
CONSTITUTIONS



Franciscan Missionaries of the Eternal Word

*Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good
News to all creation.*

- MARK 16:15

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DECREE

CANONICAL ERECTION OF THE PUBLIC CLERICAL ASSOCIATION OF THE FAITHFUL KNOWN AS THE FRANCISCAN MISSIONARIES OF THE ETERNAL WORD

Whereas, by Decree dated May 14, 1990, Most Reverend Raymond J. Boland, Bishop of Birmingham in Alabama, established the Public Association of the Faithful known as The Community of the Eternal Word, whose role was to enhance the Catholic Church in the use of the electronic media for the advancement of Gospel Values; and,

Whereas, by Decree dated August 15, 1991, Most Reverend Raymond J. Boland, Bishop of Birmingham in Alabama, established the Public Association of the Faithful known as The Missionaries of the Eternal Word, successor to The Community of the Eternal Word, and with the same role; and,

Whereas, The Missionaries of the Eternal Word have evolved into a clerical association with the expanded role of promotion and support of pilgrimages to Eternal Word Television Network and the exercise of clerical duties; now,

Therefore, I, David E. Foley, Bishop of the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama, exercising my executive power and pursuant to Canons 301 and 312.3 hereby erect the public association of the faithful known as **FRANCISCAN MISSIONARIES OF THE ETERNAL WORD**.

Through this **DECREE** the **FRANCISCAN MISSIONARIES OF THE ETERNAL WORD** are given the juridic personality according to Canon 116 of a public clerical association of the faithful according to Canon 302. The **FRANCISCAN MISSIONARIES OF THE ETERNAL WORD** is the successor to The Missionaries of the Eternal Word.

This page will contain the Community Servant's letter
of the General Chapter's approval of the Constitutions.

* The role of the **FRANCISCAN MISSIONARIES OF THE ETERNAL WORD** is to enhance the role of the Catholic Church in the use of the electronic media for the advancement of Gospel Values; promote and support pilgrimages to Eternal Word Television Network; and, exercise clerical duties and responsibilities when requested and with the express permission of the Bishop of Birmingham.

The **FRANCISCAN MISSIONARIES OF THE ETERNAL WORD** are accorded the rights and obligations of a public clerical association of the faithful according to canon law and the Statutes of their association.

Executed this fourteenth day of August, on the Memorial of Maximilian Mary Kolbe,
1996.

+ David E. Foley
Most Reverend David E. Foley
Bishop of Birmingham in Alabama

Sister Mary Francis Liff
Chancellor

(SEAL)

This page will contain the Bishop's letter
of approval of the Statutes (Constitutions).



The lost I will seek out, the strayed I will bring back.

- EZEKIEL 34:16

Chapter I - The Life of the Franciscan Missionaries of the Eternal Word

1. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Mother Mary Angelica Rizzo of the Annunciation, P.C.P.A. founded the Community of the *Franciscan Missionaries of the Eternal Word* on May 2, 1987. The Community was established on May 14, 1990 by the Most Reverend Raymond J. Boland, D.D., former Bishop of Birmingham in Alabama, and is presently a *Public Clerical Association of the Christian Faithful* according to the norms of Canons 301-320. The Community is striving to become a *Clerical Religious Institute of Diocesan Right*.

2. In the spirit of St. Francis, its members, as brothers of a single family, profess the *First Order Rule of St. Francis* approved by Pope Honorius III and these *Constitutions*, and share in the life and work of this Community. The *General Statutes* for particular situations, drawn up and amended by the duly constituted General Chapter, supplement the *Constitutions*.

3. Our friars are joined in a community which lives a communal lifestyle so as to foster:

- a. a greater dedication and a more regular life;
- b. a more fervent recitation of the Divine Office;
- c. a better formation of candidates;
- d. a greater extension of the Kingdom of God throughout the world.

4. The contemplative life of Eucharistic adoration is intimately connected to and forms the foundation of the apostolic activity of our Community. Using the modern means of communication, especially through our familial association with the *Eternal Word Television Network*, the friars teach and evangelize the world using television, radio, the printed word, the Internet and any other means afforded them so as to call back the lost sheep and strengthen the weak. Since St. Francis was solicitous in providing for the needs of St. Clare, her nuns and the faithful, so the friars serve the spiritual and sacramental needs of Mother Angelica, her nuns, their future foundations and the faithful who visit their monasteries and friaries.

5. The entire Community, as well as each friar, is subject to the supreme authority of the Church. The foundation of our Community is religious profession by which the friars commit themselves to the Gospel life

of perfect charity, not simply by using the ordinary means of sanctification, but by the profession of the private vows of chastity, poverty and obedience.

6. All professed friars have equal rights and obligations, except in those matters pertaining to Holy Orders. The friars are definitively incorporated into our Community by their profession of perpetual vows.



Chapter II - Our Charism

A. *Charism of the Franciscan Missionaries of the Eternal Word*

by Mother M. Angelica (October 8, 1991)



7. *Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation* (Mk 16:15). With this command, Jesus, the Eternal Word, commissioned His followers to be missionaries of the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jn 14:6). This commission extends to *the whole Church ... and the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God* (Ad Gentes, 35). Of prime importance, though not preeminent or exclusive, this commission is entrusted to Religious as being the most effective means for evangelization (*Evangelii Nutuandi*, 63). Pope Paul VI comments further that Religious *embody the Church in her desire to give herself completely to the radical demand of the Beatitudes. By their lives they are a sign of total availability to God, the Church and the brethren.*

8. The [Franciscan] Missionaries of the Eternal Word, by the grace of God and with the assistance of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Francis of Assisi, will generously respond to our Lord's command. The Community will primarily fulfill this mission by evangelizing Catholics who have left the Church. Pope Paul again comments: *Today there is a very large number of baptized persons who ... have not formally renounced their Baptism but who are entirely indifferent to it and not living in accord with it* (*Evangelii Nutuandi*, 56). [Franciscan] Missionaries of the Eternal Word will strive to defend and explain the beauty and truth of the Catholic Faith to those who have left the "harbor of Truth" for whatever reason.

9. Such a mission requires support or pillars. Our two pillars are the Eucharist and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, under the mantle of the Magisterium of the Church. From the Eucharist we will draw from the fountain our strength, perseverance and inspiration. We will lead others back to Jesus, present in the Most Blessed Sacrament, for He alone can lead us to

the Father. Our Blessed Lady, Mother of the Eternal Word, is the surest and safest means to Jesus. She is the cause of our salvation. She, who brought the Truth into our world, longs to do so again into the hearts of men, especially in those who have wandered from *the pillar and bulwark of the Truth* (1 Tim 3:15). With these pillars and the continual assistance of St. Francis, we pray that we will bring countless souls back to Jesus, our Lord and God!

B. *Mother M. Angelica's Letter to the Friars* (June 13, 1991)

10. In his Infinite Goodness, the Eternal Father has granted you the grace and opportunity to imitate his Divine Son in bringing back the stray sheep and in serving them in every spiritual need, by direction, teaching, retreats, radio, television and the printed word. Through the power of the Spirit, prayer and the contemplation of the Scriptures you will find the necessary grace and gifts to fulfill your mission of ever looking for the stray sheep, whose needs you will lovingly fulfill with great solicitude. You will look after the faithful sheep in the fold, who will be most dear to your hearts because, through the power of the Spirit, you will mold them into the image of Jesus. You will direct their souls as the Spirit leads them to that degree of holiness destined for them from all eternity, ever keeping in mind the statement: *What gain, then, is it for a man to have won the whole world and to have lost or ruined his very self* (Luke 9:25)?

11. Prayer, contemplation, virtue and high morals must be more than just a direction for others to pursue. These qualities must be deeply rooted in your own hearts for you cannot give what you do not possess. The adoration of the Holy Eucharist and devotion to Our Lady, St. Francis and St. Louis De Montfort are very special trademarks of this Community. It is necessary, therefore, to seek always humility of heart, knowing that although we labor, God alone bears the fruit. Because of your deep awareness of the vast difference between creature and Creator and how His mercy drew you from nothingness into the bosom of the Father, you must have indefatigable zeal that His Kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven.

12. It is every brother's goal to reach that transformation of the soul into Jesus as described so beautifully in 2 Cor. 3:18, *And we, with our unveiled faces reflecting like mirrors the brightness of the Lord, all grow brighter and brighter as we are turned into the image that we reflect; this is the work of the*

Lord Who is Spirit. Knowing that in this valley of tears we are in need of friends in heaven and on earth to encourage us on our way, let the Holy Angels, these first defenders of truth, be your special companions on your journey home. May their love encourage you, their power protect you and their zeal be a source of edification when your will falters and your faith weakens.

13. I ask that Mary, Help of Christians, ever be your guide as you strive to bring the stray sheep back home and encourage the faithful ones ever onward to the heights of holiness. In order for you to be imbued with the Spirit of St. Francis it is well for you to read his Rule. Though it is not binding and the words seem strange, remember, we also have Saracens in our age – those who wish to destroy the faith by teaching error of every kind. Look for the Spirit of this humble and holy man and your own Constitutions will become alive with that spirit.



Chapter III - The Gospel Life of the Friars



14. *A vocation to the Religious Life ... cannot be explained, only accepted. It is a silent voice whose urging creates within the soul a burning desire to know God, to be with God, to serve God and completely dedicate one's total self to God* (Mother Angelica, *Come Follow Me*, p. 1).

15. By their profession of the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience the friars:

- a. dedicate themselves directly and entirely to God in a special manner;
- b. imitate Jesus more closely, reenacting the form of life that the Son of God made His own while on earth;
- c. deepen their baptismal consecration, have a greater freedom from earthly concerns and are enabled to witness to the glory of our future resurrection (cf. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 5; *Lumen Gentium*, 43, 44).
- d. reveal the splendor of the Church for the greater glory of God and allow the light of Christ to shine in the world more brightly (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 47).

16. The three vows are serious, deliberate and free promises made to God undertaken out of love for Him.

A. Our Life of Chastity



17. Christ loves the Church as a bridegroom loves his bride (cf. Eph. 5:31-32; Mt. 22:1-14; Mk. 2:19; Jn. 3:29). In light of this precious gift of divine grace flowing from the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the friars accept the gift of chastity while the fire of the Holy Spirit that unites their souls to our Lord makes Him their exclusive Spouse (cf. *First Version of the Letter to All the Faithful*, 8; *Redemptionis Donum*, no. 11).

18. By the vow of chastity the friars are able to dedicate themselves more easily with undivided hearts to God alone for the sake of Christ and His Kingdom. They choose the state of perfect and perpetual continence as a stimulus to the love of God and man, as a pledge of heavenly treasure and as a special source of spiritual fruitfulness in the world. By freely renouncing the joys of marriage and family life, the friars give witness to the future resurrection (cf. Lk. 20:34-36; Mt. 12:25).

19. *The heart of the celibate is strong enough to be on fire with zeal for God and Kingdom, large enough to embrace all mankind, warm enough to give without receiving in return, trusting enough to forgive without limit, peaceful because God's will is its only goal, persevering because it is not its own end, courageous because it grows more beautiful in sacrifice and serene because it always possesses its Beloved* (Mother Angelica, *Come Follow Me*, p. 10).

20. The friars commit themselves to observe perfect chastity in their thoughts, words and actions. They are to carefully keep watch over themselves so as not to allow anything to tarnish their purity. Since the Lord God must be loved in all His creatures with a pure heart, chaste affection, and reverence, the relationship of the friars toward women, especially those women consecrated to God, should be characterized by discretion and respect, courtesy and purity, after the example of our Seraphic Father, St. Francis (cf. 1 Tim 5:2). United with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the friars are to entrust the observance of perfect chastity to her maternal care.



21. Trusting in the words of our Lord and relying on His help, the friars should not presume on their own strength. They should persevere in the practice of supernatural and natural means to safeguard their chastity:

- a. intimate prayer (especially before the Blessed Sacrament);
- b. devotion to the passion of Jesus (especially the Stations of the Cross);
- c. meditation on the Sacred Scriptures;
- d. frequent Confession and spiritual direction;
- e. a personal love for and confidence in our Blessed Lady (especially the Rosary);
- f. mortification, custody of the senses and a sacrificial love for others;

- g. a balanced way of life including a healthy diet, regular sleep, recreation, manual labor, exercise, study and personal creativity;
- h. a genuine participation in the fraternal life of the Community.

B. Our Life of Poverty



22. *Our Lord Jesus made Himself poor for us in this world so that we might be enriched by His poverty* (2 Cor. 8:9; cf. Mt. 8:20). It is only the *poor in spirit* (Mt. 5:3), like Mary, Mother of the Eternal Word, who can understand the poverty of Bethlehem, of the Crucifixion and of the Eucharist to see therein the infinite riches of God's love and mercy. In

their desire to imitate Jesus and Mary, Francis and Clare, the friars vow to live a poor and humble life.

23. By the profession of the perpetual vow of poverty the friars completely renounce the ownership of earthly goods, so that they may store up for themselves heavenly treasure. Freed from all worldly cares, therefore, they love their heavenly Father more easily and entrust themselves completely to His providential care (cf. Mt. 6:20).

24. In poverty of spirit we hold back nothing of ourselves for ourselves (cf. *Letter to the Entire Order*, 29). *This vow reaches down into the depths of the soul and requires a generous gift of one's time, talents, strength, love, virtue and even life if necessary. The soul truly living the vow of poverty lives and gives completely as the Spirit leads in the present moment* (Mother Angelica, *Come and Follow Me*, p. 8).

25. To observe Franciscan poverty the friars are to avoid acts of ownership, be subject to their servants in the use of temporal goods and show themselves to be genuinely poor in fact as well as in spirit (cf. no. 275). Each friar should love and practice most exalted poverty as befits followers of the poor and humble St. Francis. The friars should never forget that they are poor men and pilgrims in this world and that goods acquired by them or

provided for them are not their own. These goods are destined solely for a simple life-style and, out of zeal for souls, for the fulfillment of the Community's apostolates and works of charity.

26. Superiors should excel in the observance of poverty because they must guide others by their example. They should be cautious of weakening the observance of poverty by indiscriminate permissions. At the same time, superiors should carefully see to it that the friars' talents are not stifled and that they have all that is necessary for their life, work and a quality presentation of the Gospel which excels in technical perfection and effectiveness (cf. *Inter Mirifica*, no. 14).

27. Before temporary profession of vows a novice is to cede administration of his property to whomever he prefers and to dispose freely of their use and revenues for the duration of temporary vows. A friar who has professed temporary vows retains ownership and the capacity to acquire further property. Disposition of property during temporary profession of vows is carried out according to the *General Statutes*.

28. Within sixty days prior to his perpetual profession, he must also renounce ownership of any property he actually possesses in accordance with the *General Statutes*, which, if possible, is also valid under civil law, and this only on the condition that perpetual profession of vows actually takes place. To change these dispositions for a just cause and to place any act whatsoever in matters of temporal goods, he needs permission according to the *General Statutes*.

29. The friars should not possess goods, particularly immovable goods, without evident necessity for the life of the friars or without proportionate benefit to the works of our Community. They should always, however, avoid any semblance of avarice or unwarranted accumulation and give witness to a simple and austere life. They should willingly bear the poverty of communal life and the inconveniences arising from it.

30. The friars should consider themselves bound by the common law of work. They may accept compensation and pensions for their work and join social security plans in accordance with the *General Statutes*, with due regard for no. 32 of these *Constitutions*.

31. According to the ways and means prescribed by the General Chapter, regions and friaries should share their temporal goods with each other so that those who have more assist those who suffer want. The friars from their own resources should willingly help meet the necessities of the Church and the poor whom all Religious should love with the tenderness of Christ.

32. According to the declarations of the Church and of our Community, its friaries are capable of owning property, both movable and immovable; individual friars may never do so. All goods which accrue to the friars in any way whatsoever, either as compensation for work or for some other reason or as a gift, even if given to them personally, belong to the friary or, according to the *General Statutes*, to some other juridic person in our Community.

33. A moderate use of money which today is the common means of exchange even for the poorest of people, is allowed the friars under the authority and control of their servants, while at the same time safeguarding the norms and principles of a life of poverty and of common life.

34. If the friars cannot support themselves by their own work, they may have recourse to begging alms, but only where this form of poverty can bear witness to the Gospel. Since Lady Poverty is an essential part of the Franciscan Spirit, the friars should discuss communal poverty, both in and outside chapters, so that this evangelical witness may always be displayed. It is the right of General and Friary Chapters to judge communal forms of poverty.

C. Our Life of Obedience



35. Jesus came to do the Father's will by taking the form of a servant, learning obedience through His suffering and death, so that He would become for us the source of our salvation (cf. Jn. 4:34; 5:30; Heb. 10:7; Phi. 2:7; Heb. 5:8; Rom. 5:19). The friars by obedience, therefore, freely surrender their own wills to God, offering themselves to Him as a holocaust so as to be one with the divine will after the example of Jesus Christ.

36. In the spirit of faith, the friars subject themselves to their superiors in the Church. The friars grow in dignity and integrity as they obey God's will by responding to their superiors through obedience. The friars are to hold in reverence, respect and obedience our Holy Father, the Bishop of Rome, as their highest superior by reason of their vows and the example of St. Francis.

37. The Community places itself under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Birmingham and the friars are obedient to him according to the universal law of the Church and these *Constitutions*. The friars are subject, according to the norm of law, to the dicasteries of the Roman Curia and to the local ordinaries in whatever pertains to their pastoral activity.

38. The friars are obedient to their servants when they command by virtue of the vow of obedience in accordance with the *Rule* and *Constitutions*. In the spirit of faith and of love for the will of God, the friars should obey their superiors in everything which is not contrary to a well-informed conscience and to the *Rule* and *Constitutions*, even when they are not formally commanded by virtue of the vow of obedience.

39. Servants are to serve the Community in striving to discern God's will and the common good in accord with the *Rule* and our *Constitutions*. They are to be docile to the will of the Lord in a spirit of love and service in the exercise of their office. They are to be approachable so that the friars can easily speak with them. The servants should listen to the friars in order to discern God's will for them and to encourage communal efforts for the good of the Community and the Church. They should lead the friars in exercising an active and responsible obedience in their ordinary duties and new undertakings, without, however, compromising their own authority to decide and prescribe what must be done.

40. The friars on their part are to highly esteem their superiors by avoiding all detraction and complaint and by embracing true loving obedience which is pleasing to God and one's neighbor (cf. *Regula Bullata* X, 7; *Admonitions* III, 6, 10; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:17). To observe the vow of obedience well is the purest expression of poverty (cf. St. Bonaventure, *Major Life*, VII, 2). The vow of obedience *is the vow of union and sanctity for it looks for every opportunity to unite the will of the Religious with the will of God as it makes itself known in the present moment* (Mother Angelica, *Come Follow Me*, p. 12).

D. Our Life according to the *Rule*, *Constitutions* and *General Statutes*



41. The *Rule* for our Community, confirmed by Pope Honorius III and interpreted by successive Popes, is the fundamental law of the whole Community from which the friars should draw inspiration and to which they should conform their lives. It is the right of the Apostolic See, either on its own initiative or at the request of the General Chapter, to interpret the *Rule of St. Francis* authentically.

42. These *Constitutions* may only be amended by the General Chapter (cf. no. 299). Such amendments require the approval of the Bishop of Birmingham to carry the force of law, except for those matters which the Apostolic See has taken in hand. The Bishop of Birmingham can grant a dispensation from the *Constitutions* in particular cases.

43. The declarative interpretations of the *Constitutions* belongs to the General Chapter. However, outside of the General Chapter for an urgent reason, the Community Servant with his Council can give an interpretation which is valid until the next General Chapter. The authentic interpretation is reserved to the Bishop of Birmingham. The General Chapter can issue laws and decrees regarding the faithful observance of the *Rule* and *Constitutions*.

44. The General Chapter may enact, interpret or change the *General Statutes* for the entire Fraternity. In more urgent cases the interpretation of, or changes in, the *General Statutes* may be enacted by the Community Servant with his Council which are valid until the next General Chapter.

45. The *Rule*, *Constitutions* and *General Statutes* bind in conscience, proportionate to the importance of the matter in question. Chiefly out of love for evangelical perfection and in the spirit of our Community, the friars should strive to faithfully observe the *Rule*, *Constitutions*, and *General Statutes*, as obliged by their religious profession.

46. The following may grant a temporary dispensation from the disciplinary norms of the *Constitutions* and *General Statutes* for a just and reasonable cause:

- a. the Community Servant for individual friars and friaries;
- b. the Local Servant for his own and for other friars residing in the friary.

47. The friars should see to it that they continuously study and deepen their knowledge of the *Rule*, the *Constitutions*, the writings and lives of St. Francis and Mother Angelica, along with other documents and writings relevant to the life of our Community, and to make the spirit of these their own. The *Rule* and the *Constitutions* are to be read in common at a time and in a manner determined by the *General Statutes*.



Chapter IV - Our Life of Formation

A. Principles of Formation



48. *The Religious must daily grow in a greater participation in the Divine Nature - in grace. The vows empty the soul in order for God to fill it with Himself. There should be a constant “emptying - filling” process of growth until the soul and God are one* (Mother Angelica, *Come Follow Me*, p. 13).

49. Daily participation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, reception of Holy Communion and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament are the foundations of our Community’s life of formation.

50. From their very entrance into the Community the friars should:
 - a. be trained progressively and continuously in Franciscan religious life;
 - b. master the charism of our Community, its history, *Rule* and *Constitutions*;
 - c. be instructed accurately in the obligations of religious profession, especially the theological, ecclesial and canonical aspects of the evangelical counsels;
 - d. learn to appreciate and always give witness to the Franciscan brotherhood;
 - e. accustom themselves to manual labor after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ in accordance with the instructions of Saint Francis.
51. The friars are trained:
 - a. to live in the spirit of prayer and in a state of permanent oblation to our Heavenly Father;
 - b. to conform themselves to the life of Christ through reading and meditating on Sacred Scripture, especially the Holy Gospel;
 - c. to have a filial devotion to the Blessed Virgin, perfect disciple of Jesus and model of charity. To strengthen their vocations they foster an intimate communion of life with her and totally consecrate themselves to her in the spirit of St. Louis Marie de Montfort’s *True Devotion to Mary*;

- d. to celebrate the *Liturgy of the Hours* by which they pray to God in the name of the Church on behalf of all the people committed to them (cf. Can. 246, §2).

52. *The object of formation is the whole person called to seek and love God with all one's heart, and with all one's soul, and with all one's might, and one's neighbor as one's self. Life in the Spirit is of primary importance* since the friars must be guided by the original inspiration of our Community (cf. *Vita Consecrata*, no. 71). Therefore, the friars are formed in our founding charism and in all the elements of religious life, including the spiritual, human, fraternal, apostolic, cultural, pastoral and intellectual dimensions.

53. The formation and testing of a vocation, both by the friar-candidate and by the Community, extends over the entire period between reception into postulancy and perpetual profession.

54. A *Directory of Formation* is to be published for the entire Community and should be revised from time to time as necessity dictates. It should present clearly, and in all its stages, the program to be followed in the formation of the friars so that they may assimilate fully the spirituality of our Community (cf. *Vita Consecrata*, no. 68). This directory is to be approved by the General Chapter, or outside of the General Chapter, by the Community Servant together with his Council.

55. For the entire Community, a Formation Commission with a chairman is to be established according to the *Directory of Formation*. This Commission is to advise the Community Servant and his Council about matters pertaining to the various levels of formation and review our formation program periodically.

56. Directors of Formation are to be:
- a. perpetually professed members of the Community;
 - b. free from other duties that would impede their work of formation (as far as possible);
 - c. well-versed in the principles of formation;
 - d. outstanding for their spirit of prayer, charity and prudence;
 - e. remarkable for their dedication to Eucharistic adoration and the mission of evangelization;
 - f. notable for their understanding and true concern for those entrusted to them.

57. Directors of Formation are responsible to ascertain God's action in the lives of those placed in their care and to nourish this work of grace by teaching solid doctrine and instilling the practice of prayer. They are to evaluate the progress of those on the journey, verifying whether they have a vocation to our Community and the capacity to profess temporary and perpetual vows. The effectiveness of formation depends greatly on the encouragement, firmness and prudence which they employ. Assistant directors may also be appointed when this is deemed necessary.

58. Servants, Directors of Formation and their students should strive to have a harmony of mind and objectives. Within the Community, the young friars should find a spirit of generosity, fervor and harmony. From this, they will learn the value of mutual fraternal support through which they will progress more easily and persevere more firmly in their vocations.

59. Friars should not exclude appropriate human experiences nor relationships with their own families.

60. *There is no weakness of character that can not be overcome if the person in question wills to change. There is no tendency to sin that cannot be controlled if the will is strong. Men often fail to become holy, not because they lack talent, but because they lack the will power to persevere. We do not become holy because we do not **want** to be holy* (Mother Angelica, *Two Wills: His and Mine*, p. 2)

B. Vocations



61. With unceasing prayer, apostolic zeal and the witness of their own lives, all the friars should cooperate in recruiting and fostering vocations for the whole Church and our Community. When any man inquires about our Community the friars should receive him kindly, encourage him and provide information about our way of life.

62. With full respect for the freedom of each person, the seeds of a vocation in a young man should be nurtured diligently. The Community Servant shall establish a vocation program and, with the counsel of his Council, appoint a Vocation Director. Assistant directors may also be appointed when deemed necessary.

63. To admit into our Community secular clergy, seminarians or those who have been admitted into another institute of consecrated life, the prescriptions of universal law should be observed.

C. Postulancy

64. Postulancy, the first stage of formation, is a period of living in community, whereby the candidate experiences our way of life and prepares for entrance into the novitiate. The postulant's knowledge of Catholic doctrine, the vowed life, our apostolate and spirituality are fostered during this period according to the *Directory of Formation*. The postulancy program is for a period of nine to twelve months. The Community Servant with the consent of his Council may extend it six months.

65. The superiors along with the Vocation Director should evaluate in candidates the signs and qualities of a genuine vocation to our Community. Sufficiently mature Catholic men may enter the postulancy program who:

- a. are aware of a religious vocation and its obligations;
- b. freely submit a request in writing;
- c. have freedom of intention;
- d. have adequate physical and psychological health, evaluated within the context of his family background;
- e. have the necessary intellectual, moral and spiritual development;
- f. have the ability to live the fraternal and apostolic life of the Community;
- g. submit testimonials and documents as determined by the *Directory of Formation* (cf. Can. 645, §§1-2);
- h. are endowed with the qualities required by universal law and the *Directory of Formation* (cf. Cann. 597; 643).

66. Entrance into the postulancy program is facilitated by the Vocation Director. Upon entrance into the postulancy program, 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. He also renounces the rights to claim compensation for any accident or to sue for any injuries incurred while with the Community. The norms which regulate a postulant's finances shall be determined by the *General Statutes*.

67. The Community Servant with the counsel of his Council is to appoint a Postulant Director who ensures the requirements for admission into Religious life, outlined in Canons 641-645, are satisfied. Having consulted with the Postulant Director, the Community Servant with the consent of his Council admits the candidate into the postulancy program.

68. The postulant may freely depart the Community at any time. In addition, if it becomes evident to the Postulant Director that a candidate's vocation lies elsewhere, after having obtained the consent of the Community Servant, the postulant is requested to leave the Community.

69. To be admitted to the novitiate, it is required that the postulant, if he so freely chooses, file a petition in writing to the Community Servant requesting admission. The text of the petition shall be determined by the *General Statutes*. After considering the recommendation of the Postulant Director, the Community Servant with the consent of his Council shall determine if the postulant is to be admitted to the novitiate (cf. no. 74).

70. Prior to entrance into the novitiate, the postulant shall make a retreat of at least five days.

D. Novitiate



71. *The Father is glorified when a poor weak creature, made in His image, yields itself so completely to the sanctifying power of the Spirit, that a "reflection turns to transformation"* (Mother Angelica, *Come Follow Me*, p. 5; 2 Cor 3:18).

72. The novitiate, the second stage of formation, constitutes the indispensable foundation of all formation. It should be dedicated solely to instructing candidates thoroughly and soundly in the way of life of the *Franciscan Missionaries of the Eternal Word* according to the *Directory of Formation*. Novices are to be progressively trained to engage in the various works of our Community, all the while cultivating that union with Christ which must be the wellspring of every apostolic activity.

73. Though distinct, novitiate life is to be consistent with the life they will live as professed Religious. Professional training and studies directed toward obtaining diplomas are excluded from the novitiate year. Although some separation of the novices is required, they may, according to the prudent judgement of the Novice Director, retain appropriate relationships with the other friars, their families and others.

74. Admission to our Community begins by reception into the novitiate, effected by the Community Servant with the consent of his Council (obtained by secret vote).

75. The beginning of the novitiate should be a public act, recorded in a book for this purpose and conducted according to approved rites and the *General Statutes*. After the candidate has received the habit of our Community, a new name and title according to the *General Statutes*, he shall make a twelve month novitiate in a friary duly designated for this purpose.

76. With due regard for the prescriptions of Canons 647-649, absence from the Novitiate house which lasts more than three months, either continuous or interrupted, renders the novitiate invalid. An absence of more than fifteen days must be supplied. For a just reason the Community Servant may allow first profession to be anticipated, but not by more than fifteen days.

77. Only the Community Servant with the consent of his Council may, by written decree, erect, transfer, or suppress the Novitiate house. The Community Servant can permit the group of novices to live for a period of time in another friary of our Community designated by him. In particular cases, and as an exception, the Community Servant with the consent of his Council may allow a candidate to make his novitiate in another friary of our Community under the guidance of an approved friar-priest.

78. The Novice Director is appointed by the Community Servant with the counsel of his Council, pursuant to the norms of Canons 650, §2 and 651. Assistant directors, subject to the Novice Director, may be appointed when deemed necessary.

79. A novice may freely depart the Community at any time. In addition, if it becomes evident to the Novice Director that a candidate's vocation lies elsewhere, after having obtained the consent of the Community Servant, he is requested to leave the Community. Should there be danger of delay, the Local Servant with the consent of the Friary Chapter may dismiss him.

80. Prior to first profession, the Novice Director shall present his report and opinion concerning each novice to the Community Servant. The Community Servant, either in person or through a delegate, should inquire into the intentions of the novices and within a Community Chapter meeting solicit the opinions of the members. If there is any doubt about the suitability of a novice, his novitiate may be extended up to one more year by the Community Servant (cf. Can. 648 § 3).

81. Two months prior to the end of the novitiate year, the novice, if he so freely chooses, is to petition the Community Servant to make first profession. The text of the petition shall be determined by the *General Statutes*. Admission to first profession and renewal of temporary profession is reserved to the Community Servant with the consent of his Council (obtained by secret vote).

82. Prior to first profession, the novice shall make a retreat of at least five days.

83. The Community Servant, the Local Servant or their delegates may admit a novice in danger of death to first profession. Should the novice recover he is required to complete the novitiate.

E. Temporary Profession



84. *The vows are not chains that bind, but keys that open – they are not things sacrificed, but gifts received – they are not privations that warp, but freedoms that deliver – they are not the myrrh of penance, but the incense of sacrifices lovingly ascending to the throne of God* (Mother Angelica, *Come Follow Me*, p. 3).

85. The period of temporary vows (begun with first profession) is intended to consolidate and perfect the formation begun in the novitiate, and to complete the candidate's and the Community's experience of each other.

86. This period of formation is to be:

- a. systematic, but adapted to the capacity of each friar;
- b. spiritual, yet apostolic;
- c. doctrinal and, at the same time practical. (Suitable degrees, both ecclesiastical and civil, are also to be pursued when appropriate.)

87. Temporary vows, by their very nature, are already oriented toward perpetual profession, for which it must be, as it were, *an apprenticeship and a preparation* (*Renovationis Causam*, no. 7).

88. The profession of temporary vows for our friars is received by the Community Servant or by his delegate according to the approved ritual. Immediately after temporary profession, the newly professed, together with the Community Servant or his delegate, and two witnesses, shall sign the *Register of Temporary Profession* in accordance with the *General Statutes* (cf. no. 101 for the formula of religious profession).

89. Temporary vows are taken for a period of one year at a time for three to six years, renewed annually. Since, in certain cases the extension of temporary profession can be an aid to maturity, while in others it can involve drawbacks, the Community Servant with the consent of his Council may extend the period of temporary profession, but not beyond nine years.

90. Friars who have professed temporary vows are bound by the same obligations as those who have professed perpetual vows, i.e., to observe the *Rule* and *Constitutions*. They likewise share in all the graces and privileges of the Community, as do the perpetually professed. However, they lack active and passive voice.

91. A Director of Temporary Professed is to be appointed by the Community Servant with the counsel of his Council. He should regularly call the temporary professed friars' attention to the apostolate and introduce them to various works by way of practical assignments, insuring that the norms outlined in the *Directory of Formation* are carried out.

92. The Community Servant, aware of his duty, should not defer to a later date the decision to return a friar to the world which he could and should have made earlier (cf. Cann. 653, §1; 696, §2). When temporary profession has expired, the Community Servant after consulting his Council, can exclude a friar from subsequent profession if just causes are present, including that of illness contracted after profession (cf. Can. 689).

93. If a friar in temporary vows wishes to leave, he may do so when his vows expire, or he may petition the Bishop of Birmingham for a dispensation after receiving the prior approval of the Community Servant with the consent of his Council. Upon receipt of the dispensation, the Community Servant shall issue a written statement to this effect indicating the end of all obligations on either part.

94. A candidate who has legitimately left the Community after completing novitiate or after temporary profession can only be admitted by the Community Servant with the consent of his Council. The Community Servant shall determine a suitable probationary period before temporary profession, without the obligation of repeating the novitiate, and a time in such vows prior to perpetual profession according to no. 89 of these *Constitutions*.

95. Two months prior to the expiration of temporary vows the friar, when eligible and if he so freely chooses, is to file with the Community Servant a petition wherein he requests permission to renew his temporary vows or to profess perpetual vows, as the case may be. The text of this

petition is contained in the *General Statutes*.

96. It is desirable that perpetual profession, whereby a friar is consecrated to God forever and definitively incorporated into our Community, should be preceded by a sufficiently long immediate preparation, according to the *General Statutes*, so that it can be considered a “second novitiate.”

F. Perpetual Profession



97. The perpetual profession of vows not only builds up the Mystical Body of Christ, but shows forth what God’s love, goodness and beauty can do. Trusting in God’s grace to sustain this lifelong commitment, the friar totally consecrates himself to God for the whole of his life, an act which inspires and encourages his fellow friars to renew their own commitment and dedication to God.

98. It is proper that when a friar pronounces his perpetual vows, he should have reached the degree of spiritual and affective maturity required, so that the religious state to which he is committing himself, in a stable and certain manner, may really be for him a means of perfection and greater love, rather than a burden too heavy to carry.

99. Admission to perpetual profession is reserved to the Community Servant with the consent of his Council (obtained by secret vote).

100. The profession of perpetual vows for our friars is received by the Community Servant or by his delegate according to the approved ritual. Immediately after perpetual profession, the newly professed, together with the Community Servant or his delegate and two witnesses, shall sign the *Register of Perpetual Profession* in accordance with the *General Statutes*. Perpetual profession may be anticipated for a just reason, but not by more than three months.

101. The formula of religious profession is the following:

Since for the glory of God the Lord has given me this grace of living more perfectly and with firm will the Gospel of Jesus Christ, I, brother N.N., in the presence of the assembled brothers, and of you, Reverend Father, vow for (one year; for the whole of my life) to live in obedience, without anything of my own, and in chastity, according to the Rule of St. Francis confirmed by Pope Honorius III and the Constitutions of the Franciscan Missionaries of the Eternal Word. I dedicate myself to preaching and teaching the Catholic Faith through the works of the apostolate so as to bring the lost sheep into the heart of the Church, close to Jesus in the Eucharist, to Our Lady, and to the Holy Father. Therefore, with all my heart I give myself to this brotherhood that through the work of the Holy Spirit, the intercession of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, our Father Francis, and all the Saints, and with the help of my brothers, I may fulfill my consecration to the service of God and the Church.



102. *A vocation is a gift from beginning to end – a call to rise above the things of this world and prove by a living witness that there is something more and better to come. Those who have been called to this witnessing role are not deprived of love, comfort or joy. They merely find these gifts on a more spiritual and lasting level. Their personalities are not destroyed in some sacrificial act of piety, but developed and made beautiful by the grace of God constantly being poured into their emptying vessels* (Mother Angelica, *Come Follow Me*, p. 2).

G. Preparation for Sacred Orders

103. A calling to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ is a sublime call from God requiring discernment, prayer and sacrifice. Upon the priest is placed great responsibility to carry out the mandates of Christ and the Church. Therefore, great care and diligence must be taken to ensure that our candidates are properly formed to carry out their sacred duties.

104. Friars aspiring to Sacred Orders should have acquired that level of education in the humanities and sciences which is normally expected of young men in today's society as a requisite for higher studies. Philosophical and theological courses should be so coordinated as to facilitate the gradual opening of the minds of the students both to the treasures of human wisdom and to the mysteries of Christ.

105. Friar-students should study in seminaries and institutes of learning which are empowered to confer appropriate degrees and are equipped with the necessary facilities. Students are to be trained in seminaries of our Community or in other suitable institutes, always taking into account the nature of our Community and its apostolates.

106. When the friars are being educated in seminaries or other institutes not belonging to our Community, our own house of formation, where possible, is to be established locally.

107. A Director of Priestly Formation is to be appointed by the Community Servant with the counsel of his Council, whose duty it is to serve the friars in the seminary by:

- a. overseeing the fulfilment of seminary requirements and advancement toward Holy Orders;

- b. monitoring their academic progress;
- c. insuring that the *Directory of Formation* is being fulfilled;
- d. informing the Community Servant when they are eligible for ministries and Sacred Orders;
- e. acting as a liaison with the seminary, our Community and the Bishop of Birmingham;
- f. insuring that any Sacred Orders received are recorded and kept in the archives together with other documents pertaining to the individual friar;
- g. insuring that a testimonial of ordination to the diaconate and priesthood is sent to the parish of baptism.

108. After proper preparation, candidates for the ministries of lector and acolyte, with the consent of the Community Servant and his Council, shall make a written request of the Bishop of Birmingham to allow them to be installed as such.

109. The Community Servant shall require a report on the suitability of each diaconal and priestly candidate from the Director of Priestly Formation and have heard the views of each friar belonging to the friary to which the candidate has been assigned *de familia*.

110. The Community Servant shall share all appropriate information with his Council and obtain its consent before proceeding to recommend any candidate to the Bishop of Birmingham for ordination to the diaconate or priesthood. This same information shall likewise be submitted to the Bishop of Birmingham, whose jurisdiction and consent is required to admit the candidate to Sacred Orders. Ordination to the diaconate effects the candidate's incardination into the Diocese of Birmingham (cf. Canm. 1018; 1019).

111. Before a deacon is promoted to the priesthood, he must have completed his course of theological studies and participated in pastoral care, exercising his diaconal order for a suitable period of time to be defined by the Community Servant (cf. Can. 1032, §2). A candidate for Sacred Orders must be perpetually professed and submit a written petition to the Bishop of Birmingham and to the Community Servant. The text of this petition is to be in accord with seminary guidelines.

H. Lay Brothers' Formation

112. Recognizing the unique value and essential place of the lay brother vocation, our Community highly esteems this gift from our Heavenly Father as an authentic path to holiness. The Community benefits greatly from the lay brothers' stable and consistent presence. They exemplify in a concrete way: fraternity, humility, availability, hiddenness, prayerful example and generous service.

113. The brothers who are not aspiring to Holy Orders should receive suitable theological and catechetical training during their formation. They should also learn the sciences and trades that our apostolates and the needs of the Community require.

I. Ongoing Formation

114. On-going formation, which continues for the whole of life, is ultimately the responsibility of each friar. Among other things, human and spiritual growth (and maturity) should be developed through:

- a. cooperation with God's grace;
- b. the wise use of time;
- c. silence and spiritual reading;
- d. Franciscan studies and conferences;
- e. healthy recreation;
- f. fidelity to prayer;
- g. personal study.

115. The Community Servant, with assistance from the Formation Commission, is to assure that on-going formation of the perpetually professed friars is taking place according to the *Directory of Formation*.

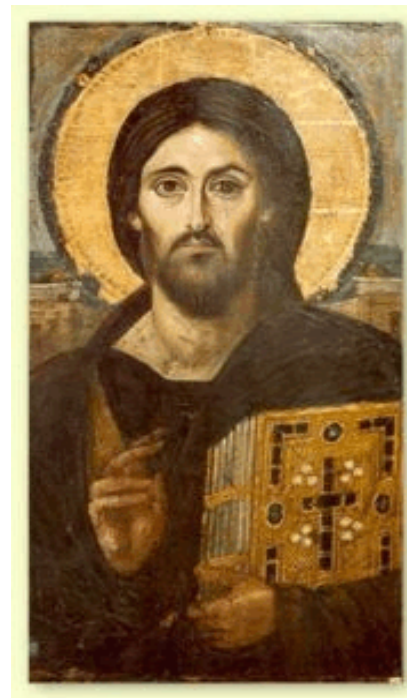
116. According to the *Directory of Formation*, the Community Servant with the assistance of the Formation Commission, assures that:

- a. friar-priests receive on-going priestly formation (cf. *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no.'s 70-81);
- b. newly ordained friar-priests receive the necessary assistance in this period of transition to active priestly life;

- c. friar-priests intimately and continually join together religious profession with clerical life;
- d. friar-priests learn to strengthen their spiritual life in the exercise of Sacred Orders and pastoral activity.

117. After completion of regular studies, formation should always be continued and adapted to the needs of the times. Therefore, chapters and superiors should make provision that periodicals, books and other useful aids are available to the friars. Superiors should encourage the participation of the friars in programs of formation for Religious.

118. Taking into account the Community's needs, the Community Servant should grant a leave of absence from assignments to the perpetually professed friars whose request is reasonable, either to renew themselves through the contemplation of the divine mysteries or to prepare themselves by special study and training for a more fruitful apostolate and religious life.



J. Separation of Members from the Community

119. If a friar in perpetual vows wishes to leave the Community, he should only do so for the gravest reasons weighed before God (cf. Can. 691§1).

120. In all cases of separation from our Community or absence from the religious house, exclaustation, permission to depart from our Community, dispensation from vows, and the dismissal of friars both in temporary and perpetual vows, the norms and procedures of canon law are to be followed as stipulated in Canons 684-704. In addition, if it is clearly evident that a friar in perpetual vows should leave, he must petition the Bishop of Birmingham through the Community Servant. At the time of dispensation of any perpetually professed friar, the Community Servant will issue a formal statement to this effect indicating the end of all obligations on both parties.

121. In each case of dismissal the reason for it must be made known to the friar and he should be given full liberty to defend himself both to our Community and to the Bishop of Birmingham. Before the decree of dismissal is issued, the friar should be granted, with due observance of the law, the option of leaving the Community of his own accord.

122. If the friar is a deacon or a priest, appropriate arrangements must be made with the Bishop of Birmingham concerning his status as regards his incardination in the diocese, and all diocesan statutes must be observed. If he is not to remain in the diocese, his status must be clarified with the Bishop of Birmingham before he leaves the Community.

123. Men who have legitimately left the Community or who have been legitimately dismissed from it can request nothing from it for any work which they may have done as members. However, the Community should assist them in their time of transition.

124. All the friars should practice fraternal charity toward those who have left our Fraternity, remembering them to God in their prayers.

Chapter V - Our Life of Prayer



125. St. Francis seemed *not so much to be praying as becoming himself a prayer. He strove constantly to have his spirit present in Heaven and thus he was already a citizen with the Angels. His whole soul thirsted after Christ, and he dedicated not only his whole heart, but his whole body as well, to Him* (2 Celano, no.'s 94 - 95).

126. By their religious profession the friars are totally subject to God who is loved above all else. Therefore, contemplation of things divine and assiduous union with God in prayer are to be the first and foremost duties of the friars (cf. Can. 663, §1).

127. The Lord taught His disciples by word and example to pray always. The friars should endeavor to have the spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working so as to:

- a. link prayer with work, maintaining a deep communion with their heavenly Father and perfecting it through the practice of virtue;
- b. discern all things in the light of faith;
- c. overcome difficulties on the strength of hope while awaiting the future glory;
- d. become more and more united to God in the love of Christ so that in all their actions they may glorify the Father.

A. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

128. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the source and summit of the entire life of the Church (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 11; *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 10). Its celebration, therefore, should be the center of the spiritual and apostolic life of each friary.

129. Striving to ponder the full magnitude of these Sacred Mysteries, with

the Immaculate Mother as guide, the friars should meditate on the Eucharist as a *Sacrifice-Sacrament*, *Communion-Sacrament* and *Presence-Sacrament* (cf. *Redemptor Hominis*, no. 20).

130. Following the example of the Seraphic Patriarch, the friars have chosen to live in a special way with Christ crucified. As the friars partake in the Paschal Mystery of the Eucharist, they are drawn into intimate communion with Jesus, and in Him, with each other.

131. Since the Mass is the source of fraternal communion, the friars should:

- a. participate daily in the Eucharistic Sacrifice and be nourished at the table of the Lord's Body and Blood;
- b. learn to offer themselves in union with the Divine Victim;
- c. allow themselves to be drawn, through Christ the Mediator, day by day, into that ever more perfect union with God and each other so that at last God may be all in all.

132. The friars should strive to assist at the Eucharistic liturgy in common so that the participation of the brotherhood, united in the same Eucharistic Sacrifice, may be more evident. Concelebration by the friar-priests, as circumstances permit, is encouraged.

133. It is the right of the Local Servant to grant permission to preach in our chapels and oratories to those whom he is certain have been approved as qualified by their ordinaries (cf. Can. 765).

134. Diligent care should be given to our chapels, relics of the saints, furnishings, and whatever else is set apart for liturgical worship. The *Franciscan Sacramentary* and *Franciscan Lectionary* are to be used for Mass.

135. To ensure the validity and fruitfulness of sacred liturgical actions the rites of the Church should be followed carefully. Since these sacred actions both initiate and perfect union with God, the friars should participate in them fully and prepare themselves through study of liturgical texts.

B. The Liturgy of the Hours

136. The richness of the Eucharist is extended to the various hours of our day by the *Divine Office* since it is:

- a. an eternal hymn of praise and thanksgiving;
- b. a commemoration of the mysteries of salvation;
- c. a form of intercessory prayer;
- d. a foretaste of heavenly glory.

137. The friars, therefore, should greatly esteem this prayer since (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no.'s 83-84):

- a. therein they are united with Christ the High Priest, continuing His priestly work;
- b. they join with the Universal Church, His Bride, praising the Lord and interceding for the salvation of the world;
- c. they make *an excellent preparation for the fruitful celebration of the Eucharist* (*General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours*, no. 12).

138. This prayer, known as the *Liturgy of the Hours*, calls forth in a special way the worship of the Blessed Sacrament. In each friary all the friars, unless legitimately impeded, shall celebrate daily the *Liturgy of the Hours* in common and, whenever possible, celebrate them before the exposed Blessed Sacrament.

139. The friars are to celebrate the *Liturgy of the Hours* according to the prescriptions of the *General Instruction*, using the *Franciscan Ordo* and *Franciscan Supplement* to the *Liturgy of the Hours*. They should strive to celebrate Lauds and Vespers with greater solemnity, and whenever possible, encourage the participation of the faithful.

140. Obligations regarding the *Liturgy of the Hours*:

- a. All the friars, unless excused by their servant or for some other excusing cause, are to celebrate daily the entire *Liturgy of the Hours* in common;
- b. A friary which, for a serious reason, is unable to recite the full *Liturgy of the Hours* in common can request through its Friary Chapter that the Community Servant, with the consent of his Council, determine which canonical hours are to be celebrated in common;
- c. Perpetually professed friar-clerics are obliged to recite privately those hours which they did not fulfill in common;

- d. Perpetually professed friars who are not clerics, and who do not celebrate the *Liturgy of the Hours* in common, are obliged to recite the canonical hours privately or the *Our Fathers* as prescribed in the *Rule*;
- e. Temporary professed friars are urged to recite Lauds and Vespers privately, either from the *Liturgy of the Hours* or the *Our Fathers* as prescribed in the *Rule*, should they not have prayed these in common.

C. Eucharistic Adoration

141. *To maintain a close relationship with the God of Love, we must remain in that Holy Presence often. As the rays of the sun change and alter whatever they touch, so the Eternal Son, ever present in the Blessed Sacrament, changes whoever places himself in His Presence* (Mother Angelica, *To Leave and Yet to Stay*, p. 2).



142. In accordance with the nature of their life, and after the example of St. Francis, the friars should worship Christ the Lord present in the most Holy Eucharist. The Most Blessed Sacrament is reserved in our chapels to serve as the spiritual center of each friary and to extend the grace of the Sacrifice of the Mass.

143. The friars are encouraged to make frequent visits to our Lord Who waits for them in the Sacrament of love (cf. *Dominicae Cena*, no. 3). They are to revere above all else the most Holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, showing all possible reverence to the Son of the living God present on the altar (cf. *Letter of St. Francis to the Entire Order*, 12). The friars are to make a holy hour each day, preferably before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, meditating on the sacred mysteries.

144. The friars celebrate the feast of Corpus Christi with the greatest solemnity, including Eucharistic processions when possible.

D. Sacred Scripture

145. In imitation of Mother Angelica, the friars should always cherish and venerate the Sacred Scriptures. Through them our heavenly Father lovingly meets His children and speaks with them to strengthen their faith and spiritual life.

146. In particular, the friars should continually meditate on the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, source of all Christian perfection and the basis of the *Rule* of our Seraphic Father, St. Francis.

E. Marian Devotion

147. The friars, after the example of St. Francis, live out their consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary with filial affection by fostering devotion and honor to her in liturgical actions, popular devotions and personal prayer.



148. Therefore, each friar is to recite five decades of the Holy Rosary daily and in common. If legitimately impeded from communal recitation he is to pray it privately. Each friar is always encouraged to recite the twenty decades of the Rosary whenever time permits.

149. Since Saturdays are dedicated to Mary, the Franciscan Crown, i.e., the Seven Joys of Our Lady, is recited in place of the five decades of the Rosary. During the season of Lent, the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady are prayed instead of the Seven Joys.

150. Following the evangelical example of Mother Angelica “of the Annunciation,” and called to announce the Good News of the Eternal Word, the friars should fervently venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary in the mystery of the Annunciation. They should celebrate this feast of their special Protectress and Queen with the greatest solemnity by renewing their consecration to her.

151. The friars should foster devotion to the mystery of the Annunciation and celebrate the feasts of the Immaculate Conception and Assumption with special solemnity. The friars should also honor and imitate St. Joseph, spouse of Mary, outstanding example of religious life and our protector.

F. Franciscan Devotions

152. The feast of our holy Father, St. Francis, should be celebrated with great solemnity. His life and works should always be recalled so that his genuine seraphic spirit may continually animate us. The friars should likewise honor and venerate the other Franciscan saints, especially St. Clare, St. Anthony (the “Evangelical Doctor”), St. Bonaventure (the “Seraphic Doctor”) and St. Lawrence of Brindisi (the “Apostolic Doctor”).



153. In accordance with the Franciscan tradition the friars should foster a special devotion to the Stations of the Cross since our Seraphic Father, St. Francis, was totally absorbed with the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

G. Retreats

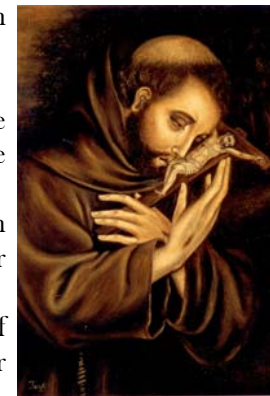
154. Each year the friars are to make a spiritual retreat for a period of at least five days. If possible, these retreats are conducted by a Religious from the Franciscan family. Friars who do not make a retreat in common with the other friars should make one privately.

155. Each month every friar shall be granted a full day of recollection during which he is to engage in exercises conducive to the renewal of his spiritual life including meditation and study of the *Rule* and *Constitutions*.

Chapter VI - Our Life of Penance

156. By means of evangelical and Franciscan penance the friars:

- a. suffer with Christ;
- b. become more and more conformed to the mystery of the Cross;
- c. become more imbued with Christ's love for God the Father and for all;
- d. achieve a deeper mastery of self and a fuller purification of their consciences.



157. The friars are to examine their consciences daily and embrace a life of penance. Therefore, they should forebear with each other, continually offering to God the hardships, infirmities, persecutions and deprivations which accompany the profession of vows and common life.

158. The friars avoid any form of penance which is merely external. They are to unite inner conversion of the heart and interior penance with the various works of mortification.



159. Finally, at the hour of death, following the example of St. Francis, they should commend their lives into the hands of God as their final offering.

160. Tobacco products are not to be stored or used in our friaries. Hard liquor is not to be stored or used in our friaries, except as specified in the *General Statutes*.

A. The Sacrament of Penance and Spiritual Direction

161. The greatest remedy for the wounds that our sins have inflicted on us and on the Mystical Body of Christ is the Sacrament of Penance. The friars should approach this sacrament frequently, using it not only as a restoration to life after mortal sin, but also to strengthen them in their daily lives and as a preparation for worthy participation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. In this way they will arrive at the joyful freedom of the sons of God, being conformed to Christ and submissive to His Spirit.

162. The Local Servant is to provide suitable confessors, allowing the friars to approach confession at least every two weeks, or more often if they so desire. The friars always have the freedom to confess to any approved priest. Superiors should not hear the confessions of the friars unless the latter request it; nor are they to induce the friars in any way to make a manifestation of conscience to them (cf. Can. 630, §§4-5).

163. The supreme art of spiritual direction is a valuable tool for the discernment of the Lord's work in a friar. It can enable him to respond more generously to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Within our Fraternity servants are to grant due liberty to the friars regarding the direction of conscience.

B. Penitential Seasons and Days

164. The following are to be observed as penitential seasons proper to our Fraternity:

- a. Those prescribed by universal law for the entire Church and in accordance with the norms for the local churches;
- b. By precept of the *Rule*: from the feast of All Saints to Christmas and each Friday of the year. During these times the friars are to fast or, in accordance with the needs of time and place, perform other forms of penance which the Community Servant and his Council have determined;
- c. By virtue of the *Constitutions*: every Wednesday is a day of abstinence and every Friday is a day of fast and abstinence unless a Solemnity or special feast day occurs.
- d. Sundays and Solemnities are not days of fasting or penance.

Chapter VII - The Fraternal Life of the Friars

A. A Eucharistic Family

165. In the words of our foundress, "We're family!"



166. The friars strive to live as one family, confidently making their needs known to one another. This family is first and foremost a Eucharistic family, united intimately through the common reception of the one Body of Christ. Strengthened at the Banquet of the Lamb, the friars are given new hearts with which they can love one another (cf. *Regula Bullata*, 6).

167. Each friar has an inestimable value that is not only witnessed to by the gift of being created in the image of God, but is proven by the great price of our redemption. In the worship of the Eucharist, each friar comes to realize the dignity of his brothers since Christ offers His Body and Blood to each one.

B. Principles of Unity

168. The friars are also members of the same family in their common love for the Franciscan tradition and for Mother Angelica. It is in the light of these two manifestations of the Spirit that the friars make their common consecration to our Lord Jesus Christ by the profession of the three evangelical counsels.

169. The friars are bound together in charity by their common and individual submission to the Word of God which is found in Scripture and Tradition as taught by the Magisterium, especially the successor of St. Peter. The *Rule*, *Constitutions*, the Bishop of Birmingham, servants and all other legitimate forms of authority are sources of communal unity.

170. Mutually beneficial relations should be encouraged among the friars, so to promote unity in life, government, education and the apostolate within

the entire Community and within each friary.

171. It is the responsibility of all the friars to cooperate in discerning the will of God. To stimulate and maintain a sense of cooperation and responsibility on the part of each friar, dialogue among the friars for the exchange of information and for consultation should be encouraged at opportune times and in suitable ways, both in chapters and in informal personal and familial discussions (cf. no.'s 40, 179).

172. The friars should always willingly carry out the decisions of their superiors whose responsibility it is to guide the Community according to the *Rule* and *Constitutions*.

C. Fraternal Charity

173. Fraternal charity should be fostered in a special way through the General Chapter in which the fraternity of the entire Community, assembled in the name of the Lord, is expressed, confirmed and perfected.



174. Fraternal charity should also be promoted by the Community and Friary Chapters in which the friars endeavor to consider in the Lord all matters pertaining to their spiritual, family and apostolic life.

175. As members of the General, Community and Friary Chapters, all perpetually professed friars must participate in them unless impeded by proper law. They should freely and humbly express their own views with a lively sense of responsibility and offer their own personal experience in the solution of problems and the advancement of projects.

176. Superiors should so exercise their authority toward the friars that they express God's love for them and lead them to unity in charity. Consequently, the spiritual and temporal welfare of the Community and of each friar should be uppermost in their hearts.

177. The friars should cheerfully support their superiors and share in their concerns so that they may fulfill their office more fruitfully.

178. The friars should always express their mutual love by courteous conduct, offering spiritual and material services to one another for their mutual development and activity. Since each friar has received gifts from God, he should use them for the good of each brother and for the common good.

179. The friars should avoid, at all costs, judgments and any words or actions which may impede or disturb peace, charity or fraternal affection. They should be vigilant lest differences of situation or age give rise in the brotherhood to discrimination or favoritism. Rather, these differences should be an incentive to charity and wholesome relationships.

180. The friars in difficulty should be suitably helped by the other friars, especially by the servants, even by discreet admonition or fraternal correction, should this be necessary and charity so dictate. The universal law of the Church is to be observed with regard to the imposition of canonical penalties.

181. The friars should promptly forgive offenses should they occur. They should strive to live a life which builds up, perfects and exemplifies a true brotherhood, namely, a "family of brothers."

182. All friars, especially servants, should exercise continual charity in assisting elderly friars and in caring for the sick. Spiritual comfort, especially through the sacraments, should be made available to them.

183. The sick friars should confidently disclose their conditions so that they may receive whatever is necessary for the recovery of their health or the alleviation of their suffering. At the same time, they should realize that by offering up their infirmities to God they contribute greatly to their own sanctification, to the works of the apostolate and to the life of the Community.

D. Our Life in Common

184. The friars should rejoice in being considered “the lesser brethren” and joyfully conduct themselves as members of one family. The nature and discipline of the Fraternity require that the friars perform certain exercises in common and adopt certain external forms of life to express and strengthen their unity of life.

185. Activities which are carried out personally according to the needs of each one’s spiritual life and of the apostolate are to be coordinated with the goals of the Community.

186. The regular observance of common life should neither hinder nor restrict the legitimate undertakings of individual friars. Rather, these should be encouraged, evaluated and organized according to the needs and opportunities of both the Community and the individual friars involved. The friars, however, should not seek what serves only their own interests, nor engage in their own activities in isolation from the Community, nor prefer their personal advantage to the welfare of the Community.

187. A suitable schedule for Community exercises which takes into account the spiritual and apostolic needs of the friars should be established by the Friary Chapter and be approved by the Community Servant. The schedule should also allow a period of free time daily to the friars for solitude and personal recreation.

188. The friars should diligently perform liturgical celebrations and other sacred services in common so that their family spirit, refreshed in liturgical communion, may permeate their apostolic activity and their whole community life.

189. As members of the same religious family, the friars should share their meals in common as a similarity to the Eucharistic banquet, expressing their love for one another.

190. The friars should assume Community tasks and carry out household chores gladly. They should also participate actively and joyfully in common recreation and fraternal conversation. When they are detained outside the friary, they should find comfort in the thought of their own Community.

191. To safeguard the privacy and freedom of common life, access to the

private quarters of the friary should not be allowed to outsiders except for a just cause. It is the right of the Community Servant to define or change the cloister limits. For a reasonable cause, however, the Local Servant may suspend the cloister in individual instances.

192. A spirit of silence, which is conducive to prayer, work and study, should pervade each friary. Times of silence are to be observed according to the *General Statutes*, always taking into account the demands of charity. Local Servants may dispense from silence for a just cause. However, since silence contributes to intimate conversation with God and regularity of discipline, a dispensation should not be given indiscriminately.

193. Necessary discretion is to be observed in the use of communications media for entertainment purposes. Whatever is harmful to one’s vocation and dangerous to the chastity of a consecrated person is to be avoided (cf. Can. 666).

194. Guests who come to our friaries should be received with religious charity and hospitality. Rooms in the friary should be designated to receive guests and to provide for overnight visitors.

195. The religious habit of our friars:

- a. is a sign of their consecration and fraternal unity;
- b. is a reminder of their dedication to poverty and penance;
- c. must be simple and modest, poor and becoming;
- d. should be treasured by the friars and displayed without fear to the world as a sign of witness;
- e. consists of a dark brown tunic with an attached hood and monstrance embroidered on the front, a white cord with three knots representing the evangelical counsels from which is suspended the Franciscan Crown (seven decade Rosary of the joys of Our Lady). Shoes or sandals may be worn consistent with the character of our habit and life.
- f. is the same for the novices, excepting the hood and profession knots in the cord.

196. The friars must wear the habit of our Community. The Community Servant, however, for particular reasons and as long as these persist may permit another form of dress. In emergencies and when recourse to the

Community Servant is not possible, the Local Servant may likewise permit another form of dress appropriate for Religious and clergy but only for a brief period of time.

197. “Work habits” or other clothing worn for manual work or recreation should be simple and modest.

198. The amount of contact the friars have with those outside of the Community through home visits, telephone calls and letters is regulated by the *General Statutes*. All of the friars may exchange correspondence free of inspection.

199. The friars should gratefully fulfill their obligations towards their parents, relatives and benefactors, for whom they pray privately and in common, so that this may redound to their edification and spiritual welfare.

200. The friars, who have chosen to serve God alone, should not become involved inopportunately in the affairs of their relatives. Servants, however, should prudently and charitably assist them when they are in need. When parents of the friars are old and infirm or dangerously ill, they may visit them after having obtained appropriate permission according to the *General Statutes*.

201. Those of the laity whom our Community employs should be treated charitably and respectfully. They should be assisted in leading a Christian life and should be paid a just wage in conformity with the norms of civil law.

E. Charity Towards the Deceased

202. Since it is a good and holy thought to pray for the dead so that they may be released from their sins, the friars should exercise concern and charity toward the deceased (cf. 2 Maccabees 12:45-46). Therefore, by precept of the *Rule* the friars are duty-bound to pray for their deceased fellow friars, parents, relatives and benefactors, offering suffrages according to the *General Statutes* (cf. *Regula Bullata*, III, 4).



Chapter VIII - Temporal Goods



203. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Matthew 5:3).

204. As a juridic person, the Community of the *Franciscan Missionaries of the Eternal Word* can acquire, administer, use and alienate temporal goods in accordance with the universal law of the Church and our own proper law (cf. Cann. 116, 302, 313, 319).

205. The entire Community itself, individual friaries and other juridic persons of the Community are to be civilly incorporated according to the *General Statutes*. Respective legal representatives of these juridic persons are to be appointed. Under the dependence of the servants they are empowered to carry out acts of administration valid under civil law either personally or through delegates. If necessary, other appropriate arrangements should be made.

A. Administration of Temporal Goods

206. The General Chapter and the Community Council are to consider and see that the financial administration of the Community is carried out properly.

207. Though defined more precisely in the *General Statutes*, the General Chapter and all Friary Chapters:

- a. are responsible for the administration of the temporal goods of the Fraternity;
- b. are to regulate the insurance policies made for friars and for

temporal goods;

- c. see to the safe deposit of money and other securities;
- d. should not contract debts unless it is certain that the capital and interest on the debt can be repaid with certainty and within a reasonable time from regular income or from other legitimate sources.

208. The General Chapter:

- a. shall decide what goods and administrative responsibilities belong to the entire Community;
- b. may expressly authorize the Community Servant with his Council to handle acts of extraordinary administration;
- c. shall define the competence of both the Community Servant alone as well as with his Council and that of the Friary Chapter;
- d. shall determine the amount and frequency of the assessments to be levied on the friaries in order to meet the needs of the entire Community and of the poorer friaries.

209. The Friary Chapter in accordance with the *General Statutes* shall determine what acts of financial administration the Local Servant and other officials are authorized to carry out habitually.

210. No friar can participate in any way in the administration of goods of a physical or juridic person outside the Community unless by way of exception and with the written permission of the Community Servant.

211. Should a friar violate civil law or cause damage through his own malice or fault, he alone will be responsible.

212. For the validity of any alienation, exchange, or lease of goods written permission is required according to the *General Statutes*. The permission of the Holy See is required, after obtaining the written approval of the Community Servant with the consent of his Council, and the local diocesan bishop, concerning:

- a. acts exceeding the amount established by the Holy See;
- b. items given to the Church in virtue of a vow;
- c. items of precious art or of historical value.

B. Stewards

213. The financial administration of the entire Community is entrusted to the Community Steward who is appointed by the Community Servant with the consent of his Council. The financial administrations of all the friaries are to work with the Community Steward so that a central financial administration is established.

214. The responsibility of the day to day financial administration of an individual friary is entrusted to the Local Steward who is appointed by the Community Servant with the counsel of his Council. He shall receive all receipts, oversee the account books, make all expenditures within the limits of his competence and procure whatever is necessary for the temporal sustenance of the friary.

215. Agreements entered into by the Community should be duly honored and the price of purchases paid on time.

216. The Office of Community Servant is incompatible with the assignment of Community and Local Steward.

217. The Local Servant may not exercise the assignment of Local Steward of a friary unless necessity requires it and he is approved by the Community Servant with the consent of his Council. Permission is to be given in writing and recorded in the account book.

C. Reports and Records

218. Since the administration of temporal goods is the responsibility of the Community itself, reports, receipts and expenditures are to be submitted accordingly to the General and Friary Chapters and to the judgment of its members.

219. The Community Steward is to ensure that all friaries have uniformity in their financial bookkeeping.

220. The Community Steward is to prepare an annual financial report.

After the report has been submitted to the Community Servant and his Council, it shall be submitted to the Bishop of Birmingham. The annual financial report shall be made available to all perpetually professed friars.

221. Under the careful supervision of each Local Servant, the Local Stewards are to record precisely and faithfully all receipts and expenditures in the account books, so that the financial status and statements of each friary will be clearly and distinctly evident. These records are to be made available conveniently and without undue delay for the inspection of the perpetually professed friars of the Community. Financial reports are to be signed by each Local Servant and corresponding Local Steward and submitted to the Community Steward.

222. In a friary where there are fewer than three friars *de familia* the Local Servant himself according to the *General Statutes* shall submit a written report to the Community Servant countersigned by the other friar concerning the entire administration of the friary. In matters that would require the consent of the Friary Chapter, the Local Servant, after consultation with the other friar, must obtain the prior written consent of the Community Servant.

223. *You don't know what's going to happen tomorrow, but you do know that His Presence and His Providence rise before the dawn, and that's all you need to know (Mother Angelica's Little Book of Life Lessons and Everyday Spirituality, p. 184).*



Chapter IX. Our Apostolic Mission

224. *The lost I will seek out, the strayed I will bring back* - Quod perierat requiram, et quod abjectum erat reducam (MFVA Motto: Ezekiel 34:16 from the *NAB& Latin Vulgate*). The mission of the *Franciscan Missionaries of the Eternal Word* is to seek out the lost sheep who have fallen away from the Catholic Church as well as to care for the needs of those who have stayed within the fold.

225. This perennial mission of the friars is valid in every age and place and circumstance and is motivated by the concern of Christ's Heart to seek out and save what was lost. Therefore, as long as there are lost sheep, their mission is not yet complete since they must bring them back through whatever means can reach them (cf. Luke 19:10; no.'s 8, 10 of these *Constitutions*).

226. While not neglecting the Corporal Works of Mercy, the mission of the friars calls for them, in a special way, to engage in the Spiritual Works of Mercy by instructing, admonishing, comforting, forgiving, counseling the doubtful, bearing wrongs patiently and praying for the living and the dead (cf. *CCC*, no. 2447).

A. Principles of Our Apostolic Mission



227. The apostolate of the Community is always to be seen as part of the work of the Church. In addition, *it is necessary to seek always humility of heart knowing that although we labor, God alone bears the fruit* (*Mother Angelica's Letter to the Friars*; no. 11 of these *Constitutions*).

228. Sharing in the Church's mission of evangelization, a work of God's mercy, the friars should

zealously strive to lead apostolic lives in order to:

- a. spread the kingdom of Christ throughout the world to the glory of God the Father;
- b. make all people partakers of the saving redemption;

- c. direct the entire universe to Christ.

229. The primary apostolate of the friars is to live the Gospel life among the people in charity and poverty, in simplicity and humility, and in prayer and penance. The contemplative life of Eucharistic adoration is intimately connected to and forms the foundation of the apostolic activity of our Community (cf. no. 4).

230. By their profession of the evangelical counsels the friars consecrate all their energies to proclaiming Christ's message in word and deed. By this total consecration they:

- a. instill among the people the spirit of the Gospel;
- b. give witness to the coming of Christ's kingdom.

231. Since our Seraphic Father intended that he and his brothers should share in the mission of the Church through apostolic activity, the friars should diligently engage in the external works of the apostolate. Their entire religious life, therefore, should be imbued with an apostolic spirit and all their apostolic work should be informed by a religious spirit.

232. In any type of work or apostolic activity, the friars should:

- a. always manifest fraternity and minority;
- b. reveal the interior unity of the Community and, in this way, make the apostolate even more effective;
- c. not extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion; rather they should foster prayer more intensely and thus sanctify their work and make it fruitful;
- d. strive to know and to be in contact with the society in which they live;
- e. carry out their apostolate through pastoral, intellectual and manual activity and through the witness of their Franciscan presence.

233. In order to be faithful to their charism, the Community may never administer a parish or a school. The friars, however, may offer assistance, always careful not to neglect their own apostolic endeavors. They should be solicitous that the obligations they undertake will not impede unity or the witness of fraternity.

B. The Ministry of Grace



234. Since the principal goal of the mission of the Church is the ministry of grace, the friars should regard the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice:

- a. as the high point of the ministry of sanctification;
- b. as the principle apostolic action of their ministerial priesthood (for friar-priests);
- c. as the principal apostolic action of their common priesthood (for non-clerical friars).

235. The goal of their pastoral ministry should be to bring the faithful to unite their lives and deaths in the Paschal Mystery of Christ.

236. Entrusted in a special way to friar-priests is the ministry of offering the sacrifice of the Mass, the other sacraments, and preaching, by which the Church makes Christ present. However, the other friars should make their own important contribution to this ministry as servants of the Holy Eucharist.

237. According to their particular state, the friars should dispense the sacraments and apostolic ministries with a promptness and zeal, so as to promote the sacramental life and the life of prayer, especially liturgical prayer, among the faithful.

238. Friar-priests should devote themselves with particular zeal to the administration of the Sacrament of Penance. They should bear in mind both the human condition, so much in need of continual renewal and increase of God's grace, and the goodness of our Redeemer Who does not will the death of the sinner but that he be converted and live (cf. Ezekiel 33:11).

239. The friars should take special care of the sick by visiting them and by providing them ample opportunity to receive the sacraments. Likewise, they should carefully prepare the dying for a holy passing to eternal life.

C. Lay Brothers

240. The lay brother vocation has a unique value and holds an essential place in the life of our Community. Greatly benefitting from the lay brothers' constant presence and humble service, friar-priests are able to carry out the *ministry of grace* more effectively (cf. no. 112).

241. As friar-priests are to grow in holiness through the practice of their sacerdotal ministry, so lay-brothers grow from virtue to virtue in the fulfillment of their apostolic ministry by:

- a. assisting at Mass and other liturgical events;
 - b. serving the apostolates in any capacity (cf. no.'s 252-253);
 - c. being available to meet immediate needs;
 - d. maintaining the friary.
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D. Preaching and Evangelization



242. Urged on by the love of Christ, with the assistance of Our Lady of the Annunciation and zeal for the salvation of others, the friars are to use every means available to proclaim the Eternal Word. As modern day missionaries, the friars fulfill the Second Vatican Council's call to use the means of communication in the apostolate *without delay and as energetically as possible* (*Inter Mirifica*, no. 13). Through their familial association with the *Eternal Word Television Network*, the friars use all forms of mass communication, especially television, radio, Internet, the printed word and any other means afforded them (cf. no. 4).

243. Through the ministry of preaching, faith is kindled in the hearts of unbelievers and nourished in the hearts of the faithful. Through the ministry

of the sacraments the union with Christ proclaimed in that preaching is brought about and deepened.

244. The friars should exercise the ministry of the Word in accordance with their particular charisms and for the benefit and edification of their audience, pointedly, yet briefly, applying the perennial truth of the Gospel to the concrete circumstances of life.

245. Since preaching must first draw on Sacred Scripture and the liturgy as its sources, the friars should read and listen to the Word of God daily in order to better communicate to others the fruits of their own contemplation. The friars are to proclaim the mystery of Christ and His Gospel of peace, charity and conversion, exhorting all to an upright life in accordance with the law of the Gospel.

246. To make their preaching of the Gospel fully effective, the friars should be trained carefully and acquire a special competence in pastoral preaching by constant practice.

247. In their “divine appointments” the friars should be ready to witness to the hope that is within them and, if possible, give something to the people such as a Sacramental.

248. The friars should promote scholarly activity and research particularly in the fields of Franciscan life and doctrine. The results of this research, as well as the practical experiences of the friars, should be made public by way of various communications media when appropriate. Permission of the Community Servant as well as that of the local ordinary is required to publish writings dealing with faith and morals (cf. Can. 832).

249. Friars attending institutes of higher learning should give witness to Franciscan life by combining the love of truth with the following of the Gospel. They should assist people at these institutes to become imbued with the spirit of Christ, so that they themselves may attend to the good of society and relate human culture to the message of salvation.

250. When opportune, without neglecting their primary responsibilities and always under the direction of their servants, the friars may engage in other works of evangelization such as missions, conferences, retreats, pilgrimages to holy sites, etc..

251. *Don't look back. St. Paul said, "I press forward." You and I have work to do, and we must do it together. Every man, woman and child must know Jesus. God has created you with a fire, a spirit, to inflame others. You can no longer sit waiting for something to happen. You must make it happen! You're the only one God has* (Mother Angelica's *Little Book of Life Lessons and Everyday Spirituality*, p. 22).

E. The *Eternal Word Television Network* (EWTN)



252. Mother Angelica founded the *Franciscan Missionaries of the Eternal Word* especially to support the work of the *Eternal Word Television Network*. Friars engaged in the *EWTN* apostolate contribute to the spread of the Gospel particularly through the spiritual support they offer to its employees. Therefore, the friars:

- a. provide the employees with the sacraments, spiritual advice and spiritual exercises;
- b. pray for them and their needs;
- c. encourage them in their spiritual lives and work;
- d. instill in them a missionary spirit;
- e. create an atmosphere of virtue in the workplace;
- f. give good example;
- g. admonish when necessary;
- h. work to insure the orthodox teaching of *EWTN*'s programming.

253. In order to extend the Kingdom of God on earth, the friars also utilize the means available to them through *EWTN* by:

- a. offering and assisting at televised Masses and other liturgical events;

- b. teaching, hosting and producing programs;
- c. assisting in the production of programs;
- d. working directly with employees in various departments;
- e. assisting decision making bodies and committees;
- f. administration;
- g. doing anything that contributes to the enhancement and effectiveness of *EWTN*.



F. Pastoral Care of the *Poor Clares of Perpetual Adoration*

254. The participation of the friars in the mission of the Church is intimately linked to the contemplative apostolate of the *Poor Clares of Perpetual Adoration*. Illumined by the holiness of their lives, the friars endeavor to manifest the hidden apostolic fruitfulness of the nuns by proclaiming the Eternal Word to the ends of the earth.

255. Since St. Francis was solicitous in providing for the needs of St. Clare, her nuns and the faithful, so the friars serve the spiritual and sacramental needs of Mother Angelica, her nuns, their future foundations and the faithful who visit their monasteries (cf. no. 4).



G. Pilgrims

256. Since *every great reform has in some way been linked to the rediscovery of belief in the Lord's Eucharistic Presence among His people* (*Sacramentum Caritatis*, no. 6), the friars promote and support Eucharistic retreats to their pilgrimage sites.

257. Preaching, providing confessions, offering Mass and Eucharistic adoration are all ways in which the friars lead pilgrims to a deeper union with God and a greater devotion to Jesus, truly present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. In their apostolate to pilgrims, the friars warmly welcome them and show a genuine concern for their spiritual welfare and growth.

H. Responsibility for Our Apostolates

258. It is the responsibility of the General Chapter to examine whether or not the various apostolates of our Congregation:

- a. are meeting the needs of the times;
- b. are fulfilling the mission of our Fraternity;
- c. are well chosen;
- d. are carried out properly;
- e. have any witness value;
- f. could be extended for the expansion of the Kingdom of God among the nations.

259. Likewise, it is the right of the General Chapter to investigate and to determine the general apostolic program of the Fraternity and to formulate statutes in conformity with diocesan and regional decrees.

260. The Community Servant, with the assistance of his Council and the cooperation of all the Local Servants, shall direct the apostolic activities of the Fraternity according to the dispositions of the General Chapter and the opportune advice of any competent commissions established by it.

261. The friars, as Religious, are subject to visitation and correction by the Community Servant and to supervision by the Local Servant in what pertains to any apostolic work undertaken in a diocese. They are also subject to the local diocesan bishop as regards their apostolic work.

262. Servants, especially the Community Servant, should take care always to have available a sufficient number of trained and experienced friars. In order to accommodate the spiritual needs of diverse cultures, competent friars should be encouraged to learn the languages needed.

263. It is the responsibility of the Local Servant to direct the work of the friary community and to keep the friars who are engaged in various activities fraternally united. In planning and executing projects, the friars, insofar as possible, should work together as a group.

264. The works of the apostolate should be assigned by the superiors to individual friars after having taken into account their religious, apostolic, doctrinal and professional competence. Whoever is blessed with a special charism or is skilled in any art or discipline, should, under the guidance of competent authority and with the support of the other friars, use it for the edification of the Kingdom of God.

265. In whatever ministry or work allotted to them, the friars should remain faithful to the observance of the *Rule* and *Constitutions* and be obedient to their superiors.

266. The friars assigned to pastoral care of souls should, by periodic renewal, adapt the procedures of their apostolate to documents issued by the Holy See.

267. *You have been chosen twice: first to **be**, then to know Jesus. What are you doing with that fantastic mission? You have been created by God to know Jesus for one reason: to witness to faith, and hope, and love before an unbelieving world. I don't care if the world knows you, or no one knows you. Even if you influence only one person in your whole life, God does not look at numbers or quantities. He looks at souls and individuals. If you were able,*



by your example or by one of your acts, to bring one person to Heaven, it would mean more to Him than a l l t h e accomplishments on earth (Mother Angelica's Little Book of Life Lessons and Everyday Spirituality, pp. 13-14).

Chapter X - Our Governance

268. Our Seraphic Father Francis himself, in replying to the question of a certain Brother, described what kind of a man the Minister General (Community Servant) of this family should be: *He must be a man who takes religious life seriously, is very discreet, and has a good reputation. A man who has no particular friendships, so as not to be a source of scandal to the rest. A man zealous for prayer... he must be a man who has no place in his heart for sordid favoritism, who cares no less for the humble and simple as for the wise and great. A man who, although he may be very learned, reflects piety and simplicity in all that he does and cultivates virtue. A man who detests money, the main cause of corruption of our profession and perfection... A man who consoles the afflicted, since he is the last refuge for the troubled, for fear that, not finding any healing remedies from him, the illness of despair may overwhelm the weak. In order to induce the violent to meekness, he should humble himself and forego something of his rights, so as to gain a soul for Christ. Toward those who take flight from the Order, as to lost sheep, he should not stifle his own inclination to tender mercy, knowing that the temptations which bring a man to such a pass are overpowering* (2 Celano, no. 185).

269. *I would want him honored by all in the place of Christ and with charity to be provided with all necessities. On the other hand, he should not seek honors, nor delight in favors more than offenses... Finally, he should be a man who in no way will weaken the stern standard of justice in an effort to retain honors, and will consider so great an office to be a burden rather than a dignity. However, he should not let apathy grow out of excessive gentleness, nor a breakdown in discipline out of lax indulgence, so that while he is loved by all, he will be none the less feared by those who do evil... This is what the Minister General of the Order must be like* (2 Celano, no. 186).

270. St. Francis further remarked: *I would want him to have assistants of upright character, who like himself would give good example: strict as regards pleasure, strong in adversity, affable and approachable, welcoming with holy joy all who visit them* (2 Celano, no. 186).



271. St. Francis in appointing superiors chose to call them “ministers” which means “servants,” for *those who are put in charge of others should be no prouder of their office than if they had been appointed the task to wash the feet of their brothers* (Admonitions, 4). Moreover, *whoever is in authority should be the servant of the other brothers. Let him have and show each brother the mercy he would wish to have shown himself in any similar case. Nor should he become angry with a brother over his offense, but kindly admonish him and bear with him in all patience and humility* (Letter to All the Faithful, II).

A. Authority in the Community

272. Our Community collectively seeks to humbly discern and enthusiastically respond to God’s Will. Authorities, namely chapters, servants and the Community Council exist in our Community to better order our life and works, always in imitation of Jesus Who *came to serve, not to be served* (Mt 20:28).

273. Since our Community is a *Public Clerical Association of the Christian Faithful*, the friars follow the norms of *Canon Law* for such associations, these *Constitutions* (proper law) and are obedient to the Bishop of Birmingham. They also follow the canons concerning *Clerical Religious Institutes of Diocesan Right* insofar as they apply, according to his directives.

274. “Superiors” in these *Constitutions* refers to the Community Servant, Community Vicar, Local Servants, Local Vicars, Director of Priestly Formation, Director of Temporary Professed, Novice Director and Postulant Director. In a wider sense, “superior” also refers to the Pope as the highest superior and the Bishop of Birmingham as the ecclesiastical authority over the Community.

275. “Servants” in these *Constitutions* refers to the Community Servant, Community Vicar, Local Servants and Local Vicars (cf no. 271).

276. Servants and all those in authority are to exercise their office

remembering that they have received it from God through the ministry of the Church. In a spirit of service they should (cf. Cann. 617-619):

- a. exercise authority according to the norms of the common law of the Church and our own particular law;
- b. devote themselves diligently to their office;
- c. show reverence for each friar treating each as a son of God;
- d. listen to each friar willingly and foster their common endeavor for the good of the Community and of the Church;
- e. be open and docile to the will of God, promoting voluntary obedience among the friars;
- f. decide and prescribe what must be done;
- g. strive to build a community of brothers in Christ in which God is sought and loved above all things;
- h. nourish all the friars regularly with the Word of God and draw them deeper into the Sacred Liturgy;
- i. serve as models of Franciscan life, cultivating virtues and the charism of our Community;
- j. meet the personal needs of all the friars;
- k. diligently care for the sick friars, correct the restless and console the fainthearted;
- l. be patient.

277. When the chapters and the Community Council meet they should express the concerns of all of the friars. Experts, including lay persons, may be invited to these meetings to obtain their advice.

278. To coordinate and promote the principal activities of the Fraternity, if it is opportune, various commissions may be established. Their number, membership, competence and *modus agendi* shall be determined by the *General Statutes*.

279. Only perpetually professed friars possessing the qualifications required by canon law and our own particular law are eligible for offices in the Community.

280. The following offices are conferred by the General Chapter by

election for a three year term, with due regard to no. 316 of these *Constitutions*:

- a. Community Servant;
- b. Community Vicar;
- c. Community Councilors.

281. Other assignments and the following offices are conferred by appointment which can be for a definite or indefinite time but not longer than a three year period which may then be renewed:

- a. Community Secretary (Community Councilor);
- b. Community Steward;
- c. Local Servant;
- d. Local Vicar;
- e. Local Secretary;
- f. Local Steward;
- g. Director of Priestly Formation;
- h. Director of Temporary Professed;
- i. Novice Director;
- j. Postulant Director;
- k. Vocation Director.

282. The following are bound by law to residence in their respective houses so as to be available for service to the friars (cf. Can. 629):

- a. Community and Local Servants;
- b. Community and Local Vicars;
- c. Novice Director;
- d. Postulant Director.

283. A friar should willingly resign an office conferred on him for the common good if the Community Servant considers him necessary for another office.

284. Resignations may be accepted by the authority which conferred the office. When the General Chapter is that authority, it may accept the resignation, or outside the chapter, the Community Servant with the consent of or together with his Council may accept the resignation, as the case may require.

285. The resignation of the Community Servant outside of the General

Chapter may be accepted solely by the Bishop of Birmingham.

286. While no one is irremovable from an office or assignment, the friars should enjoy stability in their life and work. The friars shall not be removed from offices conferred for a specified time except for a serious and proportionate reason. This is to be examined and legitimately proven by the Community Servant with his Council with due concern for justice and natural equity. The removal of any friar from office pertains to the same authority which is empowered to accept the resignations from that office according to no. 284 of these Constitutions.

287. No superior of our Community, without expressed concession from the competent Church authority, may dispense from the laws of the Church or the decrees of the Holy See, except as permitted by the law itself.

288. The following lack active and passive voice:

- a. those in temporary vows;
- b. one who has been exclaustated for any reason whatsoever until six months after his return to the Community;
- c. one who has requested from the Community Servant a reduction to the lay state or an indult of exclaustation or secularization during the time his request is pending with the competent ecclesiastical authorities;
- d. one who has been received back into our Community after having departed from it unlawfully for three years from the time of his return.

B. General Chapter



289. The General Chapter

exercises supreme authority in the life of the Community. As a sign of unity in charity it is to (cf. Can. 631§1):

- a. be persistent in reflecting upon the Franciscan tradition, our charism and the spiritual legacy of our foundress;
- b. safeguard and protect this precious patrimony of our Community;
- c. discern new ways to promote growth and ongoing renewal;
- d. elect the Community Servant, the Community Vicar and the Community Councilors;
- e. enact laws, issue norms and treat matters of greater importance (cf. no.'s 43-44);
- f. judge communal forms of poverty (cf. no. 34).

290. An ordinary General Chapter must be held every three years, at or near the time of Pentecost, in a place designated by the Community Servant after he has consulted the Community Chapter. In order to treat some important matter(s), the Community Servant, with the consent of the absolute majority of the Community Chapter, may convoke an extraordinary General Chapter.

291. The membership of the General Chapter consists of all friars in perpetual vows (cf. Can. 631 §2). All perpetually 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* (cf. no. 288). At the discretion of the Community Servant, and in accordance with the *General Statutes*, friars who are not in perpetual vows may attend a General Chapter, but they lack active and passive voice.

292. The Community Servant convenes the General Chapter and determines the preliminary agenda after consulting the Community Chapter. Any friar can freely submit suggestions to the Community Servant for discussion at the General Chapter (cf. Can. 631 §3). The Community Servant himself presides over the General Chapter or, when he is absent, the Community Vicar.

293. Once the General Chapter has been opened, it exercises power to:

- a. set agenda;
- b. permit and/or limit discussion and debate;
- c. hold votes and elections;
- d. adjourn the chapter.

294. Matters which rightly belong to the General Chapter may not be remanded to the Community Council for solution except for a serious reason to be verified by two-thirds vote of the General Chapter.

295. The General Chapter is to be celebrated in accord with the *General Statutes* and the *Directory of Chapter Acts*. The minutes and official acts are recorded accordingly.

296. All votes for election are to be held by secret ballot.

297. Concerning votes for elections, when a two-thirds majority of those who must be convoked are present, the one who has received an absolute majority of the votes by those present is elected. After two indecisive ballots, a vote is to be taken on the two candidates who have obtained the greater number of votes or, if there are several, on the two senior in profession and then in age. After the third ballot, if a tie remains, the one who is senior in age is considered elected (cf. Can. 119 §1).

298. For the third and final successive election of a friar to the same office a qualified majority, namely, two-thirds of the votes is required and must be obtained in the first or second ballot. Care should be taken to avoid having a friar remain for too long a period in the same office of governance without an interval (cf. Can. 624 §2).

299. These *Constitutions* may only be amended by a three-quarters vote of the General Chapter. In regard to all other matters, when an absolute majority of those who must be convoked are present, that which is approved by the absolute majority of those present has the force of law. If, after two ballots the votes are equal, the one presiding can break the tie by his vote (cf. Can. 119 §2).

300. Any friar elected to an office should humbly accept the ministry and faithfully fulfill it in a spirit of service. Those elected by the General Chapter to an office are presented to the Bishop of Birmingham for confirmation.

C. Community Chapter



301. Apart from the General Chapter, all friars in perpetual vows are to gather regularly in the Community Chapter (cf. Can. 632). Although the Community Chapter does not exercise the power of governance, it encourages a sense of participation and consultation in the governance of the Community (cf. Can. 633 § 1).

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

303. To the extent possible, 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 discussions shall include, but not be limited to:

- a. the appointment of Local Servants;
- b. the assignment of individual friars;
- c. the establishment of new friaries;
- d. the apostolates of the Community;
- e. financial matters;
- f. formation and advancement of friars.

304. 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 perpetual vows.

305. Should it become necessary for the removal of the Community Servant, Community Vicar or a Community Councilor, the friars in perpetual vows gathered in a Community Chapter may, by a two-thirds vote in a secret ballot, call for such a removal (cf. no. 286). Following such an affirmative vote, they must then petition the Bishop of Birmingham for such a removal.

D. Community Servant

306. The Community Servant is the Canonical Moderator for the entire Community (cf. Can. 317). Subject to the Bishop of Birmingham, he has proper authority over the entire Fraternity according to the norms of the universal law of the Church for *Public Clerical Associations of the Christian Faithful* and according to our own particular law.



307. The friar to be elected Community Servant must be a friar-priest who is perpetually professed at least five years (cf. Can 588 § 2). The duty of guiding and caring for our Fraternity and of promoting its works and projects for the good of the Church rests upon the Community Servant as the father of the entire brotherhood.

308. The Community Servant is elected in the General Chapter for a three-year term (cf. Can. 624 §1). He may be elected to only three consecutive terms of office in accordance with no. 298 of these *Constitutions*. The election takes place according to no. 297 of these *Constitutions*, the *General Statutes* and the *Directory of Chapter Acts*.

309. The Bishop of Birmingham, or his delegate, shall preside at the election of the Community Servant (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).

310. All those in elected or appointed offices are immediately subject to the Community Servant. All other friars are mediately subject to the Community Servant.

311. The Community Servant should keep his Vicar continually informed about matters of government and administration and willingly avail himself of his assistance. If he is about to absent himself or be impeded in the exercise of his office he shall forewarn his Vicar who should then carry on the affairs of office according to law and the mind of the Community Servant.

312. The Community Servant is assisted by the Community Councilors in the governance of the Fraternity.

313. To foster the bond of brotherhood and the unity of purpose of the friars, the Community Servant should maintain frequent contact with the friars through:

- a. personal dialogue;
- b. correspondence;
- c. reports from chapter meetings;
- d. fatherly concern for all matters relevant to the life of the Fraternity.

314. At least twice within each term of office the Community Servant is required to personally make a visitation of each house and give a report of it at the ordinary General Chapter. During his visitation the Community Servant should:

- a. deal with his confreres humbly and charitably;
- b. confer with each friar individually;
- c. review attentively the life and the activities of the Community according to the *Rule, Constitutions* and *General Statutes*;
- d. discuss carefully all these matters at their Friary Chapter meeting.

315. For a just cause, the Community Servant with the consent of his Council may dispense from the law of incompatibility of offices or from a law which disqualifies one from offices which are sanctioned in our particular law.

316. If the office of Community Servant should become vacant outside the General Chapter, the Community Vicar convokes an extraordinary General Chapter for the purpose of electing the Community Servant, but within three months of the time of vacancy. The newly elected Community Servant serves out the remainder of the term until the next ordinary General Chapter. If, however, 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.

E. Community Vicar

317. The Community Vicar assists the Community Servant in his duties and responsibilities. He is to be a strong support to the Community Servant as his principal assistant in all that concerns the well-being of the Community. When the Community Servant is absent or impeded, the Community Vicar governs the Community but he must not use his authority against the mind and will of the Community Servant (cf. Can. 620).

318. The friar to be elected Community Vicar must be a friar-priest who is perpetually professed at least five years (cf. Can. 588 § 2).

319. Following the election of the Community Servant, the Community Vicar is elected in the General Chapter for a three-year term (cf. Can. 624 §1). The Community Vicar may be elected to only three consecutive terms of office in accordance with no. 298 of these *Constitutions*. The election takes place according to no. 297 of these *Constitutions*, the *General Statutes* and the *Directory of Chapter Acts*.

320. Immediately following his election, the Community Vicar 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).

321. When the office of Community Vicar becomes vacant outside of the ordinary General Chapter, the Community Servant together with his Council elect a new Vicar to complete the term of office.

F. Community Council

322. The Community Servant, in the governance of the Community, is

assisted by the Community Council. They share the burdens and responsibilities of the Community Servant, working closely with him and offering their counsel for the common good. Together they loyally uphold the authority of the Community Servant and through their example of fidelity and brotherly love, help to promote peace within our Community. It is the duty of the Community Councilors to:

- a. examine the matters of the entire Fraternity;
- b. visit the various friaries frequently and present their appraisal of them to the Community Servant;
- c. maintain communication with all the friars;
- d. evaluate, discern and vote upon the advancement of friars in formation.

323. The Community Council operates in two distinct capacities in its role:

- a. When it operates as a *collegial body*, the Council consists of the Community Servant, the Community Vicar and four Community Councilors. In this capacity, the Council and the Community Servant act together as one body. Therefore, when proper law states that the Community Servant “acts with” or “together with” his Council, then he may vote (cf. Can. 119).
- b. When it operates as the *council* to the Community Servant, the Council consists of the above members except the Community Servant. In this capacity, the Council is to be of service to the Community Servant, giving advice or consent as required by proper law. Therefore, when proper law states that the Community Servant is required to act “with the counsel” or “with the consent” of his Council, he does not vote (cf. Can. 127).

324. When according to the norm of law the Community Servant needs the consent or counsel of his Council, his action is invalid if for whatever reason he failed to seek such consent or counsel, or should consent be required, if he acts against the deliberative vote given. When consent is required, the consent of an absolute majority of the Councilors is required unless it is expressly stated otherwise for a given case.

325. Consent and counsel are to be sought in joint meetings unless, should counsel alone be required, the *General Statutes* state otherwise. In every case, however, a written record must show that counsel or consent was

duly sought and obtained.

326. For validity of Council acts, the presence of two-thirds of the voting members is required unless it is foreseen that several voters will be impeded for more than a week and the matter is urgent, in which case an absolute majority suffices.

327. Although not obliged to accept the counsel of the Community Council, even if unanimous, the Community Servant is nonetheless not to act contrary to that opinion, especially if unanimous, without a reason which is overriding in the Community Servant's judgment (cf. Can. 127 §2).

328. The Community Servant presides over the Community Council and does so by convoking and adjourning meetings and determining the agenda.

329. The Councilors are obliged to offer their opinion sincerely and, if the gravity of the affair requires it, to observe secrecy diligently; moreover, the Community Servant can insist upon this obligation (cf. Can. 127 §3).

330. 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 of the ordinary General Chapter, the Community Servant together with his Council elect a new Community Councilor to complete the term of office.

331. With the exception of the Community Vicar all other Councilors are to be perpetually professed for at least three years.

332. The Community Servant, with the consent of his Council, shall appoint one of the Community Councilors to the office of Community Secretary. The Community Secretary acts as the notary and records all the minutes and official acts of the Community Council.

333. The Community Servant, with the consent of his Council, shall appoint a Community Steward who functions in accord with the norms of law (cf. Can 636; no.'s 213-223 of these *Constitutions*). 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.

334. Experts, including lay persons, may be invited to the Community Council meeting to obtain their advice.

G. Local Government

335. The local friary is governed by the Local Servant either alone or with the Friary Chapter. He must be a friar-priest who is perpetually professed at least three years. For a just cause, the Community Servant with the consent of his Council may dispense from the requirement of priesthood (cf. no. 315).



336. The friars are to support their Local Servant as he carries out the burden of his office by cooperating with him and fulfilling their responsibilities humbly and faithfully (cf. no. 40).

337. Friary Offices are those of Local Servant, Local Vicar, Local Secretary and Local Steward. With the exception of the Local Secretary, these offices are appointed by the Community Servant with the counsel of his Council. When these same offices become vacant, the Community Servant with the counsel of his Council appoints another friar to serve out the remainder of the term (cf. no.'s 216-217).

338. The Local Servant with the counsel of the Friary Chapter appoints the Local Secretary from any of the Friary Chapter members. The Local Secretary has the responsibility of preparing for the Friary Chapter meetings, taking the minutes and recording official acts of the Friary Chapter.

339. The conferral of duties and assignments in the friary are to be carried out according to the *General Statutes*.

340. It is the duty of the Local Servant:

- a. to exercise authority over all the friars *de familia* and any other residents of the friary;
- b. to provide leadership in the friary and make immediate decisions;
- c. to bear the burden of authority in a spirit of service;

- d. to be a father to the friars, guarding and guiding them;
- e. to give good example;
- f. to be faithful to all essential elements of our way of life;
- g. to direct and coordinate the prayer life, apostolic work and the day to day activity of the friary;
- h. to foster a spirit of true brotherhood;
- i. to convoke the Friary Chapter and implement friary goals.

341. The Local Servant should keep his Vicar continually informed about matters of government and administration and willingly avail himself of his assistance. If he is about to absent himself or be impeded in the exercise of his office, he shall forewarn his Vicar who should then carry on the affairs of office according to law and the mind of the Local Servant.

342. All perpetually professed friars are to be assigned *de familia* by the Community Servant to the friary where they reside according to the *General Statutes*. There they are to exercise their rights and obligations according to these *Constitutions*.

343. Each friary of the Community is to have a Friary Chapter which consists of all those perpetually professed friars assigned to it who enjoy active and passive voice (cf. no. 288). At the discretion of the Local Servant, and in accordance with the *General Statutes*, friars who are not in perpetual vows may attend a Friary Chapter, but they lack active and passive voice.

344. The Friary Chapter:

- a. promotes fraternal charity by bringing about a mutual consideration of all matters pertaining to the friars' fraternal, spiritual and apostolic life;
- b. directs the affairs of the local friary and filial house(s);
- c. is presided over by the Local Servant;
- d. is ordinarily convoked monthly by the Local Servant or whenever necessary;
- e. is convoked by the Local Vicar when the Local Servant is absent and the matter cannot be postponed;
- f. has responsibility (together with the General Chapter) of the administration of the goods of the friary;
- g. judges communal forms of poverty (cf. no. 34).

345. Through prayer, patient dialogue and humble deference the friars shall endeavor to come to a consensus in making decisions. This may include a sacrificial compromise by the involved parties so that a general agreement can be reached. If no agreement can be reached, the Local Servant may follow the procedures for such cases in the *General Statutes*.

346. The Local Servant with the Friary Chapter governs the friary. The Friary Chapter operates in two distinct capacities in its role:

- a. When it operates as a *collegial body*, the Friary Chapter consists of the Local Servant, as presider, and every perpetually professed friar legitimately assigned *de familia* to that friary with active and passive voice. In this capacity, the Local Servant and the Friary Chapter act together as one body. Therefore, when proper law states that "it is the right of the Friary Chapter", "it is the responsibility of the Friary Chapter", or "the Friary Chapter determines", then the Local Servant may vote (cf. Can. 119).
- b. When it operates as the *council* to the Local Servant, the Friary Chapter consists of the above members except the Local Servant. In this capacity, the Friary Chapter is to be of service to the Local Servant, giving counsel or consent as required by proper law. Therefore, when proper law uses these formulas: "with the counsel of the Friary Chapter" or "having consulted the Friary Chapter" or "the Local Servant with the consent of the Friary Chapter", the Local Servant does not vote (cf. Can. 127).

347. When, according to the norm of law, the Local Servant needs the consent or counsel of the Friary Chapter, his action is invalid if for whatever reason he failed to seek such consent or counsel, or should consent be required, if he acts against the deliberative vote given. When consent is required, the consent of an absolute majority of the Friary Chapter is required unless it is expressly stated otherwise for a given case.

348. Consent and counsel are to be sought in joint meetings unless, should counsel alone be required, the *General Statutes* state otherwise. In every case, however, a written record must show that counsel or consent was

duly sought and obtained.

349. For validity of chapter acts, the presence of two-thirds of the voting members is required unless it is foreseen that several voters will be impeded for more than a week and the matter is urgent, in which case an absolute majority suffices.

350. Although not obliged to accept the counsel of the Friary Chapter, even if unanimous, the Local Servant is nonetheless not to act contrary to that opinion, especially if unanimous, without a reason which is overriding in the Local Servant's judgment (cf. Can. 127 §2).

351. For the validity of chapter acts when voting as a collegial body and an absolute majority of those who must be convoked are present, that which is approved by the absolute majority of those present has the force of law. If, after two ballots the votes are equal, the one presiding can break the tie by his vote (cf. Can. 119 §2).

352. The Friary Chapter may petition the Community Servant for a review of the ministry of the Local Servant, and, if necessary, he can be removed by the Community Servant with the consent of his Council (cf. no. 286).

H. Establishment and Suppression of Friaries

353. The friars should strive to create and maintain the unity of the Fraternity, bearing witness to Christ by living in the world according to the Gospel. Wherever the friars may be in the world, they should create a real family, a dynamic center, as it were, of their spiritual and apostolic life. Wherever the Lord God calls them, the friars live in houses called friaries.



354. The Annunciation Friary enjoys a primacy over all other friaries since it is there where the first foundation and beginnings of our Fraternity were established by Mother Angelica. Therefore, it is fitting to assign a sufficient number of friars there in order to promote and foster its vitality and to serve the apostolates she founded.



355. Since the friars have a special and spiritual bond with Mother Angelica and the nuns of Our Lady of the Angels Monastery in Hanceville, Alabama, the friars serve their spiritual and sacramental needs, those of their future foundations and the faithful who visit their monasteries. Therefore, when it is possible, the friars establish friaries in these places (cf. no. 4).

356. The General Chapter determines the erection and suppression of a friary with due regard for the norms of the common law of the Church. In urgent cases, i.e. outside of the General Chapter, the Community Servant with the consent of his Council can erect a friary with due regard for the norms of common law (cf. Cann. 609, §1; 610; 611; 1215, §3).

357. At least three friars should be assigned to each friary so that a genuine community life may be assured. A friary is not to be established unless it can be prudently foreseen that three friars can work and live there. Otherwise a filial house should be established, whose organization is to be more specifically defined in the *Decree of Foundation* as specified in the *General Statutes*.

358. To establish a friary, the following documents and information must be obtained first:

- a. the written permission of the diocesan bishop;
- b. the reasons for establishing the friary;
- c. a brief description of the place and of the work to be done there by the friars;
- d. the name of the new friary to which it will be dedicated;
- e. the postal address of the new friary.

359. The date of the canonical foundation is the one noted in the *Decree*

of *Foundation* issued by the Community Servant.

360. The suppression of a friary is reserved to the Community Servant with the consent of his Council, after hearing those concerned and consulting the diocesan bishop where the friary is located (cf. Can. 616, §1).

361. A filial house which depends on another friary may be erected or suppressed by the Community Servant with the consent of his Council, after consulting the Friary Chapter of the friary involved and observing the regulations of common law (cf. Cann. 609; 616, §1).

I. Regions

362. Friaries, due to the distance from other friaries of our Fraternity and other proportionate reasons, may be grouped into regions which are not distinct juridical persons. The establishment, change and disestablishment of regions 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 authority and power of governance of the Community Servant in accord with the universal law of the Church and these *Constitutions*.

363. The friars have before their eyes the salvation of souls which is always the supreme law of the Church (cf. Can. 1752).

364.



PRAISED BE THE KING OF KINGS IN THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT!

Let the whole of mankind tremble
the whole world shake
and the heavens exult
when Christ *the Son of the living God* (Jn. 11:27)
is present on the altar
in the hands of a priest.
O admirable heights and sublime lowliness!
O sublime humility!
O humble sublimity!
That the Lord of the universe,
God and the Son of God,
so humbles Himself
that for our salvation
He hides himself under the little form of bread!
Look brothers, at the humility of God
and *pour out your hearts before Him* (Ps. 61:9)
Humble yourselves as well
that you may be exalted by Him (cf. 1 Pt. 5:6, Jas. 4:10).
Therefore,
hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves so that
He Who gives Himself totally to you
may receive you totally.

(*Letter of St. Francis to the Entire Order*)



APPENDICES

Appendix A. *Mission Statement of the Eternal Word Television Network*



Eternal Word Television Network is dedicated to the advancement of truth as defined by the magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church. The mission of the Eternal Word Television Network is to serve the orthodox belief and teaching of the Church as proclaimed by the Supreme Pontiff and his predecessors.

The goal of the Eternal Word Television Network is to provide the means by which the various organizations within the Church will have a nation-wide vehicle of expression. This will be provided for them without charge as long as their spirituality remains within the theological context of Mother Church. This is best evidenced by the acceptance of the Dogmas, Rules and Regulations of the Church in all matters, but especially as they relate to the topics on which their television presentation is based.

As the Eternal Word Television Network exists to provide a media for orthodox endeavors, this mission statement should be viewed as the basis of or foundation for this essential spiritual growth ministry, not as an attempt to censor any organization or individual.

Appendix B. *Preamble of the Constitutions of the Poor Clares of Perpetual Adoration*

Throughout Salvation History God, our Father, has continually called people to the concelebration of His Triune Love. Establishing His own people Israel, He nourished them with His word and by His miraculous power. Later He spoke personally through His Son who by His death and resurrection opens to us His Kingdom, made visible in and through the Church. Initiated by Baptism into this Kingdom, we come to share in the Eucharistic Sacrifice and to be nourished at the Sacred Banquet of Christ's Body and Blood. Religious consecration, as a response to a special call of God, furthers this Baptismal grace and unites us most intimately with Christ.



Mother Marie Claire Bouillevaux, responding to a particular call of the Lord, founded our Order of Franciscan Nuns of the Most Blessed Sacrament on December 8, 1854 in Paris, France. On June 16th of the following year, she made her First Profession according to the Rule of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis and in the observance of her own Constitutions. While still in Paris, the community began adoration of the Blessed Sacrament but it was not until August 2, 1856 that Solemn Exposition was permitted in their new convent in Troyes. This date marks the beginning of Perpetual Adoration in our Order. In 1859 Mother Marie Claire made her Perpetual Vows and the community accepted the contemplative way of life, adopting The Rule of the Third Order Regular, Cloistered.

Led by the special inspiration of the Spirit, Mother Marie Claire chose thanksgiving as our special end, having been deeply moved by the Gospel story of the ten lepers which concludes with the words of Our Lord: "Were not ten made clean? But where are the other nine?" She wrote: "If His justice finds victims who consecrate themselves to reparation ... is it not right, then that His Eucharistic Love should be glorified by unremitting thanksgiving?"



In April of 1871 Mother Mary of the Cross Morawska left Troyes with six companions to make a foundation in their homeland of Poland. Due to the religious persecutions of the times, the community was forced to move to Austrian-Poland where they made their first permanent foundation at Lemberg on October 27, 1873. Advised by the Polish hierarchy, Mother Mary of the Cross decided to adopt the Rule of The Second Order of St. Francis. In June 1879, while traveling to Rome to present her petition, she stopped at Troyes to explain her decision.

However, the Troyes Community chose at this time to remain Third Order Regular, Cloistered. The Constitutions of Mother Mary of the Cross, incorporating our heritage of perpetual adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament into the Urbanist form of the Poor Clare Rule, were approved by Pope Leo XIII on September 20, 1889.

In 1906, Mother Mary Isabelle Markiewicz, newly elected superior of the Lemberg monastery, called an extraordinary Chapter of the monasteries attached to her House to discuss the transfer of all the Houses to the Second Order of St. Francis. This petition was approved by the decree of Pope St. Pius X, June 29, 1912. This is the official date of our passing from the Third to the Second Order. The French monasteries made this change July 3, 1969. Our entire Order now has the privilege of Solemn Vows and Papal Enclosure.

On July 12, 1898, the Lemberg monastery sent seven sisters to make a foundation in Vienna, Austria. In turn, the Vienna monastery delegated Mother Mary Agnes Eiechler and Mother Mary Cyrilla Zotter to establish the first American monastery at Cleveland, Ohio in 1921. This foundation received the privilege of Solemn Vows in 1925, one of the first cloistered communities in America to be given this privilege. Since then, several other Houses have been established in the United States. In 1933 a foundation was made in Dacca, Bangladesh from which several more monasteries have been founded in South India. Our Order adopted a new title, Poor Clares of Perpetual Adoration, in 1970.

The daughters in spirit of Mother Marie Claire and Mother Mary of the Cross faithfully continue to fulfill the ideal that "Christ's Eucharistic Love be glorified by unremitting thanksgiving" through dedication to Perpetual Adoration in the Order of St. Clare.

Appendix C. Glossary of Terms

Absolute Majority - More than 50% of the votes.

Active Voice - Can vote in Community elections.

Apostolate - The means through which the mission entrusted to our Community is carried out.

Assignment - A particular responsibility in a friary given by the Local Servant.

Ballot - Vote taken.

Bishop of Birmingham - The ecclesiastical authority over the MFVA's. As a *Public Clerical Association of the Faithful* we are under his jurisdiction.

Candidate - One who is aspiring to advance to the next level of religious life or Sacred Orders within our Community.

Charism - The founding spirit given to our Community by God through Mother Angelica (cf. no.'s 7-13).

Community - The *Franciscan Missionaries of the Eternal Word* as a whole.

Community Chapter - A Community wide chapter of all the perpetually professed friars. It does not exercise the power of governance, but encourages a sense of direct participation, consultation and direction in the exercise of the governing authority within the Community.

Community Council - The body which assists the Community Servant in the governance of the Community. When it operates as a *collegial body*, the Council consists of the Community Servant, the Community Vicar and four Community Councilors. When it operates as the *council* to the Community Servant, the Council consists of the above members except the Community Servant.

Community Councilor - A perpetually professed friar (at least three years; cleric or non-cleric) who is elected to be part of the Community Council.

Community Secretary - The Community Councilor who has the responsibility of preparing for the Community Council and General Chapter meetings, taking the minutes and recording the official acts for these meetings.

Community Servant - Elected by the General Chapter for a three year term. He is the superior over the entire Fraternity and all friaries, subject to the Bishop of Birmingham. He must be a priest and at least five years in perpetual vows.

Community Steward - The friar appointed to oversee the financial administration of the entire Community, who may be a Community Councilor.

Community Vicar - One who is elected at the General Chapter as a member of the Community Council and who is responsible for the governance of the Community in the absence of the Community Servant. He must be a priest and at least five years in perpetual vows.

Consent - The approval of the majority required.

Constitutions - The proper law of our Community and the particular way we live the *First Order Rule of St. Francis*. It requires the approval of the Bishop of Birmingham to revise after the General Chapter has given its approval.

Counsel - Required advice to be obtained by the competent authority, but approval is not required.

De familia - *Of the family*. The permanent residence of a friar.

Directors of Formation - those entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing the stages of formation: Postulant Director, Novice Director, Director of Temporary Professed and Director of Priestly Formation.

Director of Priestly Formation - The friar whose duty it is to oversee those friars preparing for Sacred Orders.

Director of Temporary Professed - The friar responsible to direct the temporary professed throughout the period of temporary profession.

Directory of Chapter Acts - Provides the procedures to be followed in carrying out the General Chapter Meetings. Changes to the Directory need the approval of the General Chapter. These changes take effect at the next General Chapter Meeting.

Directory of Formation - Guide book for all stages of formation.

Divine Office - See *Liturgy of the Hours*

Filial House - Remote house that depends on another friary. It does not have its own governance.

Formation - The process whereby one is formed in the spirituality of our Community.

Franciscan Missionaries of the Eternal Word, Inc. - The legal name of the MFVAs used for civil business, e.g., wills, insurance, etc.

Fraternity - see **Community**

Friar - A member of our Community. In general, it refers to a member of the Mendicant Orders, e.g. Franciscans, Dominicans and Carmelites.

Friary - The individual place of residence for our friars.

Friary Chapter - The monthly meeting in individual friaries of all the perpetually professed members who are *de familia* in that friary.

Friary Offices - Local Servant, Local Vicar, Local Secretary and Local Steward.

General Chapter - The highest authority (after the Bishop of Birmingham) in the Community. It is made up of all the perpetually professed members of the Community and is generally convened once every three years around Pentecost.

General Offices - Community Servant, Community Vicar, Community Secretary, Community Steward and Community Councilors. The offices are for three years.

General Statutes - Part of the proper law of our Community which provides more specific details in living the *Constitutions*. It requires the approval of the General Chapter to be revised.

Horarium - The daily schedule within a friary.

House of Formation - A friary where formation on a particular level takes place.

Juridic person - A group with a purpose, in keeping with the mission of the Church, which is recognized by the Catholic Church as having a truly useful purpose and is under Her authority.

Liturgy of the Hours - The group of psalms, hymns, prayers, biblical and spiritual readings formulated by the Church to be prayed throughout the day according to our horarium.

Local Secretary - has the responsibility of preparing for the Friary Chapter meetings, taking the minutes and recording the official acts of the Friary Chapter.

Local Servant - One appointed by the Community Servant with the counsel of his Council to be the resident superior of a particular friary.

Local Ordinary - The bishop or religious superior who has authority in a given location (his jurisdiction). Our local ordinary is the Bishop of Birmingham.

Local Steward - The friar, in an individual friary, who has the responsibility of the day to day financial administration of the friary overseeing the account books, collecting receipts and making expenditures. He is appointed by the Community Servant with the counsel of his Council.

Local Vicar - One appointed by the Community Servant with the counsel

of his Council to be the Vicar of the friary. In the absence of the Local Servant, he assumes the governance of the friary.

MFVA - Latin acronym for *Missionarii Franciscani Verbi Aeterni* which is translated *Franciscan Missionaries of the Eternal Word*.

Mission - The work or purpose for which a person or group of people are sent by Christ, through the Church, to extend the Kingdom of God. For the MFVA's Mother Angelica gave us our mission *of ever looking for the stray sheep, whose needs you will lovingly fulfill with great solicitude* (cf. no. 10).

Motto - The overriding charism given to us by Mother Angelica: *The lost I will seek out, the strayed I will bring back* - Quod perierat requiram, et quod abjectum erat reducam (MFVA Motto: Ezekiel 34:16 from the *NAB & Latin Vulgate*)

Novice - A friar who has formally begun life in the Fraternity and has received the habit and a religious name.

Novice Director - The friar responsible to direct the novices throughout the period of the novitiate.

Novitiate - One year period of intense formation in the spirituality of the Community.

Offices -

Community Servant	Elected by the General Chapter.
Community Vicar	Elected by the General Chapter.
Community Secretary	Appointed by the Community Servant (from the elected Community Councilors) with the <i>consent</i> of his Council.

Community Steward	Appointed by the Community Servant with the <i>consent</i> of his Council (does not have to be a Community Councilor).
Community Councilor(s)	Elected by the General Chapter.
Local Servant	Appointed by the Community Servant with <i>counsel</i> of his Council.
Local Vicar	Appointed by the Community Servant with <i>counsel</i> of his Council.
Local Secretary	Appointed by the Local Servant with <i>counsel</i> of the Friary Chapter.
Local Steward	Appointed by the Community Servant with <i>counsel</i> of his Council.
Director of Priestly Formation	Appointed by the Community Servant with the <i>counsel</i> of his Council.
Director of Temporary Professed	Appointed by the Community Servant with the <i>counsel</i> of his Council.
Novice Director	Appointed by the Community Servant with the <i>counsel</i> of his Council.
Postulant Director	Appointed by the Community Servant with the <i>counsel</i> of his Council.

Vocation Director	Appointed by the Community Servant with the <i>counsel</i> of his Council.
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Passive Voice - Can be a candidate in Community elections.

Perpetual Profession - Life-long vows which bring about a definitive incorporation into our Community.

Postulancy - The beginning of a candidate's and the Community's experience of one another. It lasts nine to twelve months.

Postulant Director - One responsible to direct the postulants throughout the period of postulancy.

Postulant - One who is in the initial stage of formation in the Community.

Principal Friary - The Mother House of our Community which is to be a model for the life of the entire Community. Our principal friary is the Annunciation Friary.

Public Clerical Association of the Faithful - The first stage in the life of a religious community which has the intention of becoming a *Clerical Religious Institute of Diocesan Right* with public vows, and then finally, a *Clerical Religious Institute of Pontifical Right* under the jurisdiction of Rome. "Clerical" indicates that it has priests governing it. Our Community must prove that it has a unique apostolate, can attract new members and is able to sustain itself financially in order to progress to the next stages.

Qualified Majority - At least 2/3 of the votes.

Region - When the number of friaries reaches a level where they need to be divided into different regions, e.g., Western USA region, Eastern USA region.

Relative Majority - Most of the votes (Not necessarily 50%).

Rule - The First Order Rule written by St. Francis and approved by Pope Honorius III in 1223. It can only be revised by Rome.

Sacred (Holy) Orders - The office of bishop, priest and deacon.

Secret Vote - A vote taken in such a way so as to protect anonymity, e.g., secret ballots.

Servants - The Community Servant, Community Vicar, Local Servants and Local Vicars.

Superior - One who has immediate or remote authority over others, which includes the: Community Servant, Community Vicar, Local Servants, Local Vicars, Director of Priestly Formation, Director of Temporary Professed, Novice Director and Postulant Director. In a wider sense, “superior” also refers to the Pope as the highest superior and the Bishop of Birmingham as the ecclesiastical authority over the Community.

Temporal Goods - the land, buildings, cash, stocks, bonds, automobiles, artistic works, personal property and intangible but non-spiritual assets of the Community.

Temporary Profession - Profession of vows for one year at a time, renewed annually for three to six years.

