
Rule
and
Constitutions

of the
Community of the
Franciscan Friars of the Renewal



Revised and approved by the Community Chapter
May 19, 1999
Feast of St. Crispin of Viterbo

I. CHARISM, NATURE AND PURPOSE

1. The Community of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal constitutes a clerical religious institute of friars, both clerical and lay, whose members pronounce public vows and live a fraternal life in common (cf. *Rule of St. Francis*, Ch. 1 & 2; *Lumen Gentium*, 42). The Community of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal was begun in April 1987 by a group of Capuchin friars desiring to work more definitively for personal and communal renewal and the reform of the Church called for by the Holy Father and many spiritual leaders since Vatican II. By seeking a constant return to the sources of the whole Christian life and to the primitive inspiration of the *Rule and Testament of St. Francis*, this community is attempting to live sincerely and truthfully a life in conformity to the Gospel and to the ideals of the Seraphic Father as handed on by the Capuchin tradition (cf. *Perfectae Caritatis*; *Capuchin Identity Study of 1996*). Pursuant to the universal law of the Church, the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal is a clerical religious institute of diocesan right established in the Archdiocese of New York (cf. Cann. 588 § 2, 589). Accordingly, the community “enjoys a true autonomy of life,” and it “remains under the special care of the Archbishop of New York” (cf. Cann. 586, 594).

2. This Community is seeking to live the vows of authentic Franciscan life in a way that effectively challenges the worldly values prevalent in every age. Material poverty, manual labor, complete renunciation of ownership of immovable property, mature and faithful chastity, an active

and responsible obedience, and living with and engaging in hands-on work with the materially poor and destitute are essential components of this reform. The spiritual values uniting the friars are personal and communal commitment to Jesus Christ, our Savior, through contemplative and liturgical prayer, daily Eucharistic adoration, devotion to Our Lady, imitation of St. Francis and St. Clare, love for the Church and loyalty to the Holy Father. To preserve the spirit and life of St. Francis in their apostolate, the friars will carry on the work of evangelization by preaching and other non-parochial ministry in the manner of the early Capuchin reform.

3. It is our hope that, despite our inconsistencies and weaknesses, we may present to our Christian sisters and brothers and to all others a prophetic witness of Christ's teaching that life is a pilgrimage of committed faith, trusting hope, and effective love of God and neighbor through the work of the Holy Spirit.

4. These Constitutions serve the community according to the norms of Canons 312 – 320 and in conformity with the universal law for religious institutes, and particularly Canon 587 § 1, 3. *Community Norms* for particular situations, drawn up and amended by the duly constituted General Chapter, supplement the Constitutions. This chapter will be constituted and convened according to the norms of Canon 631^[1] and Chapter IX of these Constitutions.

5. Since the *Rule of St. Francis* contains the marrow of the Gospel, we accept this *Rule*, as approved by Pope Honorious III, to be the foundation of our life. We further recog-

nize the *Testament of St. Francis*, and his spirit and life, to be the light by which we will see the Will of God for our community in following Jesus.

II. SOURCES OF OUR FRANCISCAN LIFE

A. RULE OF ST. FRANCIS

Chapter I

*In the Name of the Lord begins
the Life of the Friars Minor.*

6. This is the *Rule and Life of the Friars Minor*, namely, to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, living in obedience, without property, and in chastity. Brother Francis promises obedience and reverence to our Lord Pope Honorius and his successors canonically elected, and to the Roman Church and the other brothers are bound to obey Brother Francis and his successors.

Chapter II

*Of those who wish to adopt this life,
and how they are to be received.*

7. If anyone wishes to adopt this life and come to our friars, let them send him to the minister provincial, to whom alone, and to no other is granted leave to receive the friars. And the minister shall examine him carefully concerning the Catholic Faith and the Sacraments of the Church. And if he believes in all these things and will faithfully profess and steadfastly observe them to the end; and if he has no

wife, or if having one, she has already entered a convent or has given him permission by authority of the bishop of the Diocese, – she herself, having previously made a vow of continence and being of such age that no suspicion can be raised against her – then the minister shall address to him the words of the Holy Gospel – that he go and sell all that he has and take care to give it to the poor; but if he cannot do this, his good will shall suffice. And the friars and the minister shall take heed not to be solicitous about his temporal goods, so that he may dispose of his property freely as the Lord shall inspire him. If, however, counsel be sought, the minister may send him to some God-fearing persons according to whose advice his goods shall be distributed to the poor.

8. Then shall be given him the clothes of probation, namely, two tunics without the hood, and the cord, and drawers, and the caperone reaching to the cord, unless it should seem good to the same minister, before God, to act otherwise. The year of his probation being finished, let him be received to obedience, promising to observe always this *Rule and Life*; and on no account shall it be lawful for him to leave this Order, as decreed by our Lord the Pope, for, according to the Holy Gospel, no man putting his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God. Let those who have already promised obedience have one tunic with a hood, and another (if they wish) without the hood. And those who are compelled by necessity may wear shoes. And all the friars shall wear coarse garments, and they may mend them with sacking and other pieces of cloth, with the blessings of God. And I admonish and ex-

hort them not to despise nor judge those whom they see dressed in soft and fine clothes and who use dainty food and drink, but rather let everyone judge and despise himself.

Chapter III

*Of the Divine Office and of fasting,
and how the friars ought to go about the world.*

9. The clerics shall recite the Divine Office according to the use of the Roman Church, excepting the Psalter; for which reason they may have breviaries. But the lay-brothers shall say twenty-four Our Fathers for Matins, and five for Lauds; seven for each of the hours of Prime, Tierce, Sext, and None; twelve for Vespers, and seven for Compline; they shall also pray for the dead. And the friars shall fast from the feast of All Saints until Christmas. But with regard to the Lent which begins at the Epiphany and lasts during the forty days which our Lord consecrated by His own fast, let those who keep it voluntarily be blessed by the Lord; but those who do not wish to keep it shall not be obliged. But they shall fast during the other Lent which lasts until our Lord's Resurrection. At other times they shall not be bound to fast except on Fridays. In cases, however, of manifest necessity, the friars are not obliged to observe corporal fasts.

10. I counsel, admonish and exhort my brothers in Jesus Christ, that when they go out in the world, they neither quarrel nor dispute, nor judge others; but let them be meek, peaceful, modest, gentle and humble, speaking

courteously to everyone, as is becoming. They shall not ride unless compelled by manifest necessity, or by infirmity. Into whatever house they enter, they shall first say "Peace be to this house," and, according to the Holy Gospel, they may partake of whatever food is set before them.

Chapter IV

That the friars may not receive money.

11. I strictly command all the friars, that they by no means receive coin or money, either by themselves or through the medium of others. Nevertheless, the ministers and custodes, and they only, shall take special care to provide for the needs of the sick and the clothing of the other friars, through their spiritual friends, according to places, seasons and cold climates, as they may deem necessary; saving always that, as before said, they receive neither coin nor money.

Chapter V

Of the manner of working.

12. Those friars whom the Lord has given the grace of working, shall work faithfully and devotedly, in such wise that avoiding idleness, the enemy of the soul, they yet do not extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion to which all temporal things ought to be subservient. In payment for their work, let them receive whatever is necessary for the bodily support of themselves and their brothers, excepting coin or money. And this they should do humbly as

becomes the servants of God and followers of most holy poverty.

Chapter VI

*That the friars shall appropriate to themselves nothing;
and of asking alms; and of the sick friars.*

13. The friars shall appropriate to themselves nothing, neither house nor place, nor anything at all; but as pilgrims and strangers in this world, serving the Lord in poverty and humility, they shall go seeking alms with confidence. Nor ought they to be ashamed, since for our sakes, our Lord made Himself poor in this world. This is that sublime height of most exalted poverty which has made you, my most beloved brothers, heirs and kings of the Kingdom of Heaven, which has made you poor in temporal things, but exalted you in virtue. Let this be your portion which leads into the Land of the Living. Giving yourselves up wholly to this, beloved brothers, never seek anything else under heaven for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

14. And wherever any of the friars may be, and shall meet other friars, let them all treat each other as members of one family, and confidently make known to each other their needs; for if a mother loves and cherishes her son according to the flesh, how much more diligently ought everyone to cherish and love him who is his brother according to the spirit. And when any friar falls sick, the other friars shall serve him as they would wish to be served themselves.

Chapter VII

Of the penance to be imposed on the friars who sin.

15. If any friar, at the instigation of the enemy, sin mortally in regard to any of those sins concerning which it has been ordained among the brothers to have recourse only to the minister provincial, let him have recourse as quickly as possible, and without delay. And, if the said ministers are priests, they shall with mercy, impose on him a penance; and if they are not priests, they should see that a penance is imposed by others who are priests of the Order, as in the sight of God shall appear to them more expedient. And they shall take care not to get angry or disturbed by the sins of others, for anger and trouble of spirit are hindrances to charity in themselves and in others.

Chapter VIII

*Of the election of the minister general of this fraternity,
and of the chapter of Pentecost*

16. All the friars are bound to have always, one of the friars of this Order as minister general and servant of the whole fraternity, and they shall be strictly obliged to obey him. When he dies, his successor shall be elected by the ministers provincial and the custodes in the chapter of Pentecost. At this chapter, all the ministers provincial shall assemble in whatever place the minister general shall appoint. This they shall do once in every three years, or at other periods, longer or shorter, as the aforesaid minister

shall ordain. And, if at any time it should appear to the body of the ministers provincial and custodes, that the aforesaid minister general is not qualified for the service and general welfare of the friars, the aforesaid friars to whom the election is committed shall be bound to elect another as minister general in the name of the Lord. Moreover, after the chapter of Pentecost, the ministers provincial and custodes may each, if they wish, and deem it expedient, convoke a chapter of the friars in their custodies once in the same year.

Chapter IX

Of preachers.

17. The friars shall not preach in the diocese of any bishop, when the latter has opposed their doing so. And no friar shall, by any means, dare to preach to the people, unless he has been examined and approved by the minister general of this fraternity, and the Office of Preacher has been conferred upon him. Moreover, I admonish and exhort these same friars, that when they preach, their language be well-considered and simple, for the benefit and edification of the people, discoursing to them of vices and virtues, punishment and glory, with brevity, because our Lord, when on earth, made “a short word.”

Chapter X

Of the admonition and correction of the friars.

18. Those friars who are the ministers and servants of the

others, shall visit and admonish their brothers, and humbly and charitably correct them, not commanding them anything that is against their own soul and our *Rule*. But the brothers, who are subjects, shall remember that, for God's sake, they have renounced their own wills. Therefore, I strictly command them to obey their ministers in all things they have promised the Lord to observe, and which are not against their soul or our *Rule*. And wherever those friars may be who know and feel that they cannot observe the *Rule* spiritually, they can and should have recourse to their ministers. And the ministers should receive them charitably and kindly, and show such familiarity that these same friars may speak and treat with them as masters with their servants, for so it ought to be that the ministers should be the servants of all the friars.

19. I also admonish and exhort the friars in our Lord Jesus Christ, to beware of all pride, vainglory, envy and avarice, of care and solicitude for the things of this world, of detraction and murmuring. And those who are illiterate shall not be anxious to learn, but let them endeavor to have, what is to be above all things desired, the Spirit of the Lord, and His holy operation. Let them endeavor to pray always with a pure heart, and to have humility and patience in persecution and infirmity, and to love those who persecute, reprove and censure us. Because our Lord says, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute and calumniate you. Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice sake, since theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. He who perseveres to the end, he shall be saved."

Chapter XI

That the friars shall not enter convents of nuns.

20. I strictly command all the friars not to have any suspicious dealings or conversation with women; nor shall they enter the convents of nuns, excepting those friars to whom special leave is granted by the Apostolic See. Neither shall they be Godfathers to men or women, lest hereby scandal should arise either among the friars or concerning them.

Chapter XII

*Of those friars who go among the Saracens
and other infidels.*

21. Should any friars moved by divine inspiration desire to go among the Saracens or other infidels, they shall ask leave to go from their ministers provincial. But the ministers shall not grant leave except to those whom they deem fit to be sent. Finally, I command the ministers by obedience, that they petition our Lord the Pope or one of the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, who shall be the governor, protector and corrector of this fraternity, so that, being always submissive and subject at the feet of the same Holy Church, and steadfast in the Catholic Faith, we may observe poverty and humility and the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we have firmly promised.

B. TESTAMENT OF OUR HOLY FATHER FRANCIS

*In the Name of the Lord begins the Testament of our
Seraphic Father Francis.*

22. The Lord granted to me, Brother Francis, thus to begin to do penance, for while I was in sin, it seemed to me too bitter a thing to see lepers, but the Lord Himself led me among them, and I showed compassion to them. And when I left them what before seemed bitter, was changed into sweetness of soul and body; and after that, I tarried yet a little, and forsook the world.

23. And the Lord gave me such faith in churches, that I would with simplicity, thus adore and say, "We adore You most holy Lord Jesus Christ, here, and in all Your churches throughout the world, and we bless You, because by Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the world." Afterwards, the Lord gave me and gives me still, such faith in priests, who live after the manner of the Holy Roman Church, on account of their Orders, that if they persecute me, I would still have recourse to them. And if I had the wisdom of Solomon, and found priests poor according to the world, I would not preach in their parishes against their will. And these priests, and all others, I am resolved to hold in respect, love and honor, as my lords; and I will not consider any sin in them, because I behold in them the Son of God, and they are my lords. I act thus, because, in this world I see nothing corporally of the most high Son of God, but His most holy Body and Blood, which they receive, and which they alone administer to others. And these most

holy Mysteries, I desire to venerate and honor above all things, and to reserve them in precious tabernacles. And whenever I find our Lord's most holy Name and written Words in any unseemly place, I will gather them up, and I beg that they be gathered up, and put in a becoming place. And all theologians, and those who minister to us the most holy Word of God, we must honor and revere as those who minister to us Spirit and Life.

24. Since the Lord gave me charge over the brothers, no man showed me what I ought to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live after the manner of the holy Gospel; and this I caused to be written down in few and simple words, and our Lord the Pope confirmed it for me. Those who came to adopt this form of life gave all that they might possess to the poor. And we were content with one tunic patched inside and out by those who wished, and with a cord and drawers, and we desired nothing more. We clerics said the Divine Office like other clerics; the lay-brothers said the Our Father. And we were satisfied to remain in poor and deserted little churches, and we were simple and subject to all.

25. I worked with my hands, and I still desire to work, and most earnestly do I desire that all my brothers should employ themselves in honest work. Let those who do not know how to work learn, not from anxiety to receive wages, but for good example, and to avoid idleness. But should the wages of our work be not given us, then shall we have recourse to the table of the Lord, asking alms from door to door. The Lord revealed to me this salutation that

we should say, “The Lord give you His peace.”

26. And let the friars take heed that they by no means receive churches or houses or anything else that is built for them, if these buildings be not according to that holy poverty we have promised in the *Rule*, and let them always dwell there as pilgrims and strangers.

27. I strictly command all the friars, in virtue of obedience, that wherever they are, they shall not dare, personally, or through others, to ask letters from the Roman Court, whether with regard to a church or any other place, or under pretext of preaching or on account of bodily persecution; but wherever they are not received, they shall flee into another country, and do penance there with the blessing of God.

28. I am firmly resolved to obey the minister general of this fraternity, and that guardian whom it shall please him to set over me; and I will so place myself in his hands that I shall be able, neither to go anywhere or to do anything against his will, because he is my master. And although I am simple and infirm, I will nevertheless always have a cleric to say the Office with me as directed in the *Rule*. And all the friars are strictly bound to obey their guardians, and to say the Office according to the *Rule*, and if any friar is found who does not say the Office according to the *Rule*, or who wishes to alter it in any way, or who is not really Catholic, in such case, all the friars, wherever they are, shall be bound by obedience to bring him before the custos of the nearest place where he is found. And the custos is strictly obliged under obedience, to watch him as a

prisoner, day and night, so that the friar cannot be taken out of his hands until he can personally put him into the hands of the minister. And the minister is strictly bound by obedience to send the friar with others, who shall guard him as a prisoner, day and night, until they present him before the Lord Cardinal of Ostia, who is the lord and protector and corrector of this fraternity. And the friars shall not say, "This is another Rule." For this is but a remembrance, admonition, exhortation and my Testament, which I, Brother Francis, your little one, make for you, my beloved brothers, to the end that we may in a more Catholic manner, observe the *Rule* we have vowed to the Lord.

29. And the minister general and the other ministers and custodes are bound by obedience, neither to add to these words, nor to take away from them; and they shall always have this writing with them, together with the *Rule*. And in all the chapters which they hold, when they read the *Rule*, they shall also read these words.

30. And I strictly forbid under obedience, all my brothers, both clerics and lay-brothers, to put any gloss upon the *Rule*, or upon these words saying: thus they are to be understood; but as the Lord has granted me to speak and to write the *Rule*, and these words simply and plainly, so do you understand them simply, plainly and without gloss, and with the Divine assistance, observe them unto the end.

31. And whosoever shall keep these words, may he be filled in heaven with the Blessing of the Most High and Heavenly Father, and on earth with the blessing of His Be-

loved Son, together with that of the most Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, and of all the powers of heaven and of all the Saints. And I, Brother Francis, your little one and your servant, confirm unto you all, both within and without, so far as I can, this most holy Benediction, which may you have in union with all the Powers of Heaven and all the Saints, now and throughout the ages. Amen.

Here ends the Testament of our most blessed Father Francis.

III. RELIGIOUS CONSECRATION

32. The members of the Community of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal freely assume consecrated religious life in the Church in order to serve as a sign of the heavenly glory which is a participation in the life of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 44; Cann. 573-575). Rooted in the teaching and example of Christ, the members embrace the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience as a divine and special gift in the life of the Church (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 43; Can. 575).

A. OUR LIFE OF POVERTY

33. The Gospel counsel of poverty, in imitation of Christ, Who became poor for our sakes, means that we live a life which is poor in fact and in spirit. It includes as essential elements, a life of work, the simple use of necessary things, the careful avoidance of the accumulation of costly or superfluous things, a humble and patient spirit of dependence on Divine Providence, minority and limitation in the

use and disposition of material goods according to the *Community Norms* (cf. Can. 600).

34. The friars will appropriate nothing to themselves. Every friar freely dispossesses himself of any personal savings account, means of credit, stipends, gifts, royalties, inheritances, properties or benefits. The community may use money for its basic needs and the needs of the apostolate under the limits of universal law and in keeping with these Constitutions according to Canons 634 and 638. Money for the needs of the community may be kept in a bank where a moderate rate of interest may be attained.

35. The friars are encouraged to beg for their basic needs and for materials necessary for their apostolic works, and where necessary, with the permission of the local ordinary. All goods given to the community through the generosity of benefactors, should serve only the fundamental needs of the friars. All excessive funds or superfluous goods (that is, beyond what is necessary to sustain the Community for one year) should be given to the poor.

36. The friars of each house will periodically evaluate all personal and communal goods to assure that only those things necessary for our life and work be used by the friars. This evaluation must take place in each fraternity four times a year, before the feast of St. Francis, after Christmas, during Lent and after Pentecost.

37. Any building or facility used by the friars will be received through the hands of benefactors. The community will never assume ownership of a house, institution, church, shrine or property.

38. The friars will always reside in areas noted for poverty. If the neighborhood changes due to social or economic development which displaces the poor, the friars must find residence in another poor area. The friary is then to be returned to its rightful owner, taking into account the owner's needs and rights. The friaries of our community should be poor, simple and austere. They should have no look of luxury, nor contain those conveniences commonly sought after by society.

39. Vehicles for our daily use and our apostolates are not to be purchased by the community, but received through the generosity of our benefactors. These vehicles should not have a look of luxury nor be of any great value. The number of vehicles for each friary or apostolate should be kept to the minimum necessary (cf. *Community Norms*).

40. Electronic devices in the friary should be few in number and not have any great value. The friars shall be careful to observe *Community Norms* concerning the use of electronic equipment.

41. The friars should approach the Community Council to determine if and how any special or valuable tools are to be obtained.

42. All books other than those frequently used by the friars will be kept in a common library for the benefit of all the friars. This library should be small, functional and free of any superfluous books not in keeping with the life and work of the friars.

43. The clothing of the friars is a gray tunic with a large

pointed hood, cord, sandals and a rosary. The friars are encouraged to have a plain beard. If any clothing or footwear is worn with the habit, it should be consistent with the color and the character of our religious garb.

44. Clothing worn for manual work or recreation should be simple and of a color and style consistent with the habit, which is our normal clothing. If need arises, clerical attire may be worn instead of the religious habit. Clothes proper to the laity, such as suit coats and ties are not to be worn. This is also true for dress coats, pants and shoes.

45. All forms of jewelry are inconsistent with our witness to simplicity and austerity. Watches and religious chains with a medal are to be inexpensive, not being made of any precious metal.

46. The friars are to cultivate some area near the friary which may be used as an oasis for prayer and reflection. When feasible, some portion of land should be set aside to grow food and flowers for the benefit of the friars and the poor among whom they live and serve.

47. All goods and properties should be responsibly used and maintained in keeping with the charity and justice due to our benefactors.

48. The friars shall ask permission of the Local Chapter or Community Council to be away for times of solitude or vacation, and they should receive what is necessary for these times away from the community, or from benefactors with the consent of the chapter, and in accord with the *Community Norms*. The Local Servant may give permission for

a few days away.

49. Before first profession, each novice shall cede the administration of his goods to whomever he chooses. He shall also freely dispose of the use of his material goods, as well as any revenues coming from them.

50. Before perpetual profession, each friar must draw up a will by which he makes a total renunciation of all material goods. This will is to be witnessed by two perpetually professed friars, and it takes effect on the day of perpetual profession. To change the dispositions of the cession or of the final will for a just cause, or to carry out any act whatsoever in regard to temporal goods, requires the permission of the Community Servant, according to *Community Norms*.

51. In imitation of the example of St. Francis, who desired for himself and for his friars to live in this world as pilgrims and strangers, and in keeping with our Franciscan observance in the Capuchin tradition, by perpetual profession, each friar totally and definitively renounces all rights to acquire or possess any material goods whatsoever. Therefore, whatever each friar acquires through personal work, or receives as a donation in any way, is not the property of the individual friar, but belongs to the community. This includes any pension, subsidy, insurance or inheritance.

B. OUR LIFE OF CHASTITY

52. The Gospel counsel of chastity for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven (cf. Mt. 19:11-12) is seen as an

eschatological sign of the future life, and it involves the obligation of perfect continence in celibacy. As a unique gift of an undivided heart given to God, chastity is a proven source of more abundant fruitfulness for our own human and spiritual growth as well as for the good of others. This surpassing gift must be safeguarded and nourished by a wholehearted response to the Lord's grace (cf. Can. 599).

53. The friars are to respond to the grace of God through a life of continuous conversion and self-emptying in order to live a chaste life. We can do this chiefly by fostering:

- a) A fervent life of personal and communal prayer;
- b) A deep love for the Holy Eucharist;
- c) A personal love for and confidence in the Mother of God, devotion to St. Joseph and all the saints;
- d) A genuine participation in the fraternal life of the community;
- e) Meditation on and study of the Word of God;
- f) Frequent reception of the Sacrament of Penance and regular spiritual direction;
- g) A joyful austerity;
- h) Sacrificial service towards one another and those in need;
- i) A healthy discipline applied to a balanced way of life made up of prayer, manual labor, study, recreation and exercise.

54. In all our words and actions, we should recognize the

dignity of all men and women. We ought to strive to “Treat younger men as brothers, elderly women as mothers, younger women as sisters with perfect chastity” (1 Tim. 5:1-2).

55. In all our relationships, the friars should show respect and use discretion. Let us display a selfless and mature human affection worthy of authentic disciples of Jesus Christ. We are to avoid any friendships which express an unhealthy emotional dependence. Experience teaches us that exclusiveness and possessiveness are detrimental to our human and spiritual development, our common life and our consecrated chastity.

C. OUR LIFE OF OBEDIENCE

56. The primary goal of the life of every Christian must be to do the Will of God. Following the example of St. Francis, the friars are to strive always to unite their wills to God in communion with His Church. For this reason, the friars shall vow themselves to observe the evangelical counsel of obedience in a spirit of faith and love in following Christ, who was obedient even unto death. We acknowledge that this obedience requires submission of the will to our superior, both the Archbishop of New York, who is our Benevolent Ordinary, and the Community Servant as the representative of the community according to the universal law of the Church and these Constitutions (cf. Cann. 601; 590 § 2).[\[2\]](#)

57. Recalling the ardent desire of St. Francis, all the friars are to be faithful sons of the Catholic Church. We hold in

reverence, respect and obedience, our Holy Father, the Bishop of Rome, Pope John Paul II and his lawful successors (cf. Can. 590 § 2).^[3] As a clerical religious institute of diocesan right, the Community of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal comes under the special care of the Archbishop of New York.

58. The forum where the friars discern the Will of God for the community is the Community Chapter (cf. Ch. IX). In every chapter, the friars should honestly and confidently make known their desires and needs, concerns and difficulties. An atmosphere of fraternal acceptance, trust, openness, gentleness and charity should characterize this time together. All of the friars, most especially those to whom responsibility has been entrusted, are to discover God's Will through prayer, personal reflection, counsel and fraternal dialogue.

59. Both Community and Local Servants are chosen by the friars to be guardians and animators of our evangelical way of life. They accomplish this primarily by their good example, but also by their counsel, admonition and exhortation to their brothers. At times, the servant friar must give counsel and correction to another friar. This is to be done privately, with utmost charity, discretion and gentleness according to the admonition of St. Francis. This fraternal help should be received in a spirit of humility, and with a willingness to listen to and understand the concerns of the servant.

60. As sons of St. Francis, we remember the words and example of our Father so that we might more effectively re-

nounce our own wills for the greater glory of God. Therefore, a spirit of obedience to God's most perfect Will is an essential part of our Franciscan vocation. All of the friars are to ardently seek to do what is right and just in God's sight, and to do His Will promptly, completely, joyfully and perseveringly. All of the friars owe a reverence and obedience to the Community Servant, as a sign of the unity and fellowship of our communal life together.

61. The servants shall be responsible to convene the friars and to preside over the chapter in such a way that they can personally take the lower place. The servants are responsible to lead the community through prayer so that all meetings are acts of worship, to draw out the views from the friars, to seek consensus when possible, to gently admonish those who have become conflicted in their goals, to encourage those in pain and difficulty and to focus the vision of the community so that it remains an instrument for the activity of the Holy Spirit. The *Community Norms* indicate specific ways by which the obligations of obedience are mediated by the Community and Local Servants and by the Community and Local Chapters.

62. All the friars share in the responsibility of loving obedience by helping the servants to carry their burden through encouragement and prayer. If necessary, a friar can offer a servant respectful and fraternal correction.

IV. OUR LIFE OF PRAYER

63. In our vocation as disciples of Jesus Christ, and as true sons of St. Francis, we must strive both individually and

communally to become authentic men of prayer. Prayer is to be the very heart of our way of life, according to Chapter V of the *Rule of St. Francis*.

64. The friars, unless excused, will pray in common the Office of Readings, Morning, Mid-day, Evening and Night Prayer Hours. The Angelus will accompany our prayer at the three traditional times. We follow the Capuchin-Franciscan Ordo, which lists our special liturgical celebrations.

65. Every day the community will devote two one-hour periods for meditation, contemplation and sacred reading. In the morning this will be done in private; in the evening this is done in common before the exposed Blessed Sacrament. Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament will follow the period of adoration at least once a week, especially on days of community gatherings and on solemnities.

66. If any friar is absent from the community, he is urged to do his best to be faithful to the prayer life of the community.

67. The celebration of the Eucharist is the ultimate expression of our faith and unity in Christ. It is therefore celebrated daily with due reverence and devotion. As with the Liturgy of the Hours, the Eucharistic liturgy is to be celebrated according to the proper liturgical norms established by the Church. All priests present at the Eucharistic Sacrifice are encouraged to concelebrate.

68. Our Lady is to be honored in a special way in all our friaries through the recitation of the Angelus and the rosary. Votive Masses in her honor are encouraged, especially

on Saturdays. Our Lady of Guadalupe is the patroness of our community; therefore, each friar will be consecrated to Our Lady under this title. The feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is celebrated as a solemnity. Along with the Franciscan saints, the friars are also encouraged to have a special devotion to St. Joseph who models for us poverty, humility, obedience, chastity and the dignity of manual labor.

69. Those friars who benefit from a communal recitation will pray the rosary after Night Prayer. The friars are encouraged to pray the rosary in private or when traveling.

70. In both private and communal prayer, the friars are to commend to God the needs of all, especially our Holy Father, the bishops of the Church, the Benevolent Ordinary of the community, our CFR sisters and associates, all the benefactors and family members of the friars.

71. A prayerful spirit should prevail, especially in the chapel and the sacristy, and in the entire friary. Respectful silence is to be kept from the end of Night Prayer until breakfast.

72. One day a week, each local fraternity will devote itself to a more conscious spirit of quiet and recollection. This day takes precedence over the ordinary demands of the apostolate and may be used for more intense prayer, instruction or whatever may be beneficial for the needs of the fraternity.

73. Every month, the friars will take at least one day of solitude for personal prayer.

74. Twice a year, each friar will take an extended time for a retreat in accord with the *Community Norms*, one with the community and one individually. The community retreat shall last for at least five days.

75. To assist in their on-going formation and to foster greater purity of heart, the friars are encouraged to make use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation frequently.

76. Scripture tells us that it is a holy and beneficial thought to pray for the dead. Accordingly, St. Francis wrote in his *Rule* that the friars should take care to pray for the dead. The friars are exhorted to remember frequently in their prayers the souls of the faithful departed, especially deceased friars, relatives and benefactors. Following the Capuchin tradition, each local fraternity shall celebrate a memorial Mass for all deceased friars, sisters, relatives, associates and benefactors on October third.

On the death of a friar or sister, each priest will offer a Mass beyond the concelebration of the funeral. In addition, the Community Servant shall see to it that a Gregorian series of 30 Masses is offered on 30 consecutive days by some of the priests of the community. The Office of the Dead will be recited for the repose of the soul of each friar or sister who dies.

On the death of the parents of a friar or sister, each priest shall offer a Mass beyond the concelebration of the funeral. For other members of the immediate family, a Mass will be offered and a memorial card sent by the Local Servant. In all cases, friars who are not priests are requested to offer one Mass and Holy Communion for the deceased. In the

case of the death of other relatives, the friars shall be sensitive in expressing appropriate condolences.

77. Aged or infirm friars shall be offered the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick to strengthen them spiritually in their need.

78. Each month every priest-friar may celebrate three Masses for his own intentions. The other friars may request the Local Servant to have a Mass offered for their intention on a monthly basis or for some special need. The friars will be generous in responding to requests for Masses by our sisters.

V. OUR FRATERNAL LIFE IN CHRIST

79. We are to live together as brothers of one family, united in our love of Christ. The different talents and personalities of the brothers ought to enhance our fraternal life in Christ and not be causes for division. The friars are to hold one another in esteem, always careful to preserve the character and reputation of one another.

80. As lesser brothers always seeking the least place, we should serve one another and anticipate one another's needs. The friars are to support one another through prayer, mutual encouragement, honest communication and sacrificial service, especially when fraternal assistance is needed. According to the mind of St. Francis, brothers who hold various offices and areas of responsibility are not to have special privileges.

81. A peaceful, joyful and prayerful spirit should charac-

terize our friaries. In order to better preserve this spirit, and to deepen the quality of our fraternal life we choose not to have television in the friary. In addition a practical enclosure should be established for the privacy of the friars. The rooms of the friars should be within the enclosure.

82. It is our custom that the friars both eat and sleep in a friary unless particular circumstances make this impractical or impossible.

83. In keeping with long-standing Capuchin tradition, all guests should be received with Franciscan hospitality. Care should be taken to provide for the needs of our guests. Some room or provisions should be made for overnight visitors.

84. The friars are to gather periodically to study and discuss our Capuchin Franciscan tradition and way of life for our on-going renewal. This may take the form of a community colloquy based upon authentic Franciscan and Capuchin sources.

85. As brothers, we must always show respect, deference and care toward one another, but especially toward those brothers beset by illness, injury or old age. The particular physical, emotional and spiritual needs of these friars should be the concern of the entire community, especially within the fraternities where they reside.

Even the demands of a severely disabled friar must never be seen as a burden, but rather willingly embraced and viewed as a blessing. Hence, both the healthy and the sick,

the young and the old, will gain many opportunities to express a mutual spirit of patience, humility, generosity and fraternal love.

Those friars afflicted by illness or subject to the weakness and limitation which frequently accompany old age are a special treasure. These friars can greatly enrich our lives by virtue of their presence, prayers and example. They can edify and educate all of us, in particular the young, showing us how best to accept our own crosses with patience, charity and hope. Aged and infirmed brothers must never be made to feel isolated or useless but rather be invited into the very heart of our way of life and encouraged to participate, as far as they are able, in the daily tasks and ongoing activities which make up our lives.

As men vowed to God and committed to each other, we freely forfeit any right by reason of age or infirmity to excuse ourselves from living out the essential elements stated in these Constitutions. We view the commonly accepted notion of “retirement” as incongruous with our religious profession. We understand that our service to God, His people, and to one another does not cease at the end of our apostolic activity but at the end of a generous and faithful consecrated life when we hope to receive a merciful judgment as God’s unworthy servants.

VI. OUR LIFE OF PENANCE

86. As sons of St. Francis in need of daily conversion we are called, as individuals and as a community, to do penance. We must live in a way that authenticates our Francis-

can vocation. Therefore, let the friars be content with the minimum necessary and not the maximum allowed in our friaries, in our food and drink, and in all material things. Let us also be content with the noise and poverty of our neighborhoods, burdensome demands of our common and apostolic life, lack of sleep, and all the other opportunities given by the Lord to live a penitential life.

87. To maintain an evident austerity in the friary and to heighten the power of the sacred images we use, we will have only one such object in all common areas. Another simple devotional image may be displayed for special feasts, octaves and seasons.

To preserve the Capuchin character of our friaries, and to draw ourselves and others to the very heart of our Catholic faith, an image of the Crucified Christ should be prominently displayed in the refectory or some other appropriate place in the friary. All our friary chapels will have both the image of our community patroness, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and the San Damiano Cross, which reminds us of our responsibility to rebuild the Church.

88. The entire building where the friars live should speak of austerity and poverty. Floor and wall coverings, draperies, superfluous decorations and unnecessary furniture are not permitted. This also applies to the bedrooms of the friars which should be clean and plain, without an excessive amount of art or objects, even if they be for devotional purposes. The friars are to sleep on a simple mattress placed on the floor.

89. In keeping with our Capuchin tradition, the table on

which the friars eat their meals should be of a simple design and made of wood. Tablecloths are never used in the friary, even on festive occasions.

90. The cleaning and maintenance of the friary, as well as the cooking of meals, are to be done by the friars themselves. Extraordinary maintenance may require the talents of others; however, the assistance of benefactors should be sought before hiring professional help.

91. The friars will fast during those periods of time mentioned in the *Rule of St. Francis*. The Lent extending from the feast of All Saints to the celebration of the Nativity is to be observed. The Lent of the Church preceding the celebration of the Resurrection is also to be observed. For those friars who desire, a special “Lent of Benediction” may be observed in keeping with Capuchin tradition.

92. The friars will fast on the vigils of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception and the Feast of St. Francis. Unless a special feast or Solemnity occurs, every Friday is a day of fast and abstinence and every Wednesday is a day of abstinence.

93. Wine, beer and sweets are not served in the friary, except on festive days determined by the community. “Hard” liquor shall never be served, nor shall it be purchased, received as a gift or stored. To better maintain our good health and well-being, the friars do not use tobacco in any form.

94. Along with these mortifications, let the friars strive to cheerfully accept the sacrifices of time and energy involved

in spending themselves for the salvation of souls. Our life of penance is meant to foster a perfect readiness of mind, heart and body to give of ourselves generously. This generous gift of self will enable the friars to take initiative in embracing the demands of our way of life without complaining and in a spirit that gives witness to the joy of the Lord.

VII. OUR LIFE OF FORMATION

95. Formation is an on-going process of conversion, directed toward the fuller living of our Christian lives, modeled on the values of our Franciscan life in the Capuchin tradition. This development requires the active involvement of the individual and of the community, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In this important work, so vital to the growth of our community and its effectiveness in the life and mission of the Church, we are guided by the principles and values found both in Canon Law (cf. Cann. 307, 641-653) and in the community's document entitled *Norms of Formation*. All aspects of the formation program of the institute are to be in complete conformity with the universal law of the Church.

The overall process of formation is the responsibility of the Community Servant and his Council, with the support of the Formation Council and the Community Chapter. The different phases of formation – pre-postulancy, postulancy, novitiate, temporary profession, perpetual profession and preparation for Sacred Orders – are each under the direction of a perpetually professed friar appointed by

the Community Servant after he has heard his Council.

A. FORMATION COUNCIL

96. The community shall have a Formation Council, the purpose of which is to assist the Community Servant and his Council in directing the programs and evaluating the needs of friars in formation. Membership in the Formation Council is determined by the *Norms of Formation*.

a) The Formation Council should meet quarterly and at other times as needed.

b) The tasks of the Formation Council include: offering advice to the Community Servant and his Council on matters of formation, reviewing our formation programs periodically, evaluating the progress of those in initial formation, and preparing friars to work in formation.

B. PRE-POSTULANCY DISCERNMENT

97. The Vocation Director shall assist all men who are discerning a vocation to the Community in the pre-postulancy phase of formation. He shall present candidates to the Community Servant for admission into the postulancy program in accord with the norms of universal law and the *Norms of Formation*.

C. POSTULANCY

98. Postulancy, the first stage of formation for our way of life, is an experience of residence in one of our fraternities for a period of six months to one year, which may be ex-

tended for a second year if necessary.

a) The formation of the postulants will be under the care of a Postulant Director, who oversees the postulancy program in such a way as to help each postulant test his intention and readiness to enter the novitiate. The following means are used to achieve the goals of the postulancy: (1) living fraternal life, (2) participating in communal prayer, (3) studying appropriate courses, and (4) experiencing the apostolates of the community.

b) Upon entrance into the postulancy, the postulant shall sign a waiver of immunity whereby he renounces all claims to compensation for work done or services rendered during his time with the community, and also renounces the rights to claim compensation for any accident or to sue for any injuries incurred while with the community.

c) Regarding the evaluation of the postulants and their admission to the novitiate, the requirements of both Canon Law and these Constitutions along with the *Norms of Formation* must be carefully observed. The Postulant Director will periodically present to the Community Servant and Formation Council a report on the progress of the postulants and their readiness to enter the novitiate.

d) Toward the end of the period of postulancy, upon the recommendation of the Postulant Director, the postulant, if he freely chooses to do so, may petition in writing the Community Servant for admission to the novitiate. The Community Servant may admit into the novitiate those postulants whom he considers suitable according to the *Norms of Formation* (cf. Can. 641).

D. NOVITIATE

99. The novitiate, the second stage of formation for our way of life, marks the beginning of life in the community (cf. Can. 646).^[4] A valid novitiate experience must comprise twelve continuous months. If a novice is absent for more than 15 days, these days must be made up. If he is absent for three months, his novitiate becomes invalid.

a) The novitiate must be spent in the novitiate house. Therefore, the Community Servant and his Council shall designate a specific friary as the novitiate house. This designation should be recorded in a written document by the Community Servant (cf. Can. 647). The Community Servant may, however, permit the novices to live for a period of time in another house of the community which he designates.

b) The formation of the novices, as well as the discerning and testing of their vocations, shall be under the guidance of a Novice Director. He must always be subject to and cooperative with the authority of the Community Servant and his Council in regard to the running of the novitiate. If he so desires, the Novice Director, while retaining the responsibilities for the daily running of the novitiate, may have the help of one or more assistants.

c) The novitiate must be conducted according to the community's *Norms of Formation*. The chief means for attaining the goals of the novitiate, namely, interiorizing and deepening the novice's Christian and Franciscan formation, are the following: (1) prayer, (2) study, (3) direction, (4) fraternal life, and (5) apostolic experience.

d) Based upon the periodic evaluations conducted during the novitiate year, towards the end of the year, the Formation Council and Community Chapter shall vote on each candidate and submit a report to the Community Servant and his Council. Any novice, who freely chooses to do so, may request temporary profession of vows in writing from the Community Servant. After considering the report of the Formation Council and the Community Chapter and hearing the Community Council, the Community Servant determines whether or not to grant a novice's request for temporary profession. If there is any doubt about the suitability of a novice, the novitiate may be extended up to one more year by the Community Servant (cf. Can. 648 § 3). A novice is always free to leave the institute. At the same time, the Community Servant has the authority to dismiss a novice at any time during the novitiate period, if he deems this necessary (cf. Can. 653 § 1)

e) Within two months before first profession, each novice must draw up a cession of the administration of his temporal goods according to our *Community Norms*. By temporary profession the friar relinquishes all rights to any wages, insurances, and all other goods and gifts of monetary value, except inheritances.

E. TEMPORARY PROFESSION

100. The purpose of first or temporary profession is for each friar to commit himself to the community and to deepen his understanding of our way of life, especially his experience of living the vows. Based on prayer, life experi-

ence, discussion with those responsible for his formation, and spiritual direction, the friar is assisted to discern if he should request perpetual profession of vows in our way of life after the period of temporary profession. The final decision rests on both the individual's discernment of his readiness, as well as the community's evaluation of him according to the *Norms of Formation*.

a) The profession of temporary vows for our friars is received by the Community Servant or by his delegate. The period of temporary profession may be extended on an annual basis for up to a total of nine years by the Community Servant after he has received the report of the Formation Council and heard the Community Council (cf. Cann. 655; 657 § 2).

b) The friars in temporary vows will be supervised by a Director of the Temporary Professed who shall see to it that these friars receive appropriate studies in Franciscan life, as well as training in special tasks necessary for common life and the apostolate. He shall also see to it that all the norms of Canon Law and the community are carefully carried out.

c) About two months prior to the annual expiration of his vows, a temporary professed friar, if he so freely chooses, shall write a letter requesting renewal of his vows to the Community Servant. After considering the report of the Formation Council and the Community Chapter and hearing the Community Council, the Community Servant determines whether or not to grant the request for a one year renewal of temporary profession (cf. Can. 657). The

Community Servant after he has heard the Community Council, has the authority not to grant the request and dismiss the candidate upon the expiration of his temporary vows if he deems it necessary (cf. Can. 689 § 1).

F. PERPETUAL PROFESSION

101. Perpetual profession, a total consecration of the individual friar to the Will of God and the life of the Gospel, is a great source of inspiration as well as a good example for all the friars in different stages of initial formation. Likewise, it serves as a support and encouragement for all the perpetually professed friars, challenging them to greater fidelity and continued renewal in their personal and communal living.

a) About six months prior to the end of the three year period of temporary profession, or at an appropriate time thereafter, a friar in temporary vows, if he so freely chooses, may write to the Community Servant requesting perpetual profession (cf. Can. 657 § 1). After considering the report of the Formation Council and Community Chapter and hearing the Community Council, the Community Servant determines whether or not to grant the request for perpetual profession. If the request for perpetual profession has not been granted at this time, the Community Servant may permit the candidate to renew his temporary vows, if the candidate freely chooses to do so. After hearing the Community Council, the Community Servant also has the authority to dismiss the candidate upon the expiration of his temporary vows if he deems this

necessary (cf. Can. 689 § 1).

b) The perpetual profession of vows of a friar is received by the Community Servant or his delegate.

c) Those friars approved to make perpetual profession shall prepare themselves by a special period of prayer, service and fraternity according to our *Norms of Formation*. They shall also draw up a last will, effective upon their making perpetual vows, by which they make a total renunciation of all material goods and inheritances (cf. *Constitutions*, 50).

d) Religious profession is a time of special graces, not only for the individual friars making profession and for the whole community, but also for the relatives and friends of the professed, for those we work with and serve in our apostolates, and for the whole Church of God. Our profession ceremonies shall be celebrated as spiritual events in which the community joins with the friar's family and the faithful in a celebration of God's mercy and goodness. These celebrations shall reflect poverty as well as the simple and humble joy of St. Francis and the early friars.

102.

a) When the Community Servant or any friar he delegates receives the friar's vows, the following formula for profession of vows is used:

“I, Brother of, vow and promise to Almighty God, to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to our Holy Father, St. Francis, and to you Brother, to observe (for one year ... all the days of my life), the Rule of the Friars

Minor, confirmed by our lord Pope Honorius, as interpreted in the Constitutions of the Community of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, living in obedience, without property, in poverty and in chastity.”

b) Since the practice of the frequent renewal of vows is a helpful means to strengthen the on-going formation of all the friars, by calling them to greater fidelity to our way of life until death, it is recommended that all the professed friars, in keeping with a venerable Capuchin tradition, renew their vows communally every Friday, according to the above formula.

G. PREPARATION FOR SACRED ORDERS

103. Seminary education constitutes a significant part of the formation of a number of our friars. These friars should take their studies very seriously, both for their personal growth in the knowledge and practice of the Catholic faith as well as to prepare them to share in the Priesthood of Jesus Christ and the service of His people in priestly ministry.

a) All friars desiring to pursue seminary studies must follow the *Norms of Formation* in regard to discerning and requesting these studies.

b) All seminary education is under the direction of a Director of Priestly Formation. He should be a friar with academic experience. His duties include: (1) seeing that all the requirements of the seminary are fulfilled by each student friar, (2) remaining informed about their academic progress and any other necessary information, (3) carefully

seeing that the *Norms of Formation* are being observed, and (4) informing the Community Servant when student friars are eligible for the ministries and for Sacred Orders.

c) When a student friar is presented as a candidate for Sacred Orders, the Community Servant shall receive the report of the Formation Council and the Community Chapter and submit it to the Community Council. With the consent of the Community Council and if he judges the candidate to be worthy, the Community Servant shall then petition the Archbishop of New York to grant the necessary dimissorial letters, and shall make arrangements for the ordination according to the will of the same Benevolent Ordinary (cf. Can. 1019 § 1).

H. LAY BROTHERS' FORMATION

104. We recognize and esteem the unique value and essential place of the lay brother vocation in our Capuchin Franciscan way of life. Lay brothers exemplify in a concrete way the fraternal quality of our Holy Father who called himself “Brother Francis.” As well, lay brothers emphasize the uniqueness of our charism as distinct from the added dimension of ordained ministry which is shared with the diocesan priesthood and other religious communities. The long list of Capuchin lay brother saints and blessed, beginning with St. Felix of Cantalice, definitively establishes this noble state as an authentic path to holiness. Hiddenness, simplicity, minority, humility, availability, prayerful presence and generous service are qualities that have traditionally marked the Capuchin lay brother.

a) Because this unique vocation is sometimes not readily understood by the laity it is important that we foster and support lay brother vocations in our preaching apostolate and by other means.

b) Together with those friars preparing for ordination, lay brother candidates should receive adequate instruction and formational experiences which foster the brothers' growth in the Christian and Franciscan life. In addition, it is recommended that training in some particular skill helpful for the life and work of the community be offered. In order to prepare lay brothers to participate in our community's apostolate of evangelization, catechetical instruction and training should be provided within or outside the friary.

c) In keeping with our Capuchin-Franciscan tradition, we encourage the participation of lay brothers in the life and governance of the Community to the fullest extent possible.

I. ONGOING FORMATION

105. Each friar is ultimately responsible to cooperate with God's grace in his own on-going formation, which continues for the whole of his life. Accordingly, the friars should use their personal time wisely, remembering the caution of St. Francis that idleness is the enemy of the soul (cf. *Rule of St. Francis*, Ch. V). This can be done by observing community quiet times in spiritual reading, personal study, and spiritual activities which foster on-going growth and maturity.

- a) This on-going formation involves areas of both human and spiritual development so that it includes not only theological and pastoral elements, but also the development of skills and the study of subjects necessary for our communal living and apostolates.
- b) Accordingly, the friars are encouraged to make reasonable use of pertinent conferences, workshops and courses. Attendance at such activities is under the direction of the Community Servant and his Council in consultation with the Local Servant(s) of the friar(s) involved.
- c) Conferences, colloquies and workshops, especially pertaining to Franciscan topics, should be held periodically for all the friars. These programs should be set up by the Formation Council with the approval of the Community Servant and his Council.

VIII. OUR APOSTOLIC MISSION

106. The primary mission of our community is a whole-hearted embracing of Jesus Christ and our Holy Father Saint Francis. By means of God's grace, we respond to His call for continuing conversion. We bear witness to God's reign in our lives essentially through the witness of our words and deeds. Through our commitment to prayer and contemplation, the study of Sacred Scripture, our fidelity to the Church and the Sacraments, our fraternal life, and a generous service to others, especially the poor, we receive the nourishment necessary to live out our lives as sons of St. Francis in the Capuchin tradition.

107. The apostolate of the community is always to be seen

as part of the work of the Church and in agreement with the local ordinary, according to Canon 678 and 681. The apostolic mission of the community, carried on in accord with Canon 675 § 1,^[5] is twofold:

First, our mission is to serve the materially poor, most especially the destitute and homeless. Friaries not primarily focused on formation should have one or more facilities to provide for the needs of the poor, for example, a shelter, soup kitchen, food pantry and/or clothing room. Each of these works must be directed by a friar to preserve the Catholic and Franciscan character. Every member of the community is to be personally and directly involved in “hands-on” work with the poor. All service to the poor is given completely free of charge.

Second, our mission of evangelization in the Church is through preaching and teaching the Holy Gospel, and by sharing the rich treasures of our Catholic faith with all. This can take many forms so that every friar may assist in his own way. Some expressions of this apostolate are: providing missionary centers for the poor, street evangelization, parish missions, retreats, days of recollection, pilgrimages, spiritual direction, pastoral counseling, religious education and sacramental ministry. Faithful to our vow of poverty and trusting in Divine Providence, the friars will accept whatever is given as an offering and will not require a specified stipend.

108. In order to insure that the demands of our apostolic works do not extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion (cf. *Rule of St. Francis*, Ch. V), the friars will periodic-

ally evaluate their commitments (cf. *Community Norms*).

109. In order to be faithful to our charism, the community may never administer a parish or a school. United in the spirit of St. Francis, we may offer generous service and humbly assist those in these administrative positions.

110. Following the example of St. Francis, who was so concerned about the conversion of unbelievers, the friars may undertake missionary work consistent with our apostolate. The Community Chapter may choose to accept the invitation of the bishop in a domestic or foreign mission area to fulfill the tasks proper to our community. Care should be taken that evangelization is always accompanied by material, as well as spiritual, care of the destitute and poor. We will not assume parochial responsibilities in the missions.

111. Before accepting missionary work or any permanent apostolic work outside the New York Archdiocese, the Community Servant should consult with our Benevolent Ordinary.

IX. OUR STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

112. The friars seek to imitate Jesus Christ, who came “to serve and not to be served.” In the words of St. Francis, Jesus “gave His life rather than fail in the obedience He owed to His most holy Father.” Absolute and unquestioning obedience to the Triune God is our goal since His Will is our peace. The Divine is manifested to the children of God in many ways, all of which must be acknowledged by the government of any Christian community. Therefore, our

community must seek collectively to recognize and respond to God's Will humbly and enthusiastically. We must read and meditate on Sacred Scripture as God's voice speaking to us in the present moment. Christ has given us His Church to teach and direct us, and consequently, we must both by vow and by conviction be loyal and docile to the Catholic Church, her Magisterium and Supreme Shepherd, her bishops and her Sacred Tradition.

A. AUTHORITY IN THE COMMUNITY

113. All friars who exercise authority in the Community are to do so in the spirit of humble service according to the example and admonitions of St. Francis. Accordingly, the friars responsible for community government are to be called "servants." The Community and Local Servants must be docile to the Will of God and show reverence for the human person. They must listen willingly and attentively to each friar entrusted to their care. They are to promote voluntary obedience and always act to enhance the fraternal life and apostolic mission of the community in accord with the universal law of the Church and these Constitutions. They should serve as models of Franciscan life acting always for the love of God, with a deep sense of prayer and devotion, patience and charity, encouragement for all, solicitude for the sick and consolation for those in struggle (cf. Cann. 617-619).

B. GENERAL CHAPTER

114. The General Chapter exercises supreme authority in

the life of the institute. It is the duty of the General Chapter to reflect upon the Franciscan tradition and life, to safeguard and enhance them and to discern new ways to promote growth and ongoing renewal. It belongs to the General Chapter to enact laws and to treat other matters of major importance. It also belongs to the General Chapter to elect the Community Servant, the Community Vicar and the members of the Community Council (cf. Can. 631 § 1).

115. An ordinary General Chapter must be held every three years, if possible at the time of Pentecost, in a place designated by the Community Servant after he has consulted the Community Chapter of the institute. With the consent of the majority of the Community Chapter, the Community Servant may convoke an extraordinary General Chapter, to consider some important matter. If the office of Community Servant should become vacant, then the Community Vicar shall convoke an extraordinary Chapter for the purpose of an election as soon as possible, but within three months of the time of the vacancy. The newly elected Community Servant serves out the remainder of the term until the next ordinary General Chapter. However, if the period of time before the next ordinary General Chapter is less than one year, the Community Vicar shall serve out the term left vacant until the next ordinary General Chapter.

116. The membership of the General Chapter consists of all friars in final vows (cf. Can. 631 § 2). At the written request of an individual friar in final vows, the Community

Servant may excuse the friar from the obligation to participate in the General Chapter for a just reason. All finally professed friars enjoy active and passive voice at the General Chapter in accord with the norms of the universal law of the Church and these Constitutions. At the discretion of the Community Servant, friars who are not in final vows may attend a General Chapter, but they lack active and passive voice.

117. The Community Servant convenes the General Chapter and determines the preliminary agenda after hearing the Community Chapter. Any friar may submit agenda items to the Community Servant (cf. Can. 631 § 3). Once the General Chapter has been opened, it exercises power to set agenda, to permit and/or limit discussion and debate, to hold votes and to adjourn the Chapter. The Community Servant presides over the General Chapter, except when the election of the Community Servant occurs.

118. An election at the General Chapter is held in accord with Canon 119 § 1.[\[6\]](#) In regard to all other matters, the vote is held in accord with Canon 119 § 2[\[7\]](#) and the *Community Norms*. All votes for election are held by secret ballot.

119. These Constitutions may only be amended by a three-quarters vote of the General Chapter. Such amendments require the approval of the Archbishop of New York to carry force of law.

C. COMMUNITY CHAPTER

120. Apart from the General Chapter, all the friars in final vows shall gather on a regular basis in the Community Chapter (cf. Can. 632). Although the Community Chapter does not exercise the power of governance, it encourages a sense among the finally professed friars of direct participation and consultation in the exercise of governing authority within the community (cf. Can. 633 § 1). Thus, the Community Chapter serves as an important means to foster the spirit of Franciscan life in the Church.

121. The membership of the Community Chapter consists of all friars in final vows. The vote of the Community Chapter is consultative to the exercise of the authority of the Community Servant. All finally professed friars enjoy active voice at the Community Chapter in accord with the norms of the universal law of the Church and these Constitutions. At the discretion of the Community Servant, friars who are not in final vows may attend a Community Chapter, but they lack active and passive voice.

122. To the extent possible, all major decisions which pertain to the life of the friars should be discussed by the friars gathered in a collegial fashion at the Community Chapter. Such decisions shall include, but not be limited to, the appointment of Local Servants, the assignment of individual friars, the establishment of new houses, the ministry of the community, financial matters, and an individual's request for admission to the novitiate, profession or ordination.

123. The time, place and frequency of regular Community

Chapters is to be determined by the vote of the General Chapter. In addition to the regular meetings of the Community Chapter, an extraordinary Community Chapter may be called by the Community Servant or by a written request to the Community Servant which request shall contain an absolute majority of the signatures of the friars in final vows.

124. The friars in final vows gathered in a Community Chapter may by a two-thirds vote in a secret ballot call for an extraordinary General Chapter for the purpose of removing from the office the Community Servant, the Community Vicar or a member of the Council. Following such an affirmative vote to hold an extraordinary General Chapter, the Archbishop of New York is to be informed. When an extraordinary General Chapter for the stated purpose has been convened, the friars vote by secret ballot. To remove a friar from one of the aforementioned offices, an absolute two-thirds majority of votes is required. All votes are to be conducted pursuant to Canon 119. If a friar has been removed from office, then an election to fill the vacant office is to proceed immediately by the ordinary means of the General Chapter.

125. If and when, the community expands into other geographical territories and dioceses, it is permissible to create regions. The creation of a region should occur only after the positive vote of an ordinary or extraordinary General Chapter. Also by the vote of the General Chapter, a new region may have its own Regional Chapter and formation program. All such regions remain under the lawful author-

ity and power of governance of the Community Servant in accord with the universal law of the Church and these Constitutions.

D. THE COMMUNITY SERVANT

126. The Community Servant is elected in the General Chapter for a three year term (cf. Can. 624 § 1). The Community Servant may be elected to only two consecutive terms of office. However, by a two-thirds vote of the members of the General Chapter, he can be postulated for additional consecutive terms (cf. Can. 624 § 2). By law, the Archbishop of New York presides over this election (cf. Can. 625 § 2). Immediately following his election, the Community Servant must make the Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity in the presence of the General Chapter as required by the universal law of the Church (cf. Can. 833 § 8).

127. In order to be elected to the office of Community Servant, a friar must be a priest who is in final vows for at least five years (cf. Can. 588 § 2).

128. The Community Servant exercises authority over all the friars and local communities of the institute. He is the major superior who governs the institute and exercises his office in accord with the universal law of the Church (cf. Cann. 617-620). With the consent of his Council, the Community Servant can promulgate decrees which enjoy the force of law until the next General Chapter (cf. Cann. 29-34). The Community Servant can assign a friar to a particular house and/or apostolate to provide for the needs

or well being of the community (cf. Can. 622). The Community Servant is required to make a visitation of each house and confer with each friar individually at least twice within each term of office (cf. Can. 628 § 1).

E. COMMUNITY VICAR

129. Following the election of the Community Servant, the Community Vicar is elected at the General Chapter for a three year term. The Community Vicar may be elected to only two consecutive terms of office. However, by a two-thirds vote of the members of the General Chapter, he can be postulated for additional consecutive terms (cf. Can. 624 § 2). The Community Servant presides over this election. Immediately following his election, the Community Vicar must take the Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity in the presence of the General Chapter as required by the universal law of the Church (cf. Can 833 § 8).

130. In order to be elected to the office of Community Vicar, a friar must be a priest who is in final vows for at least five years (cf. Can. 588 § 2).

131. The Community Vicar assists the Community Servant in his duties and responsibilities. When the Community Servant is absent or impeded, the Community Vicar governs the institute. He is a major superior and enjoys ordinary vicarious power within the limits of the institute, but he must not use his authority against the mind and will of the Community Servant (cf. Can. 620).

132. When the office of the Community Vicar becomes vacant outside an ordinary General Chapter, the Com-

munity Council must elect a new Community Vicar to complete the term of office.

F. THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

133. As a canonically established collegial body, the Community Council consists of the Community Servant, the Community Vicar and four Community Councilors (cf. Can. 627 § 1). An affirmative vote requires an absolute majority (cf. Can. 119). When it acts as the council to the Community Servant, however, it consists of the above members except the Community Servant. In this capacity, an affirmative vote, or the consent of the Community Council, shall require an absolute majority (cf. Can. 119). The Community Servant presides over the Community Council. He does so by convoking and adjourning meetings and by determining the agenda.

134. As a collegial body, the Community Council proceeds according to the requirements of the law. As the Council of the Community Servant, it should be of service to him and give advice and consent according to universal and particular law (cf. Can. 627, 127).

135. Following the election of the Community Servant and Community Vicar, the General Chapter elects four friars to serve a three year term as Community Councilors. When the office of Community Councilor becomes vacant outside the General Chapter, the Community Council votes to elect a friar to fulfill the remainder of the unexpired term according to the norm of law.

136. In order to be elected to the office of Community

Councilor, a friar must be in final vows for at least three years (cf. Can 623).

137. The Community Servant, with the consent of the Council, shall appoint a friar in final vows, who may be a Community Councilor, to the office of the Secretary of the Council. The Secretary acts as the notary, and records all the minutes and official acts of the Community Council. If the Secretary has not been elected to the Council, he attends the Council meetings, but he does not vote.

138. The Community Servant, with the consent of the Council, shall appoint a Community Steward who functions in accord with the norms of law (cf. Can. 636). The Community Steward may be a Community Councilor, but if he is not, he attends relevant portions of the Community Council meeting, but he does not vote. A Community Almoner will be appointed by the Community Servant, with the consent of the Council, who will assist the Community Steward in collecting and distributing alms for our apostolate to the poor.

G. LOCAL GOVERNMENT

139. Each house of the community is to have a Local Chapter which consists of all the finally professed friars assigned to the house, who enjoy active and passive voice. The Local Chapter directs the affairs of the local community. According to the *Community Norms* and directives of the General Chapter, the friars in temporary vows may participate in Local Chapters, but without active and passive voice. Local Chapters are to be held frequently accord-

ing to the *Community Norms*.

140. In arriving at decisions, the friars shall strive by prayer, patient dialogue and humble deference to arrive at a consensus, when possible, especially by compromise so that a consensus can be agreed upon. If no consensus is reached, the servant may follow procedures given in the *Community Norms*.

141. The Local Servant is to provide leadership in the friary. Like all the friars he is to strive with God's grace to give good example and to be faithful to all the essential elements of our way of life. He is appointed by the Community Servant after the Community Servant has heard the Community Chapter. He is to work with the friars and bear the burden of authority in a spirit of service in accord with Canons 618 and 619. The Local Servant convenes the Local Chapter and friary meeting for the good of the friars and coordinates the prayer life, apostolic work and day to day activity of the friary (cf. *Community Norms*).

142. To be appointed to the office of Local Servant a friar must be in final vows for at least two years.

143. As in the case of the Local Servant the Local Vicar is to be appointed by the Community Servant, after he has heard the Community Chapter. In the absence of the Local Servant, the Local Vicar implements community decisions and makes necessary immediate decisions, as does the Local Servant, to implement community goals.

H. ERECTION AND SUPPRESSION OF HOUSES

144. Local communities are established, with the prior written consent of the diocesan bishop in which the new house is located, by the decree of the Community Servant with the consent of the Community Council (cf. Can. 609 § 1). In establishing a new house, the welfare of the Church and the institute are to be kept in mind, and care is to be taken that all the conditions are fulfilled for the friars to lead their religious life in accord with the spirit and purpose of the institute (cf. Can. 610 § 1). Prior to the establishment of a new house, when it is practical, it is desirable that the sense of the Community Chapter be obtained.

145. After consultation with the diocesan bishop of the location of the house, the Community Servant with the consent of his Council may suppress an established house of the institute (cf. Can. 616 § 1). Prior to the suppression of an established house, when it is practical, it is desirable that the sense of the Community Chapter be obtained.

146. As the supreme governing authority of the institute, the General Chapter retains the power to establish and suppress houses and communities, in accord with the universal law of the Church and the provisions of these Constitutions.

X. ADMINISTRATION OF TEMPORAL GOODS

147. As a juridic person, the Community of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal can acquire, administer, use and alienate temporal goods in accordance with the universal law of the Church and the proper law of the institute. The

community and individual friars must avoid all appearance of luxury, excessive gain and the accumulation of goods and wealth (cf. Can. 634).

148. Once a year, the Community Steward shall prepare a report about the financial affairs of the institute. After the report has been submitted to the Community Servant and the members of the Community Council, the Community Servant shall submit it to the Archbishop of New York (cf. Can. 637). The annual financial report shall also be made available to all friars in final vows.

149. Expenditures, debts, alienation, and other financial items that go beyond the limits or ordinary administration require the written permission of the Archbishop of New York for the validity of the act. The same is true if the act should exceed the sum established by the Holy See for extraordinary administration (cf. Can. 638 § 4).

150. Local Servants and Local Vicars have the capacity to enter into ordinary business transactions necessary for the day-to-day life of the members. Any other significant financial transaction requires the consent of the Community Servant with the consent of his Council (cf. Can. 638 § 2).

151. The institute shall do all that is possible to donate something from its own modest resources to assist the needs of the Church and support the poor (cf. Can. 640).

XI. SEPARATION OF MEMBERS FROM THE INSTITUTE

152. In all cases of separation from the Institute, the

norms and procedures of canon law are to be followed as stipulated in Canons 684-704.

XII. OUR LIFE IN THE CHURCH

153. The friars shall consider it an essential part of our life and reform to be completely loyal to the Roman Catholic Church and its Supreme Shepherd, the Bishop of Rome. This loyalty of mind and heart should be modeled after the filial obedience and love of St. Francis for the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ and for the office and person of the pope. The friars will also be obedient to the bishop who is our ordinary and to the diocesan bishops where we live and work. Following the admonition of St. Francis, the friars will respectfully withdraw from the diocese of any bishop who indicates that he does not desire our service and witness (cf. *Rule of St. Francis*, Ch. IX).

154. Since the Church is not an abstract idea, but a living reality of God's grace in human life, the friars will love and serve the Church in all its members. The friars will earnestly strive not only to follow the teachings of the Church, but also to defend and promote them as the way that leads to eternal life. They should show respect and deference to all prelates, priests and deacons, and to the religious and laity of the Church. An appropriate and cheerful welcome and hospitality will be extended to all, but always in accord with our limited resources and the demands of prayer and the apostolate.

155. The friars will exemplify in their lives the pilgrim aspect of the Christian life and shall work for the up-build-

ing of the life of the Church. This is not to minimize in any way the important work of the maintenance of the life of the Catholic people in parishes and formal education; rather we choose to concentrate on other aspects of the life of the Church, namely, evangelization, the physical and spiritual care of the poor and destitute, the preaching of personal reform and foreign missions.

156. An essential part of the work of evangelization and care of the poor is the friars' public and prayerful witness to the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death. This witness is in opposition to the moral relativism and paganism of our times which undermines and attacks the fundamental human right to life, which is the foundation of a just and peaceful society.

157. By our loyal dedication to the Church, we will insure that our work of outreach and building up is always harmoniously linked to the equally important work of maintenance and establishment of the Christian life.

158. The friars shall be concerned about all people as children of God and beloved of Christ. They should encourage warm and creative dialogue with all our separated Christian brothers and sisters of East and West. They shall also show special deference and concern for the Jewish people who have given us our Lady with her Divine Son, and Sacred Scriptures. They shall be especially attentive to Moslems, about whom St. Francis was most concerned in his prayer and preaching. They should respect the sincere attempts of all world religions to find God and to do His Will and should reflect to their members the respect which

Christ Himself showed to those coming from East and West to take their place at the Heavenly Banquet. The friars should pray and work for the salvation of all human beings, especially for those who choose to be our enemies, considering always that Christ, Our Lord, drew all things to Himself when He was lifted up on the Cross. As representatives of the gentle Savior, the friars shall not only strive to avoid all rudeness, lack of consideration and impatience, but as St. Francis teaches us, strive to behave as servants of all.

159. Finally, we acclaim the universal primacy of Christ, the New Adam and the King of creation. Our Seraphic Father Francis, speaking of the sun and moon, the wind, fire and water, the flowers, birds and beasts called them his brothers and sisters. All of creation by its very existence reflects God's glory and sings its own song of praise. Aware that creation, by God's design, has entered into a deep intimacy with Him through the Incarnation, let us not only protect and cherish this beautiful but broken earth, which is good, but let us reverence those made in God's own image and likeness for they are very good.

XIII. OBLIGATION TO OBSERVE THE CONSTITUTIONS

160. All members of the community are to observe in complete fidelity all the requirements of the evangelical life, of the universal law of the Church, and of the proper law of the institute as contained in these Constitutions (cf. Can. 598 § 2).

XIV. CONCLUSION AND DEDICATION

161. These Constitutions are meant to be a guide to the friars in their struggle to observe the Holy Gospel and to follow the *Rule of St. Francis*. It is our fervent hope that in doing so we shall achieve the goals of this reform and become true disciples of Our Lord Jesus Christ, while at the same time contributing effectively to the ongoing renewal of the Church which He founded. To recall the powerful spirit of the Capuchin reform, we accept and embrace the following words of the first friars, hoping to rediscover in our time their fervor and dedication:

162. *Great indeed, are the things we have promised, yet they are nothing in comparison with the eternal reward God will bestow upon us if we remain faithful. Let us, therefore, act manfully, and not distrust our strength, because that best of Fathers, Who has created us and has called us to a life of evangelical perfection, knowing our condition, will give us not only strength by His aid, but also heavenly gifts in such abundance, that, surmounting all obstacles, we shall be able not merely to obey His most Beloved Son, but even to follow and imitate Him with the greatest cheerfulness and simplicity of heart; utterly despising those visible and temporal things, and ever yearning after those which are heavenly and eternal.*

163. *In Christ then, Who is God and Man, the True Light, the Brightness of Glory and of Eternal Light, the Spotless Mirror and Image of God; in Christ, appointed by the Eternal Father to be the Judge, Lawgiver and Savior of men; in Christ, to Whom the Holy Spirit has given testimony; and*

from Whom are all our merit, example, help, grace and reward; in Whom be all our meditation and imitation; in Whom all things are sweet, learned, holy and perfect; in Christ, Who is the light and expectation of the Gentiles, the end of the law, the salvation of God, the Father of the world to come, our final hope, Who of God is fashioned the Wisdom and Justice, Sanctification and unto us Redemption, Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit co-eternal, consubstantial, and co-equal lives and reigns one God, be everlasting praise, honor, majesty, and glory, world without end. Amen.

(Capuchin Constitutions of 1536)

[\[1\]](#) Can. 631 § 1 In an institute the General Chapter has supreme authority in accordance with the Constitutions. It is to be composed in such a way that it represents the whole institute and becomes a true sign of its unity in charity. Its principal functions are to protect the patrimony of the institute mentioned in can. 578 and to foster appropriate renewal in accord with that patrimony. It also elects the supreme Moderator, deals with matters of greater importance, and issues norms which all are bound to obey.

2 Can. 601 The evangelical counsel of obedience, undertaken in the spirit of faith and love in the following of Christ, who was obedient even unto death, obliges submission of one's will to lawful Superiors, who act in the place of God when they give commands that are in accordance

with each institute's own Constitutions.

[3] Can. 590 § 2 The individual members are bound to obey the Supreme Pontiff as their highest Superior, by reason also of their sacred bond of obedience.

[4] Can. 646 The purpose of the novitiate, by which life in an institute begins, is to give the novices a greater understanding of their divine vocation, and of their vocation to that institute. During the novitiate the novices are to experience the manner of life of the institute and form their minds and hearts in its spirit. At the same time their resolution and suitability are to be tested.

[5] Can. 675 § 1 Apostolic action is of the very nature of institutes dedicated to apostolic works. The whole life of the members is, therefore, to be imbued with an apostolic spirit, and the whole of their apostolic action is to be animated by a religious spirit.

§ 2 Apostolic action is always to proceed from intimate union with God, and is to confirm and foster this union.

§ 3 Apostolic action exercised in the name of the Church and by its command is to be performed in communion with the Church.

[6] Can. 119 § 1 In regard to elections, provided that a majority of those who must be summoned are present, what is decided by an absolute majority of those present has force of law. If there have been two inconclusive scrutinies, a vote is to be taken between the two candidates with the greatest number of votes or, if there are more than two, between the two senior by age. After a third inconclusive

scrutiny, that person is deemed elected who is senior by age.

[7] Can. 119 § 2 In regard to other matters, provided that a majority of those who must be summoned are present, what is decided by an absolute majority of those present has force of law. If the votes are equal after two scrutinies, the person presiding can break the tie with a casting vote.

