

## Greeting to Pope Francis

Your Holiness, our beloved Lord Pope Francis, with deep joy I offer you the most cordial of greetings from all the members of the General Chapter of the Order of Friars Minor.

We have been gathered in Assisi since last May 10<sup>th</sup> at Santa Maria della Porziuncola, where St. Francis of Assisi wanted his brothers to gather.

Each one of us and all together want to thank you so very much for the kindness that you have always shown us. We are particularly grateful for the audience that you give us today and for the exquisite attention you have had for our Chapter by way of the very amiable presence of your delegate, Card. Francisco Javier Errazuriz Ossa, who in his brotherly discretion and paternal authority was able to transmit to us the attentiveness and loving care of the Pope for our Order.

[I'm sorry, Holy Father, but we came up empty-handed, without even a little mate: the Capitulars drank it all! And our "Turk" failed to find even a tiny bit in Assisi!]

We have summed up the theme of our Chapter in a short phrase: *Fratres et minores in our Aetate*.

There are two aspects to this motto: *brothers and minors*, (which) is the name chosen by St. Francis for himself and for his companions. Attention to our day is the perspective from which we want to ask ourselves how to be brothers more and more and increasingly minor. We are, in fact, convinced that the prophecy that the contemporary world expects of us is above all that fraternity and minority to which we want to give credible witness.

We came here with to you, "Lord Pope," as St. Francis used to say, to express our firm resolve to be always faithful to the holy Roman Church, and also to receive indications, corrections and suggestions so that we might follow ever more faithfully in the footprints of Jesus .

We know that before long you will make us sharers in your reflection on the theme of ecology. This is a subject very dear to all of us Franciscans. We promise right now to do everything possible to translate into concrete options what you will tell us in this area as well.

Within the General Chapter and in this meeting with you we want to recover new impetus, courage and audacity for our life as Friars Minor. In this way we can return to the countries of the five continents from which we come, confirmed in the desire and renewed forces (needed) to be able to announce peace, as the gift of the Risen Christ, and to be witnesses to the joy of the gospel, *Evangelii gaudium!*

But it happens, that sometimes our witness of life falters, making us not very credible. As you well know, Holy Father, our consistency with the charism of minority and poverty has recently failed, especially because of questionable choices of economic management. In this Chapter we have sought to speak with honesty and clarity about this issue. We ask God that these problematic and provocative situations may be, by the grace of God, a death that blooms into the resurrection of the gospel life, the Gospel which we have promised to live. The Gospel is the only solid foundation of our lives. We ask the Lord to heal, with his holy Spirit, the wounds to brotherly confidence that these events have caused.

In the beginning and end of our *Rule*, St. Francis intimately unites "to observe the Holy Gospel" with "obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope Honorius and his successors canonically elected and to the Roman Church." Therefore, I want to end this greeting with the phrase that concludes our *Rule* and which explains why we are here today in front of you: "being always subject and submissive at the feet of the same holy Church, grounded in the Catholic faith, we may observe poverty and humility and the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which we have firmly promised."