international dimension.

Why did the FSLs come into being and manifest themselves as a particular project in the Order?

It was the challenge of secularization, evangelization and the rapid disappearance of our presence in Western Europe that generated the idea of establishing ‘fraternal signs’ to keep our charism alive and put it at the service of the Church and the world. The idea from the outset envisioned a common responsibility that would go beyond our own provinces, so that in regions where, due to an increasingly sparse presence and lack of our own forces, we could create with joint efforts international fraternities that, in the light of the Gospel and the Constitutions, would live prayer,

⁴ Roberto Genuin, *Letter to the Order at the Beginning of the Sexennium 2024-2030*, 36.

⁵ Vedi *Let us revive the flame of our charism*, General Curia grant 2020.



fraternal life and mission authentically and consistently, as minors and in poverty. It was not primarily a matter of saving our Capuchin presences, but of renewing our form of life. Over time, seeing the good fruits, the project also developed outside Europe, taking the name St. Lawrence Fraternities.

What fruit does the FSL project bear that justifies its continuation and development in the Order?

- 1) An asset for ongoing and initial formation:
 - several brothers, living simply the lifestyle proposed by the guidelines, renewed their “yes” to God, reinvigorating themselves in the aspects of both vocation and motivation.
 - several brothers from those parts of the world where the Order is developing and where there is a strong emphasis on the pastoral dimension have rediscovered the importance of other aspects of the charism.
 - several friars in initial formation found in the FSL a clear example of Capuchin life and experienced there an important period of vocation discernment.
- 2) Attraction to our charism in the area of youth/vocation ministry: in various places where FSLs are located, a movement of people willing to share our way of life is observed. Therefore, these fraternities turn out to be a credible sign for vocation ministry.
- 3) Witness to our form of life: in some parts of Europe, FSLs are practically the only way to encounter our form of life, awakening in people the will to approach the sacraments and to resume the Christian life.

What is the current situation of the St. Lawrence Fraternities?

There are currently 12 FSLs: 9 in Europe and 3 in the Americas.



Questionnaire

1. What do you think about the FSL project? What do you think the existence of FSLs in your conference would mean for your conference?
2. To what extent can the FSL contribute to reviving our charism in the different parts of the Order? What should be done in this regard?
3. With the existence of FSL, what do you think are the fruits/opportunities for the Order and what are the problems/risks associated with them?
4. What could be done so that FSL becomes an increasingly shared project in the Order, involving more of the brothers and major superiors?
5. What place should the FSL occupy in the next PCO? What connection do you see between the FSL and the missionary dimension of the Order and the experience of fraternal collaboration?



