

STUDY RESOURCES FOR THE CONSTITUTIONS OF THE CAPUCHIN FRIARS MINOR

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THE CAPUCHIN CONSTITUTIONS OF 2013: A THEOLOGICAL READING

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1. The post-conciliar journey of the Capuchin Constitutions

The Capuchins revised their Constitutions at the General Chapter (2012)¹. The text was approved by the Holy See in 2013, thus becoming the third version of the post-conciliar Constitutions. Broadly speaking, in fact, the history of the Constitutions can be divided into two parts; the first goes from its origins up to Vatican II, the second flows from Vatican II and continues to this day.

This second phase began with the General Chapter of 1964, which launched the journey of revision of the Constitutions according to the conciliar criteria and produced the text approved experimentally by the General Chapter of 1968. This text, minimally modified by the General Chapters of 1970 and 1974, was substantially reorganized and rewritten in 1982, promulgated in 1983, approved by the Holy See in 1986, further corrected and supplemented by the Order and presented to the Order in 1989, and finally comprehensively approved by the Holy See in 1990. In summary, the two outstanding dates in the recent journey of the Constitutions are 1968

¹ For the entire process comprising the preparation, presentation, drafting and approval of the text cf C. CALLONI (ed.), *Atti dell'84° Capitolo generale*, 3 vols., Curia generale OFMCap, Roma 2012. Cf F. Cangelosi, *Relazione generale*, *ibid.*, II, 657-708.

and 1986. At the same time, the Order had embarked on a journey of detailed study and reflection by means of the first five Plenary Councils (Quito 1971, Taizé 1973, Mattli 1978, Rome 1981) and the Assembly of Lublin (1991). More generally in the Church, abundant fruits were reaped from the conciliar event in the area of the Magisterium and theology, with particular reference to the consecrated life and the rediscovery of the spiritual sources of Franciscanism and the Capuchin Order. So it was that in 2006 the General Chapter decreed that the foundational legislation of the Order needed further revision, both in order to detach the inspirational part (destined for the Constitutions) from the disciplinary part (destined for General Ordinances), and to incorporate into the new text the further enrichment that had emerged in the meantime from the Magisterium and from theology, as well as from Plenary Councils VI and VII held at Assisi².

Without excluding the prerequisite of the *Ordinances* of Albacina (1529)³, the current text of the Constitutions cannot be studied without adequate knowledge of the ancient Constitutions, especially those of St. Euphemia (1536). The subsequent adjustments made to the text did not alter the experience and spirituality they contributed, and substantially they remained in force until Vatican II. This is correct, not only from a historical-theological perspective, but also from a theological-systematic one, since they still provide a crucial key by which we can know and interpret Capuchin identity, and in many cases they are mentioned implicitly or explicitly in the Constitutions, in which they therefore continue to be present⁴.

On the other hand, the Constitutions in the 1968 and 1986 versions cannot be ignored either. In fact, especially with regard to the latter, the text in force today does not set out to be totally alternative, but rather to complete its predecessor, combining *fidelity* and

² The path leading to the chapter of 2006 can be reconstructed from C. CARGNONI, *Bibliografia sul rinnovamento legislativo dell'Ordine cappuccino (1964-2006)*, accessible on the site www.ofmcap.org

³ For a first approach to the Ordinances of Albacina cf. F. ELIZONDO, "Las constituciones capuchinas de 1529. En el 450 aniversario de su redacción en Albacina", in *Laurentianum* 20(1979), 421-434; F. ACROCCA, "L'influsso degli Spirituali sulle costituzioni di Albacina", in V. Criscuolo (ed.), *Ludovico da Fossombrone e l'ordine dei Cappuccini* (Bibliotheca seraphico-cappuccina. 44), Istituto storico dei Cappuccini, Roma 1994, 271-306.

⁴ A critical edition of the text was published in *Le prime Costituzioni dei Frati Minori Cappuccini*, a c. di F.A. Catalano – C. Cargnoni – G. Santarelli, L'Italia Francescana, Roma 1982, 170-204; *I Frati Cappuccini. Documenti e testimonianze del primo secolo*, a c. di C. Cargnoni, I, EFI, Perugia 1988, 253-464; *I Frati Cappuccini. Fonti documentarie e narrative del primo secolo (1525-1619)*, a c. di V. Criscuolo, Curia generale OFMCap, Roma 1994, 163-244. The subsequent developments of the Constitutions took place in 1552, 1575, 1608, 1643, 1909, 1925, the text of which is in the two volumes: *Constitutiones Antiquae (1529-1643)*, Curia generale OFMCap, Roma 1980, e *Constitutiones Recentiores (1909-1925)*, Curia generale OFMCap, Roma 1986. F. Elizondo, "Las Constituciones Capuchinas de 1536", in *Estudios Franciscanos* 83(1982), 143-252; Id., "Estructura y lenguaje de las Constituciones capuchinas de 1536", in *Laurentianum* 24(1983), 283-296; Id., "Constituciones Capuchinas de 1575 en torno a un centenario" in *Laurentianum* 16 (1975), 1-52; Id., "Contenido de las Constituciones Capuchinas de 1575 y su relación con la legislación precedente", in *Laurentianum* 16(1975), 225-280; Id., "Las Constituciones Capuchinas de 1608", in *Laurentianum* 17(1976), 153-208; Id., "Las constituciones capuchinas de 1638", in *Laurentianum* 17(1976), 313-387. Cf anche M.-A. de Lauzon, *Conférences spirituelles sur les constitutions des Frères Mineurs Capucins*, 3 voll., Curia generale OFMCap, Roma 1959-1961

enrichments. Therefore all the contributions to the post-conciliar drafts of the Constitutions are useful if we wish to study the current version⁶.

2. The post-conciliar journey of Catholic theology

In the theological sphere, the period after Vatican II was extraordinarily fruitful⁷. Certainly, the Council itself was the original event, prepared for by the renewal of biblical, liturgical, patristic and medieval studies, but it also provoked new and important ripple effects in systematic reflection.

From the structural point of view, the recovery of the historical and existential dimension in Revelations⁸, and particularly in Christology⁹, must be considered as one of those effects. It has

⁵ Cf. F. CANGELOSI, *Relazione generale*, cit., 686-688

⁶ For a global approach to the Constitutions of 1968 cf. A. de Sobradillo, "Las nuevas constituciones de la Orden capuchina", in *Estudios Franciscanos* 72(1971), 165-188; Id., "Las nuevas constituciones de la Orden capuchina (Continuación)", in *Estudios Franciscanos* 73(1972), 173-215; L. Iriarte, *I cappuccini si rinnovano: riflessioni sulle nuove costituzioni*, Editrice Francescana, Torino 1970; Id., *Le Costituzioni Cappuccine rinnovate* (Sussidi formazione permanente. 4), CISPCap, Roma 1978; Id., *Le Costituzioni Cappuccine rinnovate: lettura a dieci anni di "esperimento"* (Sussidi formazione permanente. 4/2), CISPCap, Roma 1978. Su alcuni aspetti particolari cf. M. Erburu, "Valor moral de las nuevas Constituciones Capuchinas", in *Laurentianum* 10(1969), 79-91; S. Ara, "La renovación acomodada de la formación para la vida religiosa capuchina", in *Laurentianum* 10(1969), 142-172; O. Schmucki, "La nostra vita di preghiera: note sul capitolo III delle Costituzioni dei Frati Minori Cappuccini", in *L'Italia Francescana* 56(1981), 109-136.

On the Constitutions of 1986 cf. C. RIZZATTI, *Riflessioni sulle Costituzioni dei Frati Minori Cappuccini* (Sussidi per lo studio delle Costituzioni. 1), Curia Generale OFMCap, Roma 1990; Conferencia de Superiores Mayores Capuchinos de Venezuela, Ecuador, Colombia, *Guide di studio per le Costituzioni dei Frati Minori Cappuccini* (Sussidi per lo studio delle Costituzioni. 2), Curia Generale OFMCap, Roma 1990; L. Iriarte, "Le nuove costituzioni dei Frati Minori Cappuccini: tra creatività ed istituzione, tra fedeltà e rinnovamento", in *Laurentianum* 35(1994), 491-515; T. Ricci, *Il patrimonio spirituale delle Costituzioni dei Frati Minori Cappuccini* (Sussidi per lo studio delle Costituzioni. 3), Curia Generale OFMCap, Roma 1991; S. Ara, *El patrimonio espiritual de los Capuchinos: comentario a los capitulos V, VI, XI, IV y X de las Constituciones de Capuchinos* (Colección OPI), Curia Provincial de Capuchinos, Pamplona 1996; M.-A. Peña González, "Dimensión espiritual de las constituciones renovadas de los hermanos menores capuchinos", in *Naturaleza y gracia* 44(1997), 415-452; Id., "Identidad del capuchino, como hermano menor a la luz de las constituciones de 1990", in *Naturaleza y gracia* 47(2000), 7-195; *El patrimonio espiritual de los Capuchinos: comentario a los capitulos V, VI, XI, IV y X de las Constituciones de Capuchinos* (Colección OPI), Curia Provincial de Capuchinos, Pamplona 1996; M.-A. Peña González, "Dimensión espiritual de las constituciones renovadas de los hermanos menores capuchinos", in *Naturaleza y gracia* 44(1997), 415-452; Id., "Identidad del capuchino, como hermano menor a la luz de las constituciones de 1990", in *Naturaleza y gracia* 47(2000), 7-195.

⁷ Cf. G. Canobbio – P. Coda (edd.), *Teologia del XX secolo. Un bilancio*, 3 voll., Città Nuova, Roma 2003; Ch. Theobald, "Il divenire della teologia cattolica dopo il Concilio Vaticano II", in *Storia del cristianesimo. Religione, politica, cultura*, XII: *Crisi e rinnovamento: dal 1958 ai giorni nostri*, a c. di A. Riccardi, Borla, Roma 2004, 161-204

⁸ The monumental example is *Mysterium salutis*, edited by J. Feiner and M. Löhrer, with the subtitle *Nuovo corso di dogmatica come teologia della storia della salvezza*, starting from 1965. A more recent application is in R. FISICHELLA - G. POZZO - G. LAFONT, Un'applicazione più recente è in R. Fisichella – G. Pozzo – G. Lafont, *La teologia tra rivelazione e storia. Introduzione alla teologia sistematica* (Corso di teologia sistematica. 1), EDB, Bologna 1996. Cf. G. Pasquale, *La storia della salvezza. Dio Signore del tempo e della storia* (Diaconia alla verità. 11), Paoline, Milano 2002.

⁹ We refer back to the studies by G. Lafont, *Peut-on connaître Dieu en Jésus-Christ? Problematique* (Cogitatio fidei. 44), Cerf, Paris 1969; "Breve saggio sui fondamenti della cristologia", in R. Fisichella (ed.), *Gesù Rivelatore*.

resulted not only in the elaboration of a new fundamental theology and a new attention to the theology of history, but also and above all in the recovery of the centrality of the mystery of Easter, which the Nicene currents had in some way subordinated to the mystery of the Incarnation¹⁰.

Furthermore, in Christology the Trinitarian perspective has been recovered: the centrality of Jesus' relationship with the Father, in the bond of the Holy Spirit, has been rediscovered. Leading up to this was the rediscovery of the mystery of the One and Triune God, not just as one of the treatises of dogmatic theology, perhaps the most abstruse and useless of all, but rather as the heart of theology itself and as the structure on which all the other sectors of systematic theology are organised¹¹. Beyond this, the fresh reading in a Trinitarian key has had an impact on ethics¹² and ontology¹³.

Precisely in the light of the Trinitarian mystery, the Church has been reinterpreted and placed in the category of communion, as the focus of an ellipse whose other pole is mission¹⁴.

Anthropology has greatly increased in importance, on the one hand by underlining the interrelation between Christology and anthropology¹⁵, and on the other by emphasising the component of relationality in humans as pointing to the origin of the divine relationships¹⁶.

Teologia Fondamentale, Piemme, Casale M. (AL) 1988, 120-139; *Dio, il tempo e l'essere*, Piemme, Casale M. (AL) 1992.

¹⁰ On the recovery of the centrality of Easter in the Christian faith, cf R. Cantalamessa, *La Pasqua della nostra salvezza. Le tradizioni pasquali della Bibbia e della Chiesa primitiva*, Marietti 1820, Torino ²2007, e anche *Pasqua: un passaggio a ciò che non passa*, San Paolo, Cinisello B. (MI) ²2008.. With regard to the role of Easter as the centre of gravity in revelation and theology, the starting point may be that of H. U. von Balthasar and his essay in *Mysterium Salutis* (1967), accessible also autonomously as *Teologia dei tre giorni. Mysterium paschale* (Biblioteca di teologia contemporanea, 61), Querinana, Brescia ⁸2011. Cf In generale cf M. Gonzalez. *Il ricentramento pasquale-trinitario della teologia sistematica nel XX secolo*, in P. Coda (ed.), *La Trinità e il pensare. Figure, percorsi, prospettive*, Città Nuova, Roma 1997, 331-371.

¹¹ The reference is to Karl Rahner's contribution in *Mysterium Salutis* (1967), later republished independently as *La Trinità* (Biblioteca di teologia contemporanea, 102), Queriniana, Brescia 42008. For a recent summary see INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Dio Trinità, unità degli uomini. Il monoteismo cristiano contro la violenza*, in *La Cibid.Ità Cattolica* 164(2014/1), 157-212

¹² Cf T. GOFFI, *Etica cristiana trinitaria*, EDB, Bologna 1995 and COMMISSIONE TEOLOGICA INTERNAZIONALE, *Alla ricerca di un'etica universale: nuovo sguardo sulla legge naturale* (2009), in *Cibid.Ità Cattolica* 160(2009/2), 319-426

¹³ A milestone is Klaus Hemmerle's small work *Tesi di ontologia trinitaria*. For a renewal of Christian philosophy, Città Nuova, Rome 1986. By the same A. cf. also *Partire dall'unità. La Trinità come stile di vita e forma di pensiero* (Contributi di teologia. 24), Città Nuova, Roma 1998.

¹⁴ The topic had already taken root in Vatican II. It was developed in the Synod of 1985, and explained by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in its *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on some aspects of the Church understood as communion* (1992), and completed by John Paul II in the Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte* (2000). Cf. Commissione Teologica Internazionale, *Temi scelti d'ecclesiologia in occasione del XX anniversario della chiusura del Concilio Vaticano II* (1984): EV ; J. Ratzinger, *L'ecclesiologia della costituzione "Lumen gentium"*, in R. Fisichella (ed.), *Il Concilio Vaticano II. Recezione e attualità alla luce del Giubileo*, San Paolo, Cinisello B. 2000, 68-81

¹⁵ This is the approach of Vatican II, particularly in *Gaudium et spes*. Cf L. Ladaria, *L'uomo alla luce di Cristo nel Vaticano II*, in L.F. Ladaria - R. Latourelle (edd.), *Vaticano II. Venticinque anni dopo (1962-1987)*, Cittadella, Assisi 1987, 939-951.

¹⁶Cf INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Desiderio e conoscenza di Dio. Teologia – Cristologia – Antropologia* (1982), EV 19/1164-1169; Id., *Comunione e servizio. La persona umana creata a immagine di Dio*

From the point of view of the participants and the topics of study, post-conciliar theology has seen the emergence of new voices, especially those of the laity and women, and new contexts, particularly Latin America, Africa and Asia. New questions have been subjected to study, starting with contemporary issues such as justice and peace, the safeguarding of creation, bioethics and the neurosciences. New forums for discussion and deeper study, such as ecumenical, interreligious and intercultural dialogue, have also become established¹⁷.

All of this - Paschal and Trinitarian Christocentrism, the ecclesiology of communion, the anthropology of relationship - was then reflected in the renewal of the theology of consecrated life. At this point, after looking at theology, we must also consider the parallel path taken by the Magisterium, now taking on board, now inspiring the advance of theology. Precisely with regard to the consecrated life, in fact, after those of Vatican II, the magisterial document most present in the new Constitutions is the Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata* (1996), issued by John Paul II following the Synod of 1994¹⁸.

Other post-conciliar texts, more global in scope and which have had a different impact on the Constitutions, are the Code of Canon Law (1983) and the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992).

On the basis of these premises, we can now embark on our exploration of the theology scattered throughout the Constitutions.

3. Theological themes in the Constitutions

The Constitutions are an eminently juridical document. Their function is to regulate the main aspects of the life of the brothers, wherever they are present. However, both because they are addressed to religious of the Catholic Church and because, faithful to a character that has been maintained for some five centuries, the Capuchin Constitutions blend together spiritual and juridical elements, they inevitably have a rich theological content. The study of these

(2004): EV 22/2870-2964. Cf P. Coda, "Sul concetto e il luogo di un'antropologia trinitaria", in Id. – L. Žák (edd.), *Abitando la Trinità* (Collana di teologia. 35), Città Nuova, Roma 1998, 123-136.

¹⁷ The need for diversified pastoral approaches based, for example, on territory, is expressed in special Synods with post-synodal exhortations, all issued by John Paul II: *Ecclesia in Africa* (1995); *Ecclesia in America* (1999); *Ecclesia in Asia* (1999); *Ecclesia in Oceania* (2001), 51-52; *Ecclesia in Europa* (2003). An enculturated theology must be at the service of specific pastoral approaches. On these perspectives see INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Fede e inculturazione* (1989): EV 11/1347-1424; Id., *Cristianesimo e religioni* (1997): EV 15/986-1113; Id., *La teologia oggi. Prospettive, principi e criteri* (2011), in *La Cibid.Ità Cattolica* 162(2012/2), 44-94.

¹⁸ In addition to the text of the Exhortation (EV 15/434-775), it is useful to consult the Lineamenta of the Synod (1992), in *Enchiridion del Sinodo dei Vescovi*, II, EDB, Bologna 2006, 4374-4449, and the *Instrumentum laboris* (1994), *ibid*, 4450-4625. The documents of the competent Congregation are also decisive on the theology of consecrated life and the Constitutions: *Mutuae Relationes* (1978): EV 6/586-717; *Religious and human promotion* (1980): EV 7, 436-504; *The contemplative dimension of religious life* (1980): EV 7/505-541; *Religious life in Church teaching. Its essential elements in Institutes dedicated to the works of the apostolate* (1983): EV ; *Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes* (1990): EV 12/1-139; *Fraternal Life in Community* (1994): EV 14/345-537; *Inter-Institute Collaboration for Formation* (1998): EV 17/1806-1895; *Starting Afresh from Christ. A renewed commitment of consecrated life for the third millennium* (2002): EV 21/372-510; *The service of authority and obedience* (2008), LEV, Vatican City 2008. For the impact on the Franciscan world cf. P. MARTINELLI (ed.), *Il rinnovamento della vita consacrata e la famiglia francescana*, EDB, Bologna 2007.

Constitutions should involve the juridical and Franciscan sphere, should be conducted from a historical and philological perspective, and follow the blueprints provided by psychology and formation. But it should also take into account the contribution of the theology they contain. We will structure our examination around three core areas: the mystery of God, the mystery of the Church, and the mystery of the human being.

3.1. *The Mystery of God*

We can catalogue the constitutional texts that speak of God into groups¹⁹: (a) texts that speak of God presenting the Most Holy Trinity from the point of view of its substantial unity; (b) texts that present the divine mystery in the articulation of the three Persons; (c) texts that distinctly mention only one Person, therefore either the Father or Jesus or the Spirit; (d) finally, some texts that use the term "God" or "Lord", but without a clear understanding of whether it refers to the Father or Jesus or the Most Holy Trinity considered *sub specie unitatis*. For practical purposes we will follow the order of the creed, the same one adopted by the Catechism of the Catholic Church, so that we will consider the three divine Persons in the order in which they appear in the baptismal command, and then we will examine the Trinitarian texts which present the Persons together.

1. The person of *God the Father* is considered first of all, according to the first article of the Creed, as the principle of creation. The Father is the Creator (13:4), who in creation has expressed his power (105:3), doing everything with wisdom and love (18:1). He turns his gaze to the world (13:4) and under the Father's gaze the world is called to live as one family (13:1: AG 1). God then bears witness to himself first of all in creation, indeed "in all creatures" (45,2).

But God also enters into history with his *providence* (67:1), by which he continually cares for people (77:1; 108:1; 178:3), and calls them to become co-workers (108:2). He "is present and active in the history of the world" (108,5), so as to manifest his providence through "events and actions, but also through new ideas and life experiences" (108,4). God, in fact, has sown "good and beautiful things in the human heart and in the harmony of creation" (156:1).

God also enters into history through revelation. He already speaks "in the signs of the times, in the lives of people, and in our hearts" (45:2), but, because "he loved us first" (45:2), he sent the Son (88:2; 157:3), the Only Begotten One, out of love for the world (105:4), and in the Son, in the Word made flesh, "he revealed himself and made known to us the mystery of his will" (158:2), his own plan (17:3). He constituted Christ "judge, lawgiver and the salvation of all peoples" (189,2), and together with the Spirit he bore witness to him (189,2).

He therefore calls people to "follow in the footsteps of his beloved Son" (16:3), and he will reward those who persevere to the end (168:5). The Father's offering is universal, that is, addressed to all, whom he calls to "share in the work of creation through work" (78:1). He who

¹⁹ On St. Francis' vision of God cf. C. DALLARI, "Francesco d'Assisi, un tratto dimenticato: il "teologo"", in G. Ravaglia (ed.), *La sapienza della Parola*, Inchiostri Associati, Bologna 2000, 149-165; T. Matura, *Francesco parla di Dio*, Biblioteca francescana, Milano 1992, 1-63.93-98.

"sees in secret" (147:7) and "whose voice speaks to the heart" (45:1.3), speaks to each one. Nevertheless, the Father is also the one who "reveals to the little ones the secrets of the kingdom of heaven" (24:3), for "he loves and seeks out the poor" (60:3; 61:6).

He gathers his people, which is the Church, and in it calls Christians in every state of life to work in his field (80:4) and to strive for the fullness of charity (16:1). God has sent the apostles throughout the world (15:2), continues to speak to the Church in the liturgy (53:1), gives talents (79:2; 81:1; 87:4), establishes ministries (117:3), and inspires every apostolate, even of individuals (148:1). Then, out of love (162,1), he calls some, those he wishes, to give themselves to him (16.3; 17.5; 44.1) in the religious life (16,3), and more particularly in the Capuchin Order (162,1), without ever revoking his gifts (184,2), and ensuring the help necessary to live out their consecration (171,4). Each brother, with his different gifts (79,2; 89,1) is a gift of the Father to the fraternity (28,1), in particular the ministers (12,2), and manifests his goodness and kindness "also through the faces of the brothers and the life of our fraternities" (45,8).

The features of the Father's face are shown in the statement that he is charity (59,1; 109,1), goodness (16,1; 44,4, 45,8; 67,1), kindness (45. 8), love that welcomes and forgives (163,1), patience (60,5), gentleness (60,5), mercy (51,2; 152,2), compassion (14,2), humility (14,2; 60,2; 60,5), omnipotence (21,4; 105,3; 109,5), wisdom (105,3), peace (44. 4), holiness (21,4; 109,1; 152,2), beauty (160,5; 56,1; 156,1; 169,3.4), infinite splendour (169,3), and grace in many forms. (57,2). The Father is the Most High (77,4), "supremely Good and all Good, from whom all good proceeds". (13,1.2; 46,6; 108,5), "all our wealth and sufficiency" (77,4), the living (106,4), the Absolute for which all people thirst (59,2; 181,2).

It was from the adoration of the Father that Saint Francis drew his sense of universal brotherhood (13,1), and to the Father he attributes the gift of brothers and the revelation that he was to live according to the form of the holy Gospel (4,1). Therefore the brothers, following their founder and like all his sons, offer their lives totally to God through consecration (9,2; 21,4; 35,3; 47,1). They are called to serve, love, worship and honour God with a pure heart and a pure mind (59,1); to worship God in spirit and truth (33.1; 54,2); to love God above all things (9. 3; 174,1); to attune their minds to God (47,6), to fix their eyes and hearts on him (59,2); to direct all their intentions and energies to him (80,4); to seek the will of God in every event and action (158,6.7); to offer their will to God (158,7; 159,3; 160,2; 165; 166); to attract people to love God with joy (15.5); to live for the glory of God (9.3). In fact, local fraternities have the mission to be places where God is sought and loved in all things and above all things (161,1; 181,2), and the aim of the chapter is to seek the will of God (141,2).

God's plan is a plan of salvation, in which he asks us to take part daily (17,3; 51,1; 184,1), a plan which can be identified through the signs of the times (149,1), since it is woven into the fabric of history, popular religiosity and the particular cultures of the different regions (50,4). Moreover, he speaks in the liturgy (53,1), therefore one can experience him in prayer (46,6; 52,2; 55,7), praising him and meditating on his Word (15,5; 49,5); speaking to him with the heart (52,2), with confidence (80,4; 177,5), establishing a filial conversation with him (45,5), to the point of offering to God the praise of creation (13,2) and the toil and fruit of daily work (80,4), uniting them to Christ in the Eucharist.

Therefore, the Father is the source and content of hope in history (168,4) since he is present through his providence (108,1). He receives the cry of the poor (46,3), laying his table before them (68,4; 111,6). He acts in the history of the world (108,5), even in daily events and human realities (50,3), as well as in cultures and religions (117,7). But God the Father is, at the last, the eternal reward of those who persevere to the end (168,5) and are introduced into his eternal rest (52,2), when he will be all in all (169,6).

2. *The Lord Jesus Christ*²⁰ is the one "who receives everything from the Father and with the Father shares all things in the Spirit" (60:2). He is the "beginning and end" of creation (105,2), the firstborn of every creature (13,1), in each of which one can see his image (13,1; 46,7).

He is the Word that God pronounces in history (45,2) through the Incarnation, sent by the Father into the world (146,1; 157,3) as a gift of love (105,4), "assuming the condition of a servant, who came not to be served but to serve and to give His life for the salvation of all" (14,1). He, rich as he was, enters the world poor, so that we might be enriched by his poverty (60:2), and thus he is seen to be "the greatest manifestation of God's humility" (60:2).

Born of Mary (181,3) in the crib (60,3), he is poor and humble (16,4; 46,3). He is in a virginal condition (169,4), and during his hidden life he works with his hands, experiencing fatigue (78,2).

Having received a mission from the Father (111,1) and "consecrated by the anointing of the Spirit" (146,1) in baptism, guided by the Holy Spirit, he withdraws into the desert and fasts there for forty days and forty nights (111,1).

He proclaims the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the poor (15:4; 60:2; 109:1; 146:1; 150:1), whom the Father seeks out with love (60:3). He walks through towns and villages (153,2), living as a pilgrim (104,1). He cures every disease and every infirmity (153,2). He calls everyone to conversion (109,1), and some to follow him, like the rich young man (19,1). He prays incessantly (15,1), retreating into contemplation on the mountain (15,4), sharing in in all that his brothers and sisters experience (50,1.5).

Coming not to be served but to serve, he washes the apostles' feet and recommends them to do the same (159,1), desiring unity in brotherhood, which Christ wished to be so perfect that the world would know the Son had been sent by the Father. (157,3).

²⁰ On Franciscan Christology, N. Nguyen-Van-Khanh, *Gesù Cristo nel pensiero di san Francesco secondo i suoi Scritti*, Biblioteca Franciscana, Milano 1984; G. Iammarrone, *Cristologia francescana. Impulsi per il presente*, Messaggero, Padova 1997; C. Vaiani, *Vedere e credere. L'esperienza cristiana di Francesco d'Assisi*, Glossa, Milano 2000; F. Acrocca "Cristo e la sua croce nell'esperienza di San Francesco d'Assisi", in *Ricerche Teologiche* 18(2007), 207-226. Sulla cristologia delle Costituzioni cf O. van Asseldonk, "La Persona di Cristo nelle prime (e ultime) costituzioni", in *L'Italia Francescana* 53(1978), 667-679; F. Elizondo, "Cristo y San Francisco en la constituciones capuchinas de 1536", in *Laurentianum* 24(1983), 76-115; M. Darpetti, "Le nuove Costituzioni cappuccine e il volto di Cristo", in G. Fiorini (ed.), *L'unico Salvatore. Teologia e grazia*, Viterbo 1998, 151-158.

His food is to do the will of the Father (158:3), to whom He entrusts His own will (165:1), and becomes obedient unto death (22:2; 158:1) on the Cross, learning obedience through his suffering (165:5).

Through the Cross, Jesus loves us first, to the ultimate gift of himself, (170,1), for the salvation of all (14,1), freeing us from the slavery of sin (158,1). His pierced side is the sacrament of unity (88,3). In the "naked, crucified Lord" (60:5), the mystery of humility and charity, prepared by Christmas (52:5), and perpetuated in the Eucharist (14:1), comes to completion.

His Resurrection sustains our hope (51:2), and in the celebration of the Eucharist we have a foretaste of its glory (2:2).

Risen, the Lord sends the apostles to evangelize all nations (15,2; 150,1; 175,1), so that his mission may continue in the Church (146,2). The Risen One unites the Church to Himself in the prayer of praise and intercession which He presents to the Father on behalf of all people (49:1; 50:1). In the Gospel and in the sacraments given to the Church, the Risen One makes himself present by his saving power (151,1; 158,4). He is also present in seminal form in cultures and religions (177,7). The Lord will come again in glory (2:2), when the definitive encounter with him is celebrated (169:4) and the words of the final judgment are spoken (104:1).

There are many *Christological titles* used in the constitutional text. Beginning with the Trinitarian names, Jesus is Son of God (14,1; 88,2), Son of the Father (32,1), the beloved Son (16,3), the only-begotten Son (105,4), who receives everything from the Father and communicates everything with the Father in the Spirit (60,2); he is the image of God's goodness (189,2); the Word (151,4), with whom God speaks (45,2), present in seminal form in religions and cultures (177,7), and finally the Word made flesh (158,2), the God-Man (45,3). From an economic perspective, he is the firstborn of all creation (13:1), the one whom the Father has sent into the world (146:1; 157:3); the way, the truth and the life (26:4); the brother (61:2; 77,1), the firstborn among many brothers (88,2), in whom they form one family (5,4); the Gospel of God (175,1); the Saviour (13,1) and Redeemer (188,3); the divine Master (15,2), excellent (54,2), most wise (19,1); the Wisdom of God (188,3), the light that enlightens all men (105,4) and the salvation of all peoples (181,3); the Servant (14,1), poor, meek, and humble (16,4; 35,4; 46,3); the good shepherd (152,1); the Lamb beside the throne (49,2); the Bridegroom of the Church (169,4), the Priest who has brought into the world the eternal song of praise (49,2) and upon whose eternal mediation the liturgy is founded (47,1).

In particular, for the brothers there is the habit (35,4); life, prayer, activity (45,4); the contents of preaching (150,4); the one whose footsteps are to be followed (2,1) as disciples (55,5 182,1), prophets (39,1) and witnesses (182,3). In Christ are all merits, examples of life, all help and rewards, and in him is anchored every thought, meditation and imitation (189,2).

The concluding doxology is worth reproducing here: it is what remains of an ancient hymn of praise, dating back to the Constitutions of 1536. It is not only a moving testimony to the love of the Capuchins for Christ, but is also a small compendium of Christology. Jesus is called "Christ, Who is the Light and Expectation of the nations, the End of the Law, the Salvation of God, the Father of the world to come, the Word and the Power that upholds all things and,

finally, our hope, in Whom all things are possible, delightful and easy, and to Whom our frailty is known. He will not only give us strength to follow his commands and counsels, but will also pour out His heavenly gifts in such abundance that, having overcome all obstacles, we may be able to follow and imitate him, with the greatest eagerness in our hearts, using visible things as pilgrims and yearning for things eternal" (189,1), and again "In Christ, therefore, Who is God and Man, the True Light, the Splendour of Glory and the Brilliance of Eternal Light; in Christ, the Mirror without blemish, the Image of God's Goodness; in Christ appointed by the Father as Judge, Law-giver and Saviour of all peoples; in Christ, to Whom the Father and the Holy Spirit have borne witness and in Whom are our merits, our models of life, our help, and our reward; in Christ Whom God had made our Wisdom and Justice, may all our thought, meditation, and imitation be anchored" (189,2).

From this there flows a *relationship of the brothers with Christ*, which is a process of formation and growth (1,5), the following of a teacher (117,1), a life-giving contact until we find our identity in him. (32,3). It is a process of constant thought and reflection (189,2), devotion and imitation through St. Francis (3,2), a striving to be more and more moulded into his likeness (109,7), to assimilate his feelings (23,1), to be profoundly rooted in his example and teachings (10,2), to follow him in his poverty (61,1). Knowledge of Christ grows in obedience (158,4), in prayer (54,6), in fixing one's gaze on him, in order to know his will and to please him with a pure heart (188,3), and above all by living the gospel (150, 5) and by sharing and cooperation (93,3) in his redemptive Cross, which we are to remember (112,2), venerate and preach (52,5), completing his sufferings through penance (109,8) and acceptance of infirmity (93,3). Christ is thus the "spiritual heart of the fraternity" (48,3).

3. *The Holy Spirit*²¹ is presented in his action as the "creator and sanctifier" (78,3); a "burning fire" (59,2); "remission of sins" (114,1); "power" (16,1; 169,1), "strength" (157,4).

The Spirit acted on Jesus by anointing him (146,1), leading him into the desert (146,1). The Spirit bore witness to Christ (189,2).

The Spirit also acts *in the Church*, which he constituted at Pentecost (181,3), and in which he lives and works (11,1). He leads her to know Christ through the Gospel (1:1), and to make ever greater progress in her understanding of him (1:4). The Spirit guides the Church (1,2), gives life to her (175,2), renews her (184,3), moves her to give witness to the Gospel (157,4), supporting the mission by his own power (146,2). The Spirit also enriches the Church with gifts and charisms (10,1), bringing spiritual families to life within her (10,1). In religious consecration, too, the Holy Spirit places her in a state of life that foretells the future resurrection

²¹ For Franciscan pneumatology cf. M. MELONE, "Presso Dio non vi è preferenza di persone, e lo Spirito santo, ministro generale dell'Ordine, si posa egualmente sul povero e sul semplice (2Cel 193)", in P. Martinelli (ed.), *Autorità e obbedienza nella vita consacrata e nella famiglia francescana*, EDB, Bologna 2008, 109-124; Id., "Donum in quo omnia alia donantur. Aspetti di teologia dello Spirito Santo in Bonaventura da Bagnoregio", in *Ricerche teologiche* 17(2006), 51-75; Id., "Spirito Santo", in *Dizionario Bonaventuriano*, a cura di E. Caroli, EMP, Padova, 2008, 761-771. Con riferimento alla consacrazione religiosa, cf Y. Spiteris, "Lo Spirito come fonte di animazione e rinnovamento della vita consacrata", in P. Vanzan – F. Volpi (edd.), *Lo Spirito Santo e la vita consacrata*, Il Calamo, Roma 1999, 163-174; P. Martinelli, "L'animazione dello Spirito in Cristo e nella vita consacrata", *ibid.*, 283-296.

and glory of the heavenly Kingdom (33,2), and participates in the mystery of the Church in total dedication to the Bridegroom, in preparation for the definitive encounter with him (169,4).

Again, he acts *in the individual believer*, resting equally on the simple and the poor (24,3), pouring love into our hearts (169,2), instructing us with his own voice (9,3), strengthening faith (182,3), arousing love for divine beauty (169,4) and indeed transfiguring into divine beauty those who live in chastity 169,3; moving and unifying prayer (45,1; 46,5) and action (46,5). The Spirit conforms the believer to Christ, uniting him to his mystery (33,2) and in him making him grow (52,4), transforming him into the image of Christ (16,3), leading him to assimilate his feelings (23,1: Phil), and through him to offer himself to the Father (48,4). In this way the Spirit, who cries out in our hearts "Abba, Father" (45,5), leads us to the Father (2,1).

Next, the Spirit acts in *the Order*. He, who filled (8,1) and inflamed St. Francis (13,1), also raised up his apostolic fraternity (146,3). Therefore the Spirit is its guide (1,4; 59,3; 117,1), brings the brothers together in the same vocation (13,3), leads the itinerary of discipleship (another name for formation) (23,1) as its principal agent, inwardly enlivening both formators and formandi (24,1), and acting effectively at the moment of profession (21,4). Like every single believer and the whole Church, the brothers are called to respond to the action of the Spirit with docility (4,2; 158,2) and generosity (114,5), to listen to his voice (9,3), to obey him faithfully (11,1) without extinguishing him (7,5), and above all "to desire the Spirit of the Lord and his holy operation" (38,1); 44,4; 45,8; 146,4; 168,5), making sure that nothing hinders, nothing separates, nothing prevents the Spirit of the Lord from acting and manifesting himself (174,2), so that we are inwardly cleansed, interiorly enlightened, and burning with the fire of the Holy Spirit (59,2).

4. Finally, let us examine the texts that refer to the Trinity as a whole²². We begin with those that mention the three Persons together. Some rise to the heights of considering the Most Holy Trinity in its *immanent dimension*, presenting "the infinite love which binds the three divine Persons" (169,2). "God the Most High, perfect Trinity and simple Unity, is a mystery of humility" (60,1), and the foundation of every historical-salvific work is "the pure relationship of love among the divine Persons" (60,1). It is shown to us in "Jesus Christ, the Son who receives everything from the Father and with the Father shares all things in the Spirit" (60,2).

Other texts present the Trinity in the *economic dimension*. The history of salvation is translated into the mission that the Father has accomplished of the Son, "the firstborn among many brothers". (88,2), "consecrated by the anointing of the Spirit" (146,1), "guided by the Spirit" (111,1), " so that through His death and resurrection, and by the gift of the Holy Spirit, He

²² In general for the Franciscan context, cf F. Accrocca, "La Trinità negli scritti di san Francesco d'Assisi", in G. Cipollone (ed.), *La liberazione dei 'cattivi.' tra cristianità e Islam*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 2000, 419-437; M. Melone, ""Crediamo e amiamo... l'altissimo e sommo e eterno Dio, trino e uno" (RnB 23,11). La dimensione trinitaria della spiritualità di Francesco d'Assisi", in P. Martinelli (ed.), *La grazia delle origini*, EDB, Bologna, 2009, 235-259. Per lo specifico cappuccino cf F. Neri, "Il mistero trinitario nelle Costituzioni dei Cappuccini", in *Italia Franciscana* 81(2008), 265-282.

might form humanity into a brotherhood." (88,2). To Christ the Father and the Holy Spirit have borne witness (189,2).

The work of salvation has its summit in *Mary*, the Mother of God, daughter and handmaid of the Father, Mother of the Son, and spouse of the Holy Spirit (52,6).

On the Marian model, *the Church* listens devotedly to the Word, docile to the action of the Spirit, and through the obedience of faith responds to the loving plan of the Father (158:2). The Church is in fact a mystery of communion, which shines forth especially in fraternal life, " a human space in which the Trinity dwells" (88:3).

The *Order* itself is a brotherhood, that is, a communion of consecrated persons who, following the Master, seek to accomplish together the Father's will, (117,1). Indeed, Saint Francis, a true disciple of Christ and an outstanding example of Christian living, teaches us to walk joyfully in the footprints of the poor, humble, and crucified Christ, so that through him, in the Holy Spirit, we might be led to the Father (2:1). In the Order, the Father calls us to give ourselves to him, to follow in the footprints of His beloved Son, so that we may be transformed into his image by the power of the Holy Spirit. (16,3). Consecration in consecrated chastity is a reflection of the infinite love binding the three divine Persons: love exemplified by the incarnate Word to the extent of laying down his life; love poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (169,2). Therefore, *formation* for the consecrated life is a journey of discipleship guided by the Holy Spirit leading one progressively to assimilate the sentiments of Christ, the Son of the Father (23:1). *Profession* is made following the inspiration to follow the Gospel in the footsteps of Jesus, and consists in a vow made to God the Father, holy and almighty, trusting in the efficacious action of the Holy Spirit (21,4). *Prayer* brings about a filial conversation with the Father when we live Christ and pray in His Spirit, who cries out in our hearts: "Abba, Father!" (45,5). With Jesus Christ present in the Eucharist, the brothers offer themselves and their actions to the Father through the Spirit (48,4). So too, in the Liturgy of the Hours, the fraternity gathers together each day in the name of Christ, to give thanks to the Father in the Holy Spirit by recalling the memory of the mysteries of salvation (49,3). Through prayer in general, we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us in prayer so that we grow more and more in Christ, until we reach the fullness of communion with the Father and with our brothers and sisters. (52,4). *Work* is interpreted after the example of the Father, who has done everything with wisdom and love, calling all to participate in the work of creation through work. It is inspired by the Incarnate Word, who worked with human hands and made work an instrument of salvation, and by the Spirit, who is creator and sanctifier (78). Finally, *brotherly relationships* have their foundation in the mystery of love of the perfect Trinity and the holy unity of Father, Son, and Spirit. (88:1).

The texts we have read present the Holy Trinity as three persons, each with their respective properties. Other texts present the Trinity in an equalizing way, that is, according to the pattern of the command to "go out and baptise". Fraternal life has its foundation "in the mystery of love of the perfect Trinity and of the holy unity of the Father, Son and Spirit" (88,1). The entire network of fraternal relationships is based on the mystery of love of the perfect Trinity and the holy unity of the Father, Son and Spirit (88:1). Individually, the brothers are called to build within themselves a house and a permanent dwelling place for the Lord God Almighty, Father,

and Son and Holy Spirit (59,3). The Constitutions conclude by addressing "Christ, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns coeternal, consubstantial, equal and one God, eternal praise, honour and glory for ever and ever" (189,3).

Other texts present the Trinity *sub specie unitatis*. Profession is made in praise and glory of the Most Holy Trinity (21:4; 33:1). Saint Francis is remembered because, close to death, he imparts the blessing of the Most Holy Trinity (188,1).

3.2. *The mystery of the Church*

1. Let us now review the texts concerning the Church ²³. We will first consider the images and definitions of the Church, then the role of the Word and the sacraments in the life of the Order.

So, she is proclaimed as *Holy Mother Church* (10,5; 18,3c; 51,1; 183,2), and professed to be *one, holy, Catholic and apostolic* (10,6).

The Church is considered in its Trinitarian origin. As the *people of God*, she is the Church of the Father. (10,1; 19,6; 184,1). She is the *dwelling place of God*, for whose building the world offers living stones (105,5).

She is the Church of the Son, flowing from his side (88:3), and whose spouse she is (169:4). She is the *Body of Christ* (10:6; 51:1; 175:5), indeed the Mystical Body of Christ (117:1), who established her in a communion of life, charity and truth (10:1). Wherever they are gathered together in the name of Jesus, the brothers strive to be one in heart and mind. (89,2).

She is the Church of the Holy Spirit, who gives her life (175,2) and enriches her with many gifts or charisms (10,1).

Based on her Trinitarian origin, the Church is a *universal sacrament of salvation*, that is, "a sign and instrument of the closest union with God and of the unity of the whole human race" (10:1; 175:1).

The Church is presented *ad intra* as a "community of faith and love" (175,2), "a communion of life, charity and truth" (10,1), "a mystery of communion, whose richness and depth are reflected in our living as brothers, a human space inhabited by the Trinity" (88,3). She is "the sacrament of unity" (88:3), a unity willed by Jesus to be so perfect that the world recognizes that the Son has been sent by the Father (157:3). Such unity, however, is not uniformity, since she breathes "with her two lungs of East and West" (10:6).

The Church, then, is not an end in herself. In fact - *ad extra* - wandering in the world and in time (175,2), she is missionary by nature (175,1), continuing the mission of the Lord Jesus,

²³ On the Ecclesiology of the Constitutions cf R. Armstrong, "The ecclesial vision of the Capuchin Constitutions of 1982", in *Laurentianum* 25(1984), 152-180; D. Spatola, *Autocoscienza ecclesiologicala nelle costituzioni dei Frati Minori Cappuccini: analisi e prospettiva*, Facoltà Teologica di Sicilia, Palermo 2004; W. Henn, *Le attuali Costituzioni dei Frati Minori cappuccini alla luce dei recenti insegnamenti del magistero nell'area dell'ecclesiologia*, accessibile in www.ofmcap.org. Cf also P. Martinelli, "Ecclesialità della vita religiosa: un valore fondamentale per i francescani", in Id. (ed.), *Il rinnovamento della vita consacrata e la famiglia francescana*, EDB, Bologna 2007, 73-97

who for this reason gave her the Holy Spirit (146,2)²⁴. This mission is one of salvation (16,5), a proclamation of the Gospel (146,3). This includes dialogue both with the other Christian Churches (39:1) and with the different religions (177:7).

The Church herself, while she must provide for her own wider expansion, knows that her goal is the establishment of the Kingdom of God. The *Kingdom* is in fact an "absolute" (173,3), announced and established by Jesus (15,4; 109,1; 150,1) and revealed by the Father to little ones (24,3). The Church's function, therefore, is to usher in the coming of the Kingdom (10:1; 173:7), through evangelization (96:1), the apostolate (155:2), and the care of the poor and suffering (153:2).

In the Church the consecrated life²⁵ is a sign of the Kingdom, and, following Saint Francis (4,1; 175,4) so is the life of the Capuchins (15,4; 39,1). The vows are taken in view of the Kingdom (22,1; 22,4; 165,4; 168,3; 169,1.6), and fraternal life makes it visible (13,4; 106,3). Not yet fully realized (33,2; 171,1), the Kingdom is fostered by prayer (51,2), conversion to charity (109,8), work (51,6), and daily acceptance of the cross (110,5; 145,3).

In the constitutional text the Church is present in its hierarchical structure, composed of *clerics and lay people* (102,6; 177,3). Within the clergy, emphasis is placed on the pope, to whom we owe obedience and reverence as our highest superior (11,2), and religious reverence of will and intellect as supreme teacher of the universal Church (183,4) and for whom we must pray (51,1). Obedience and reverence are also due to the bishops. Their college, together with the Pope, is "a visible sign of the unity and apostolicity of the Church" (11:2), and they are witnesses to the faith and teachers of the people of God (183:4). Likewise, priests must be given honour and active collaboration (11,4).

As for the lay faithful, we must recognise their role and mission in the life and activity of the Church, collaborating with them in evangelization and supporting their apostolic associations (155,1). This is especially true in the context of the mission *ad gentes* (177,3.4). Lay people can also be admitted to share more closely in the prayer, common life and apostolate of the brothers (95,4). Their professional competence should be used in the area of administration (76,5). It is understood that particular importance is reserved to the Franciscan laity, who with the members of the First and Second Orders form a single family (13,3; 155,2), and commit themselves to live the perfection of charity in their own state of life. (102).

Consideration is also given to the role of women, whose dignity and mission are to be promoted (173,4).

The Order is an expression of the Church (10:6), indeed an integral part of the Mystical Body (117:1), and it cultivates its own identity within her (24:4). Therefore, the Order is bound to

²⁴ Cf P. Martinelli, "Il posto della vita consacrata in una Chiesa tutta missionaria", in *Religiosi in Italia* 8(2003), 201-210.

²⁵ Cf P. Martinelli, "Sulla "essenzialità" (o "necessità") della vita consacrata nella Chiesa per il mondo. Note per una ricerca che continua", in *Religiosi in Italia* 10(2005), 32-46.

love the Church, meditate on her mystery, study her teachings and apply them, and participate in her life and mission (10,5).

2. The Order recognizes the gifts of the Lord entrusted to the Church in the liturgy: namely, the Word and the sacraments.

The Church is the guardian of the Word of God transmitted in Scripture and Tradition (183,1). The Word of God, or more precisely the "holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1:1), is "the source of the entire life of the Church and the message of salvation for the whole world" (1:1). She gives birth to the consecrated life and builds it up (53:2).

For Saint Francis²⁶ the Gospel is the reason for life and action (1,3), the "form" (1,3) that gives shape to life (1,5). Therefore, for the brothers the Gospel is the "supreme law" to be followed in all the circumstances of life (1,5). It possesses a transforming force that is manifested in brotherhood (13,4). The Word must be read, as nourishment for the spiritual life (6,4), prayed in *lectio divina* ²⁷(53,3), meditated on with perseverance (15,5), studied more deeply (32,3), and shared in brotherhood (53,4).

3. *The liturgy*²⁸ is described as "the exercise of the priestly office of Christ, the summit of all the Church's activity and the source of all Christian life" (47,1), from which we nourish our individual and fraternal spiritual life, as well as that of the faithful (47,1). In it God himself comes to us and speaks to men and women, who respond to him with receptive, trust-filled hearts (53:1).

²⁶ Cf Aa.Vv., *Parola di Dio e Francesco d'Assisi*, Cittadella, Assisi 1982; G. Cardaropoli - M. Conti (edd.), *Lettura biblico-teologica delle fonti francescane*, Antonianum, Roma 1979; A. Drago, "Parola di Dio", in *Dizionario francescano*, Messaggero, Padova ²1995, 1354-1370; D. Dozzi, *Il Vangelo nella Regola non bollata di Francesco d'Assisi*, Ist. Storico dei Cappuccini, Roma 1989; Id., "Così dice il Signore". *Il Vangelo negli Scritti di San Francesco*, EDB, Bologna 2000; S. Bovis, *Francesco e la Parola. La rivelazione della Parola nell'esperienza vocazionale di S. Francesco e dei primi Compagni*, Porziuncola, Assisi 1999; L. Iriarte, *Vocazione francescana*, EDB, Bologna ⁶2006, spec. 43-53; Th. Matura, "La Parole de Dieu dans les Écrits de François", in "Verba Domini Mei". *Gli Opuscula di Francesco d'Assisi a 25 anni dalla edizione di K. Esser*, Antonianum, Roma 2003, 211-219; C. Vaiani, *Vedere e credere. L'esperienza cristiana di Francesco d'Assisi*, Glossa, Milano ³2007, spec. 51-63; P. Martinelli (ed.), *Parola di Dio, vita spirituale e francescanesimo*, EDB, Bologna 2008. Per lo specifico dei Cappuccini, cf F. Raurell, *I Cappuccini e lo studio della Bibbia*, Istituto Francescano di Spiritualità – Facultat de Teologia de Catalunya, Roma – Barcelona, 1997.

²⁷ . Cf U. Occhialini, "Lectio divina monastica e spiritualità biblica di san Francesco", in Aa.Vv., *Parola di Dio e Francesco d'Assisi*, Cittadella, Assisi 1982, 42-63; T. Lorenzin, "La *lectio dibid.na* in san Francesco d'Assisi e in sant'Antonio di Padova", in G. Cappelletto (ed.), "Insegnava fra loro la Parola", Messaggero, Padova 2000, 293-309; N. Dell'Agli, "Una via francescana alla *lectio dibid.na*", in *Italia Francescana* 80(2005), 261-276.

²⁸ O. Schmucki, *Pregheiera liturgica secondo l'esempio e l'insegnamento di san Francesco*, CISPCap, Roma 1979; F. Rampazzo, "Lineamenti di liturgia francescana. Indagine storica sullo sviluppo del Santorale francescano", in *Laurentianum* 40(1999), 501-518; Id., "La spiritualità liturgica francescana. Indagine sulle fonti e sullo spirito dell'Ordine", in *Italia Francescana* 75(2000), 71-86.

From initiation onwards, the brothers are called to participate in the liturgy in a way that is active (27,4), devout and dignified (47,3), faithful to the norms but also creative and enculturated (47,4), capable of combining silence (47,5) with song and music (47,6).

The *Liturgy of the Hours* “is the prayer of Christ, who unites the Church to Himself in praise and humble intercession which he forever presents to the Father on behalf of all humanity” (49,1). It extends the grace of the Eucharist to the different hours of each day (49:1), and enables the mystery of Christ to permeate and transfigure time (49:3).

The liturgical year is an itinerary (52,3) with the Easter triduum at its heart (52,1), which is presented anew on Sunday, the weekly Easter (52,2), but which also embraces Christmas and the celebrations of the saints. In the liturgical year the mysteries of redemption are recalled and the grace of salvation is dispensed (52,1).

4. Moving on to the *sacraments* in general, they are recognized as “the fountain of spirit and life, [...] the wealth of grace, [...] the inexhaustible source of spiritual nourishment and the sure guide of formation” (52:3). “In the celebration of the sacraments, Christ becomes present to the faithful with His saving power, sanctifies them, and builds up His Body, while the People of God render worthy worship to the Lord their God” (151:1). In the celebration of the sacraments the faithful are helped to nourish, strengthen and express their faith (151:2).

The sacramental life nourishes, sustains and strengthens our commitment to religious life (114:3), especially consecrated chastity (171:2). Therefore, special and more intense preparation is recommended for perpetual profession (33,6), and guardians must ensure that the brothers are faithful to it (114,7).

4.1. Let us move on to look more closely at each sacrament, beginning with baptism. The call to the perfection of charity, addressed to every person, is rooted in this sacrament. (16,1). It initiates conversion into a new creature (109,2), consecrates us to the service of God (47,1), calls all the baptised indiscriminately to evangelize (175,2). Religious consecration is rooted in the grace of baptism. Its purpose is to reap more abundant fruit from the sacrament (33,3). Logically therefore, the baptismal name the name should normally be maintained by those who enter the Order (OG 2/12).

4.2. The sacrament of *confirmation* never appears in the constitutional text.

4.3. The *Eucharist*²⁹ is the sacrament which receives a more abundant treatment. It is in fact “the source of the Church’s life: the root, the focal point and the very heart of our life as

²⁹ Cf K. Esser, “La dottrina eucaristica di san Francesco”, in Id., *Temi spirituali*, Biblioteca Francescana, Milano 1973, 321-284; 207-253; R. Falsini, “Eucaristia”, in *Dizionario Francescano*, 611-639; L. Lehmann – P. Martinelli – P. Messa, *Eucaristia, vita spirituale e francescanesimo*, EDB, Bologna 2006; F. Neri, “L’Eucaristia nell’esperienza cristiana di san Francesco d’Assisi”, in L. Bianchi (ed.), *L’Eucaristia nella tradizione orientale e occidentale*, Venezia 2007, 157-176.

brothers" (48,1). Christian life is centred on the Eucharist, and we are to nourish this awareness among the faithful. (151,3).

Celebration of the Eucharist is a participation in the Paschal Mystery (2:2). In it the self-abnegation of Christ, begun in the manger and on the Cross, is perpetuated, for in it " He daily humbles himself and comes to us under humble appearances" (14:1). At the same time, in the Eucharist the glory of Christ's Resurrection is foretold in anticipation of his coming (2:2).

In it, the sacrifice of Christ is re-presented (80:4); Christ offers himself to the Father, interceding for his brothers and sisters (50:1), but also giving himself entirely to them (48:1). One must therefore participate in it actively and with full awareness, "holding back nothing of ourselves, so that "he who offered himself totally to us may receive us totally" (48,1), as we offer to the Father the toil and fruit of daily work (80,4), interceding for the dead (51,2).

The Eucharist is also a banquet, necessary so that we learn how to live as brothers (88,8), because in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread the faithful are raised to communion with Christ and with one another. This is why it should be a joyful celebration (2,2). Also, in order to manifest the unity of sacrifice, priesthood and brotherhood, a Mass of the fraternity is recommended, with the participation of all the brothers, every day or frequently (48,2). The celebration is important, not least because it includes the table of the Word, so that it is part of the guardian's ministry to ensure that a homily is preached at the fraternity Mass. (161,4).

We believe and profess that the Lord Jesus is present in the consecrated species, and therefore it is established that they must be preserved "in the most fitting place and manner" (48:3), and that we should spend time before the Blessed Sacrament in adoration, "with faith, humble reverence, and devotion " (48:4).

The Eucharist is the source of pastoral charity, which urges the brothers to give themselves in chastity (171,2) for the good of their neighbour (151,3).

4.4. The *sacrament of reconciliation* is to be greatly esteemed and frequently celebrated (114,4). It is presented as the place where, by the working of the Holy Spirit, "who is the remission of sins", we experience on the one hand the benefits of the Paschal Mystery, and on the other, we share "more deeply in the Eucharist and the mystery of the Church" (114,1). The individual as well as the community dimension is emphasized (114:6), with the aim of restoring union with the Saviour and reconciliation with the Church (114:2). The reconciliation which God gives to the brothers in the sacrament overflows into mutual forgiveness within the fraternity (114,4). The brothers may confess freely to any priest who has received the faculty from any Ordinary (115,3).

In the constitutional text, sacramental reconciliation is associated with the recommendation to practise daily examination of conscience and spiritual direction (114,5).

4.5. The Constitutions also include *sacred Orders*³⁰ within their own perspective.

From the point of view of formation, the only prescription is that preparation of the brothers for the priesthood should take place according to the norms of the Church (39,4).

With regard to the exercise of the ordained ministry by brothers who are priests, reference is made to their readiness to administer the sacraments either in virtue of their office or when invited to do so by the clergy (151,2), after diligent preparation, desiring to imitate what they celebrate and to conform their lives to the mystery of the Lord's cross (151,3).

In order to manifest "the unity of sacrifice, priesthood and brotherhood" (48,2) it is recommended that a daily or at least frequent Mass of the fraternity be celebrated, with the participation of all the brothers, therefore also including the priests (48,2).

With regard to sacramental reconciliation, the text states that this ministry "is particularly appropriate to us as lesser brothers (152,1), since it makes it possible for us to be close to sinners. Confessors are therefore called to dispense God's mercy in forgiving sin, faithfully and willingly (152,1), and to grow continually in pastoral wisdom and in the proper exercise of their ministry (152,3). They must know how to combine zeal for the holiness of God and his mercy with "respect for the dignity of the human person, with charity, patience and prudence" (152,2), and they are recommended "not to be angry or upset about the sin of anyone, but to treat the penitent with all goodness in the Lord" (115,4)³¹.

4.6. The *anointing of the sick* is referred to implicitly, when ministers are reminded, in the case of a brother suffering from a serious illness, to inform him of his condition and prepare him "to receive the sacraments" (92,4)³².

4.7. Finally, although the Constitutions are addressed to consecrated celibates, the sacrament of *marriage* also finds a place in them. Marriage is the foundation of the family, which is "the domestic Church and a living cell of society" (149,4). Both the vocation to the consecrated life and the vocation to marriage and the family find their meaning and value in the "absolute claims of the Kingdom" (173,7).

³⁰ On the Franciscan vision of the priesthood cf. F. Neri, *"Miei signori, figli e fratelli". San Francesco d'Assisi e i sacerdoti*, EDB, Bologna 2010.

³¹The faculty of administering this sacrament is conferred on the priest-friars by the local ordinary and the religious ordinary, as well as - *ad modum actus* - by the guardian (115,1), and enables them to hear the confessions of the friars anywhere in the world (115,2).

³² It seems that the underlying vision here is that of "extreme unction". A more updated approach would link the sacrament to its nature as a source of support to face the trial of serious illness in a Christian way.

5. Obviously, since the Constitutions are a normative text addressed to a religious Order, *the consecrated life* in its various aspects appears constantly throughout. It would require a study in its own right, so we will limit ourselves to commenting on a few essential features.

The nature and purpose of the three evangelical counsels can only be found in a *Christological and Trinitarian* context. Formation for the consecrated life is in fact "a journey of discipleship guided by the Holy Spirit, leading one progressively to assimilate the sentiments of Christ, the Son of the Father, and to shape one's life according to His obedient, poor, and chaste life" (23:1). Starting from a consideration of the vow of chastity, the Constitutions note that the consecrated life is "a reflection of the divine beauty, infinite in splendour, in those who let themselves be transfigured by the power of the Holy Spirit. (169,3). It is the grace and work of the Holy Spirit, who transfigures and moulds us into the likeness of Christ in his virginal life (169,3.4).

The *ecclesiological dimension* of the consecrated life is proclaimed. It is in fact "an outstanding gift that the Church has received from the Lord. Profoundly rooted in the example and teaching of Christ, it expresses the innermost nature of the Christian calling and belongs to the life of the Church, to its holiness, and to its mission" (10:2)³³.

The particular reference to chastity goes on to highlight the *eschatological dimension*³⁴ of the consecrated life. The Holy Spirit, in fact, gives the consecrated person a share in the full and exclusive dedication of the Church to Christ her Spouse, in preparation "for the definitive encounter with him". (169,4). Our consecrated brotherhood is a distinctive "proclamation of the life to come, in which those who have risen are brothers and sisters in the presence of God, who will be all in all for them (169,6).

3.3. *The mystery of the human person in the cosmos, in history, in eternity*

Anthropological questions are also scattered throughout the constitutional text³⁵. We will begin by considering the human person in his make-up and dynamism. Finally we will collect the fragments concerning the theology of creation and of history, and eschatology.

1. Let us look first at the structure of the human person. According to traditional ecclesial anthropology, man is understood as a *unity of soul and body*, as is explicitly stated with reference to what is necessary in case of illness (92,1). Let us analyse the various aspects.

³³ Elsewhere it is also called "good for the Church" (17,1), and "a special gift of God in the life of the Church" (33,5).

³⁴ Cf G. Pasquale, *La natura escatologica della vita consacrata*, in "Credere Oggi" 28(2008/3), 77-91

³⁵ Cf. J.A. Merino, *Umanesimo francescano. Francescanesimo e mondo attuale*, Cittadella, Assisi 1984; G. Gniecki, *Visione dell'uomo negli scritti di Francesco d'Assisi*, Antonianum, Roma 1987; R. Zavalloni, *L'uomo e il suo destino nel pensiero francescano*, Porziuncola, Assisi 1994; G. Iammarrone, "Antropologia teologica francescana", in *Impegno ecclesiale dei frati Minori Conventuali nella cultura ieri e oggi (1209-1997)*, Miscellanea Francescana, Roma 1998, 283-310; D. Dozzi, "L'antropologia di Francesco d'Assisi a partire dai suoi scritti", in G. Pasquale - P.G. Taneburgo (edd.), *L'uomo ultimo: per una antropologia cristiana e francescana*, EDB, Bologna, 2006, p. 65-88; J.B. Freyer, *Homo viator: l'uomo alla luce della storia della salvezza. Un'antropologia teologica in prospettiva francescana*, EDB, Bologna 2008.

1.1. Dwelling first on human interiority, the reference to the *soul* appears, since idleness (78,4) and failures in poverty (93,2) are its enemies³⁶.

Next, an "inner man" is invoked, who listens to the voice of God in prayer (45:1).

There are more frequent references to the *heart*. God speaks to the human heart (45,1.2), where he has sown "good and beautiful things" (156,1), especially the Holy Spirit (45,5). Therefore man is called to store up the word of God in his heart, like Mary (1:5; 150:4; Lk 2:19.51). With an open and trusting heart man speaks to God in the liturgy (53,1) and in personal prayer (54,1), and with a heart "freed by grace" (22,1) man unites himself to Christ, remaining indissolubly bound to Christ (170,1). A friar lives his consecration with a humble heart like that of Francis (60,6), "generous and faithful" (2,3; 189,1), "undivided" (22,4), happy (171,1; 184,3), pure (44,4; 45,8; 188,3), simple (149,7), true and sincere (168,1), free (169,5), "docile and open" (59,1), totally satisfied only by the beauty of God (177,2). With "his whole heart" the brother entrusts himself to the fraternity at profession (21,4), welcomes the richness of the liturgy (52,3), and serves the poor (108,3). The heart is also the seat of attachments (77,1) and affection, because in it Franciscan prayer takes place, which is precisely affective (46,6), and from it burst forth "adoration, thanksgiving, wonder and praise" (46,6). However, the heart can fall into apostasy and become "worldly" (44,3), and slide into loneliness (171,3). Therefore it is called to experience repentance (146,1) and sorrow for sins (113,1), and to practise continual conversion (5,2; 81,4; 110,1)³⁷.

Another category which we ascribe to the domain of interiority is the *mind*. Taking the word in its biblical sense, the Constitutions recommend that we devote ourselves to God's service with "a pure mind" (59,1). In a more intellectual sense, the mind is seen as a way of accessing or seeing reality, ("the eyes of the mind": 53,5). In formation it must be cultivated, but in harmony with the heart (38,5), even as the harmony of heart and voice enlighten it in prayer (47,6)³⁸.

The Constitutions use the term *spirit*. The word has a variety of meanings. It rarely appears in its biblical anthropological meaning (78.7; 109.5; 172.8; OG 2/1.3). Much more often the term is used in a theological sense, to indicate the third Person of the Trinity, or to refer to spirituality, as opposed to what is worldly or material (153.1). Sometimes again it is used in a

³⁶ The Holy Spirit is defined as the "soul of the Church" (78,3), and charity as the "soul of the apostolate" (157,1). Service to the brotherhood is described throughout the Constitutions as "animation".

³⁷ The Constitutions also use the expression "to have at heart", attributing special importance to following the Magisterium (183,1), to knowledge of the Rule (7,3), and to the link with the Secular Franciscan Order (102,5; 155,2). Figuratively speaking, the Eucharist is called the "heart of the fraternity" (48,1), in that it is placed at its centre and renders the fraternity alive.

³⁸ It also appears in the common expression, "keeping in mind", i.e. remembering, with reference to our calling to exercise the apostolate (81,5).

cultural sense, that is, as a way of feeling, thinking and acting ("spirit of brotherhood", "of minority", "of sacrifice", "of prayer and devotion", and so on).³⁹

1.2. The physical dimension of a person is expressed by the term *body* (92,1; 111,6)⁴⁰. It must be surrounded by "proper esteem" (172,3), and cared for in its needs (153,1), and also kept chaste (174,1), with the help of bodily mortification (111,6). Physicality is also referred to as flesh: in it the sick person completes what is still to be completed in the passion of Christ (193,3: Col 1,24)⁴¹.

Our bodily nature has a right to what is "necessary" (112,3), specifically the nourishment of food and drink (112,2), and periods of rest (86,1).

The body also appears because it manifests human sexual identity, which calls for "calm acceptance" (172,3) and maturity (172,1).

Among the events of bodiliness, the Constitutions consider illness, both as an opportunity to serve the sick (149,2; 153,2), and – after the example of St. Francis - dwelling in some detail on what to do when a brother falls sick (92 and 93). The case requires accompaniment by the fraternity (92; 93; 112,3; OG 6/1), since the sick person is considered a manifestation of Christ (92,2). Illness, however, when it is lived with respect for poverty and freely accepted, is a call to be conformed to Christ, sharing in and completing his passion in his own flesh (93,3), to the point of thanking his Creator (93,2). Health (172,8) and sickness (92,1) also involve both soul and body.

1.3. On the whole, the anthropology of the Constitutions demonstrates a unitary character.

The interior dimension is described as a unity "of heart and mind" as regards commitment to living as brothers (89,2). Saint Francis is remembered as having " great fervour of spirit and joy of heart " (109,5).

The unity of the intellectual and affective dimensions is mentioned with regard to prayer, aiming to "enlighten the mind and enkindle the heart rather than to formulate words" (54,2), and with respect to formation, which must develop "the mind and the heart" (38,5). Similarly, the service of God in general must be given "with a pure heart and a pure mind" (59,1).

This inner and outer unity of the human person is expressed by reference to discipline "of the senses and of the heart" (172,8), and to serving God "with a clean heart, a chaste body and holy activity" (174,1), and by recommending the use of any means which foster "health of mind and the body" (172,8).

³⁹ However, the distinction between the various meanings of the term is not always clear. It also seems to us that sometimes the use of the lower or upper case is ambiguous. Moreover, even in biblical sources the use of the term is not always crystal clear in the same text.

⁴⁰ It also appears with its ecclesiological value as "Body of Christ" (10,6; 51,1; 117,1; 151,1; 175,5).

⁴¹ More frequently the term flesh appears in reference to the Incarnation of the Word.

Similarly, the call to practice penance "in heart and in deed" (16,5), and to live minority "in heart, word and deed" (35,4), points to the same unity of being and acting.

Finally, in some couplets there is an underlying doctrine of the spiritual senses, such as when the text combines "eyes and hearts" (59,2), or refers to "our mind's eye" (53,5).

2. In the Constitutions the human person is also present as a dynamic being. One aspect of this is seen in the *life-cycle*, an idea supported by the fact that life has its stages. In accordance with these, formation is arranged as an articulated whole through the provision of suitable structures and programs (OG 2/1,3). In summary, the Constitutions distinguish between the younger brothers and those who are more mature or older (91). Old age also appears in the form of a "burden" (110.5), associated with illness. The dignity of human life is to be promoted at every stage and condition "from conception to death" (149,4)⁴².

3. Continuing in this dynamic perspective, man is considered in his *relationality*. Relationships, in whatever form they arise, look to the Trinitarian mystery, since "the pure relationship of love between the divine Persons, which overflows into creation and salvation history, is the model of every human relationship" (60,1). We will dwell first on relationships constituted by conflict and then move on review various other forms of relationship.

3.1. Since every living being is unique and the uniqueness comes from the specificity of each, relationship begins with an encounter between the differences which each individual brings, and therefore with conflict in its various possible forms. The Constitutions consider possible conflicts both internal and external to the Order, and offer ways to prevent and resolve any possible breakdown.

The primordial conflict is that linked to sex, therefore to the difference between men and women (172,3). Living in consecrated celibacy, however, the Capuchin must know how to enter into a "courteous, respectful and just" relationship with women (173,4), modelled on the noble affection of Brother Francis for Sister Clare⁴³.

The other conflict envisaged by the Constitutions is one related to age. If age differences are to foster "harmony and complementarity" (91,1), young brothers must show the elderly "loving care and gratitude", willingly profiting from their experience; the elderly, for their part, should welcome "new and healthy forms of life and activity" (91,3). In this way the generations enrich one another through their mutual sharing (91,3).

⁴² Birth is mentioned only in reference to Jesus (60,2). Death is mentioned with reference to Jesus (22.2; 60.3; 88.2; 114.1; 158.1), Saint Francis (188.1), the pope (OG 3/2), the individual friar (92.4). Greater attention to the cycles and phases of life in *Progetto formativo dei frati minori cappuccini italiani*, nn. 26-35, EDB, Bologna 2011, 34-42

⁴³ Cf. Cf P. Martinelli (ed.), *Maschile e femminile, vita consacrata, francescanesimo. Scritti per l'VIII centenario dell'Ordine di Santa Chiara (1212-2012)*, EDB, Bologna 2012

One specific diversity in the Order is centred on *power*, specifically between those who are endowed with authority and those who are exposed to it. A variant of this conflict could be the one linked to *sacred orders*, and therefore to the conflict between clerics and laity. But – always safeguarding the gospel perspective that authority and the priesthood are expressions of ministry - the Constitutions recall that "by reason of the same vocation the brothers are equal" (90,1), and called to share responsibility for the various expressions of service (90,3.4).

Some societal conflicts based on *ideology, class, race, religion, and nationality* are mentioned (107,2), but some of these factors of diversity can also arise within the Order, such as those relating to culture, class, ethnicity, and nationality. Individual and national cultures can lead to differences between circumscriptions based on secondary or variable elements of the charism (the use of the beard is explicitly mentioned: 35,2). Therefore, given a convergence of all the brothers on the foundational elements of Capuchin identity, the standard to which we refer is that of *unity in pluriformity* (35,2; 143,1).

In the end, however, we know from daily experience that conflicts are simply due to differences of character, problems with communication and the sin that dwells in the human heart. Conflicts can affect not only people, but also houses and circumscriptions (186,5). Therefore the Constitutions remind us that relationships hinge on the bonds created by baptism and profession (100,5), and recommend a "spirit of mutual understanding and sincere esteem" (89,3). They then go on to identify *dialogue* as the royal road of relationship, whether between people, when it takes the form of communication of the experiences and needs of each one (89,3; 160,3), or in the form of the local chapter, "a primary means of expressing the nature of our fraternal communion and promoting its growth" (89,4; 160,3). Dialogue promotes an encounter with the differences between circumscriptions (100,5). One of the specific tasks of those who carry out a ministry of authority is to promote and adopt dialogue (160,3; 163,3; 164,3; 166,3). If this is not sufficient, the conflict must be resolved by law (186,5).

Thus, at the level of society, the hatred and envy that can arise from differences must be faced, through a *commitment to justice and peace* (107,2). Once again, dialogue with all people (147,4) is one of the first expressions of this commitment. Dialogue is also the way in which we communicate with non-believers (149,6), as well as with the separated baptized brethren and with believers of other religions, in the form of ecumenism and interreligious encounter (39,1; 149,5.6; 177,3.7; 178,2).

3.2. Let us now look at some different categories of relationship.

3.2.1. We begin with the relationship between *parents and children*. The word *father*⁴⁴ first appears with reference to Saint Francis (5.2; 7.4; 8.1; 21.4; 52.8; 101.1; 188.2), to denote the founder and legislator of the lesser brotherhood. The *mother* is evoked for her loving care (10,3), tenderness and concern for her son (92,2), sometimes being applied to the Church which welcomes charisms, and at other times referring to the care that the brothers are to have for one

⁴⁴ Obviously understood as not just referring to God (and once even to Christ: 189,1).

another. We are also reminded that Saint Francis called the mother of any brother his mother and the mother of all the brothers (103,1). The figure of the mother is applied to Mary Most Holy (52,6; 171,2; 181,3; 188,2), to one's natural mother (92,2; 103,1), to the Church (10,3,5; 18,3; 51,1; 183,2), to the Earth (105,2). There is a corresponding reference made to the form of the *son* to indicate the relationship with God, but also with the Church (153,2) and with Saint Francis (1,4; 71,4; 147,8; 182,1).

3.2.2. More widely, there is *the family*, "founded upon marriage, as the domestic church and a living cell of society" (149,4), and linked to the "absolute claims of the Kingdom" (173,7). On the one hand, the Capuchin friar recognizes the positive fact of "good relations with the family of origin" (173,6; OG 2/1), and maintains his "religious and family duties" (103,1), even in the case of "spiritual or material needs" (103,2). On the other hand, he knows that his new and true family is the fraternity, which is understood as a family gathered together by Christ (5,4; 24,8; 75,1; 94,3; 100,1; 145,2), within the wider reality of the one Franciscan family (10,3; 13,3; 51,1; 72,4; 101,1; 102,1.3; 103,1). Moreover, the whole of humanity is called to become like a single family of sons and daughters, brothers and sisters (13,4; 109,8). This family relationship of trust and closeness serves as a model for the mutual relationships of the brothers (168,1) but also for the relationship with the Word of God (53,2). In the apostolate, attention should be paid to families in need (149,4).

3.2.3. *Friendship* is also mentioned among the types of relationship, and should be a feature of relationships with all people, in order to draw them to the Lord (173,3). It is a "great gift" that makes them grow humanly and spiritually, especially if it is authentic and profound (172,6), as long as it is "liberating and not destructive of brotherhood" (173,5), as in the case where friends are exploited to circumvent poverty (69,4).

3.2.4. Some importance is also given to *hospitality*. It fulfils the gospel precept of Christ, who identifies with the stranger (Mt 25:35), and finds its rightful place in the footsteps of Saint Francis. Hospitality to guests applies to brothers, priests and religious (104,3) but also the afflicted and those suffering hardship (104,2). It should be a blend of simplicity and prudence (95,3), kindness and courtesy (104,2.3).

3.2.5. It is not surprising that the relationship that features most in the Constitutions is *brotherhood*⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ Cf F. Iozzelli, "La vita fraterna nell'Ordine francescano primitivo", in *Studi francescani* 74 (1977), 259-313; O. van Asseldonk, "Fisionomia della fraternità francescana", in *L'Italia Francescana* 57 (1982), 631-640; A. Pompei, "La fraternità negli Scritti di S. Francesco e nel primo secolo francescano", in *Miscellanea Francescana* 93(1993), 3-63; F. Uribe, "La fraternità nella forma di vita proposta da Francesco d'Assisi", in C. Di Nardo – G. Salonia (edd.), *La fraternitas di Francesco d'Assisi.*, Italia Francescana, Giulianova (TE) 2003, 131-155; L. Lehmann, "L'idea fondante dell'Ordine francescano", in P. Martinelli (ed.), *La grazia delle origini*, EDB, Bologna 2009, 15-46

Brotherhood is a sense that Saint Francis draws from his adoration of God, the Father and Creator, and is endowed with a universal scope, since in all creatures Saint Francis saw the image of Christ (13,1). If brotherhood includes every creature, it embraces all people without any distinction (13,2). The very plan of God, in fact, is to make humanity a brotherhood in Christ the first-born brother (50,1; 61,2) through the gift of the Spirit (88,2). Brotherhood is rooted "in the mystery of love mystery of love of the perfect Trinity and the holy unity of Father, Son, and Spirit" (88,1), as it overflows into the mystery of creation and the mystery of redemption. The Church herself is a mystery of communion which is reflected in fraternal life, a manifestation of communion between the three divine Persons (165,2), "a human space in which the Trinity dwells" (88,3). Life in brotherhood therefore "foreshadows the definitive unity of the People of God" (88,4), as "a fruit and a sign of the transforming power of the Gospel and of the coming of the kingdom. Like the leaven of the Gospel, it calls us to promote genuine relationships among all people and nations so that the world may live as a single family under the gaze of its Creator" (13:4).

Brotherhood is the essential and original feature of the Order founded by Saint Francis (4:2), who wanted it to be known by that name (88:6), and by that same name the Order was welcomed by the Church (10:3). The Order as such is therefore defined as a brotherhood, and fraternities are called its provincial and local branches, just as its members are defined as brothers, who must be called by that name without distinction (90.1). It therefore constitutes "an Order of brothers". (88,7; 100,1; 123,6). Consequently, brotherhood is the fundamental requirement of formation (24,7) and the ability to live it is the criterion for admission to the Order (18,3a).

Brotherhood is a "spirit" (43,3.7; 100,3; 141,2), which also permeates the whole Franciscan family (13,3). It is a bond (160,5), which becomes a life (88,5; 93,3; 94,2; 97,2; 106,3; 141,2; 157,4; 187,2) lived in common (88,5; 95), and leading to fraternal communion (89,4; 96,2; 130,2; 158,6; 165,2.5), so that every expression of the fraternity becomes "a house and school of communion" (94,4).

The unity (157,3; 166,2) that results from brotherhood is a condition for discerning God's will (158,6; 165,2). It takes concrete shape in charity (89,3; 92,1; 98,1; 107,1; 167,2) and in the sharing of personal gifts and abilities, spiritual goods and the life of faith (160,5). It is expressed in the various forms of fraternal service (172,5), mutual help in living our vocation (21,4), comfort offered to the sick (92,3), mercy towards the sinner (116,1.5), welcoming guests (98), the ministry of authority (159,3), and collaboration among circumscriptions (121,4). Not even death can interrupt it, since faith in the risen Lord "keeps alive our communion with brothers and sisters who are resting in the peace of Christ" (51,2).

Brotherhood produces relationships marked by authenticity (147,3), spontaneity (5,4), affection (101,4), familiarity (168,1), mutual esteem (168,1), serenity and openness (172,6) and respect (103,3).

Such a way of relating must be embodied in actual ways of living together, in the style of a family within a home. It therefore calls for a juridical discipline that regulates the establishment, structure and suppression of places and circumscriptions (27,3.4; 31,7; 56,2;

76,2; 104,2; 118; 120; 137; 142,1; OG 6/7), and also needs a daily lifestyle, which requires a timetable (49,5), and translates into an efficacious presence that is not rendered ineffective by excessive absences (97,1; 140,1; OG 6/4,2).

Brotherhood is a commitment (172,6) which demands constant renunciation of self-love and requires dedication to others (172,6). Some of the tools of brotherhood include dialogue (163,3; 166,3), correction (113,2), silence (168,1) and reconciliation (114,4). At the same time it is a gift of grace that springs from sharing and listening to the Word of God (53,4) and finds its "root, focal point and heart" (48,1) in the celebration (2,2; 48,2; 52,2) and adoration (48,4) of the Eucharist. In this way it can be defined as *evangelical* brotherhood (109,3)⁴⁶.

Brotherhood must also be expressed outside the Order, to the members of the Secular Franciscan Order (102) and related institutes (101,4), and generally in the ecclesial sphere to those who wish to follow in the footsteps of Christ under the guidance of Francis (102,4.6). Since, however, brotherhood is the very content and the first expression of apostolic and missionary testimony (181,2), it expresses its prophecy through its presence in the world (11,3), as "a leaven of justice, unity and peace" (14,5), in contact with the people (5,4), especially the poor (14,3.4), the suffering (108,3), through service and sharing (111,6).

Finally, following the example of St. Francis, brotherhood transcends the human world to a universal and cosmic level (173,2) embracing all creatures (13,2; 105,1).

3.2.6. The foundation of brotherhood is that all are *children of God*. As Christians, in the Son of God (14,1; 16,3) the brothers recognize their dignity and freedom as God's children (13,2; 88,5; 158,3; 177,6) and trust in his paternal providence (67,1). The spirit, not of servants but of sons, impels them to obey God through the observance of the Constitutions (9,3; 162,2). Indeed, the aim of every type of formation is to assimilate the sentiments of Christ, the Son, and to shape one's life according to His life (23,1). The poverty of the brothers is grafted into the filial poverty of Jesus (61,2) and the prayer of Jesus, the Son and Brother, becomes the prayer of the brothers (45,5; 50,1), who as children of God celebrate the mysteries of salvation in the liturgy (52,4). The relationship of sons and daughters is also used to express our relationship with the Church (153,2) and with Saint Francis (1,4; 72,4; 147,8; 182,1).

4. Interpersonal relationships are the figure and foundation of the relationship that characterizes the human person and distinguishes him from other creatures, namely his relationship with God. In responding to this call to relationship, man becomes fully himself, since he is thirsty for the Absolute, that is, for God (181,2), and for holiness (44,4)⁴⁷. Let us now consider the possible ways of developing this relationship.

⁴⁶ This is summarized in J. CORRIVEAU, Circular Letter *Gospel Brotherhood* (1997): "A fraternity of lesser brothers, servants of the world. A contemplative fraternity. A poor and austere fraternity. A fraternity inserted among the poor. A fraternity dedicated to justice, peace, respect for nature. A fraternity full of human warmth", in *Analecta OFM Cap* 13(1997), 13.

⁴⁷ Note the plural form... We speak of a world "thirsting for God" (59:2), or of people who are to be drawn to the joyful love of God (15:5).

4.1. The Constitutions present the human person as endowed with *freedom*⁴⁸. With the gift of freedom, through obedience he responds to the divine call, rooted in baptism (16,2). By following the divine plan, he achieves his own fulfilment (158,3). The result is true freedom, the freedom of the Gospel (7,5), freedom of spirit (45,6; 78,7), inner freedom (111,3), freedom of heart (169,5), the freedom of the children of God (88,5; 158,3; 177,6). This applies in particular to the Capuchin brother as he makes profession (33,4) and lives it (172,4). Freedom is then "a journey of obedience to the Father's will" (158,1)⁴⁹.

4.2. The Constitutions, however, take note of the reality of *sin*. Since only Mary, the Immaculate, has been exempt from it, in fact it dwells in human beings and in society (105,5; 109,7), and in the fraternity itself (116,1). It is a "miserable" condition (152,1), which causes wounds (105,5) and "slavery" (158,1). It must therefore be avoided because it "saps the vitality" of the religious life (44,3), and prevented (OG 7/3). If committed, it will arouse sorrow (113,1) but not disturbance (115,4), and will be met with mercy (116,2) but also with the assumption of responsibility towards victims (116,3).

4.3. We see, then, that the concrete form by which we cling to the Lord is *conversion*⁵⁰. It begins with faith and baptism, but then calls for "a constant effort of daily renunciation" of self (109,2), in order to be "moulded into the likeness of the crucified and risen Christ" (109,7). Saint Francis shows that conversion is achieved through penance (16,5) and mercy (3,1; 109,4). It fundamentally involves the heart (5,2; 81,4). It is a spirit (110,3), but it is an inner disposition "which demands external manifestations in daily life" (110,1). In fact, one constant reminder of this is the use of the Capuchin habit (35,3), and it is supported by certain practices such as "prayer, recollection, listening to the word of God, bodily mortification and communal fasting" (111,6). In particular, the cross of Christ ought to become an object of love (5:3), of which we are reminded by mortification (112:2). Conversion, as well as having an individual dimension, has an ecclesial dimension (184,3), that is, a communal and social aspect (113,3; 114,6). Inasmuch as transformation in Christ is the goal of formation (23,2.3), conversion lends substance to ongoing formation, "a continual return to the sources of Christian life and to the primitive spirit of the Order, carried out in forms adapted to times and cultures" (41,3). Conversion is – as it was for Saint Francis (50,2; 106,2) – the essential content of preaching (147,5; 173,2).

⁴⁸ Cf G.F. Benegiamo, *Autorità e libertà nelle costituzioni cappuccine: un contributo per la visione teologico-morale del rapporto tra autorità e libertà nella vita religiosa*, Bari 1988; P. Martinelli P., "Liberi di cercare Dio. Note teologico spirituali", in *Vita Consacrata* 45(2009), 125-161

⁴⁹ P. Martinelli, "Obbedienza salvifica di Cristo e l'obbedienza nella vita consacrata", in *Religiosi in Italia* 13(2008), 48*-54*.

⁵⁰ Cf L. SIMANULLANG, *Conversione continua: le Costituzioni attuali (1990) dei Frati Minori Cappuccini come stimolo per un rinnovamento della vita dell'Ordine* (Dissertationes ad Doctoratum. 332), Antonianum, Roma 1993.

5. God's grace produces new life in the converted, which is manifested in *holiness*. Personal holiness promotes the salvation of the world (16,1). Therefore the brothers should be "thirsty" for it (44,4) and resolutely aim for it (114,5). However, holiness is also a shared journey in which the brothers are called to support one another (94,4), with a specific role for ministers and guardians (161,1.3). It is shown in the practice of the virtues.

5.1. Let us examine the space that the Constitutions devote to the theological virtues

Faith in God the Father of all produces unity (88,2) and, in obedience to his plan of love (158,2), leads to welcome Christ with his works and words, which are spirit and life (1,2). It marks the beginning of the new baptismal life (109,2) and gives the gift of sight by which to read the signs of God's action in history (149,1). It has an ecclesial dimension, since the Church is a community founded on faith (175,2), and through the Church one receives faith from God (182,1). So faith informs the life of the brothers and directs all we do (182,1). With a firm faith religious profession is made (21,4; 22,2), the Rule and Constitutions themselves are observed (186,2), the Order is welcomed in its historical manifestations (145,3), together with the decisions of those who exercise the service of authority within it (158,7; 165,3). The brothers are to deepen their grasp of it ever more profoundly (182,1), while knowing that a shared faith grows stronger (182,3). Therefore they will form the faithful in the faith through catechesis (150,6), and defend it even to the point of martyrdom (147,8).

Hope is the content of the Gospel proclaimed by Saint Francis (50,2), sustained by the providence of God the Father (108,1) and by faith in the risen Christ (50,2). It has as its object the "good things that never end" (63,2), "eternal life" (182,3), indeed Christ himself (189,1), "the Lord God" (108,5), "God whom we love above all else" (168,4), and it keeps alive our communion with the dead (51,2).

Charity, "which is God" (59,1), is manifested in the gift of Christ (109,1), and is therefore also the love "of Christ" (38,4; 84,4; 85,3), poured out particularly in the passion (60,5; 116,1). The whole human family is called to communion in perfect charity (109,8), and that is what the Kingdom is. (168,3). The Church is a communion of truth and charity (10:1; 117:1), in which God calls all the baptized to the fullness of love (16:1), like the laity belonging to the Secular Franciscan Order (102:2). Among the baptized, the Capuchin brothers, as religious, are called to perfect charity in a special way (18,1; 21,4; 33,1.4; 88,5; 89,2). They are called to express it first of all towards God (157,1) and, in a delicate and affectionate way (110,2), towards their neighbour in pastoral action (151,3; 157,1) – especially that of the priest-brothers (152,2), who administer sacramental reconciliation (152,2; 153,3) - towards other baptized Christians in ecumenical dialogue (149,5), in mission (177,1). 6), and generally towards all people (61.1; 63.1; 95.5; 106.4; 107.1), especially the poor (66.2; 69.1; 104.2). Charity must then leave its mark on our mutual fraternal relationships (65.2; 158.5; 168.1). It inspires obedience (100,4; 166,1), disciplines the service of authority (159,4; 162,3; 163,2; 186,2), enlightens studies (38,4), is expressed in work (79,1; 82,2), moves us to welcome guests (98,1; 99,3) and care for the elderly (91,2) and the sick (92,1; 112,3). It settles conflicts between religious or between circumscriptions (186,5), regulates the use of speech (168,2), imposes silence for the safeguarding of common life (58,1), inspires suffrages for the deceased (51,2), joins together

with discretion when dealing with a brother's family of origin (103,2), with prudence in the application of penalties (116,4), with fairness towards brothers who leave the Order (103,4), and with justice in assuming responsibility for the victims of crimes (O 7/2).

Charity is also called by the equivalent and more generic name of love, as the driving force behind the Capuchin life (61,3; 188,1). Love is the force at the heart of the Trinity (60.1; 88.1; 169.1; 173.3), it is the love of God the Father (46.7; 50.4; 60.3; 78.1; 89.1; 114.4; 147.7; 158.2; 162.1; 163.1), of Christ (2.2; 3.1; 12.2; 19.3; 22.2; 50.2; 52.5; 164.5; 169.1), of the Holy Spirit poured into our hearts (169.1). Love is then humanity's response to God (9,3; 15,5; 16,2; 59,1.2; 80,4; 111,3; 147,8; 158,5; 164,3; 169,1. 5; 173.1; 177.1) and to his beauty (169.4; 170.2), to Christ and his cross (3.3; 170.1; 173.6; 177.2; 188.2). This is why it is the very breath of prayer (45.1), the abundance from which all preaching flows (150.4). Love extends to our neighbour (111,3; 147,8; 169,1; 173,1.3), especially among the baptized, which makes the Church a community (175,2). The brothers are called to express love for the Church (10,5) and for the poor (14,3), as well as to exchange it among themselves (12,1.2; 72,2; 88,8; 89,2; 113,2; 116,1; 172,5) and to foster love for the Order in the various expressions of its spiritual heritage (6,1; 7,3; 9,4; 44,3; 178,6). Nonetheless, love is viewed realistically, as a reality in need of purification and direction towards charity, through conversion from a "self-centred and possessive" love (172,1) to "one that is self-sacrificing, capable of giving itself to others" (172,1), "free and universal" (172,4; 173,3).

5.2. The Constitutions also give space to the *cardinal virtues*.

Prudence, in general, inspires the process of initiation (28,3), the way one tells a sick brother that he is ill (92,4), the reception of guests (95,1.3) and the hiring of domestic workers (83,4). In particular, for those who exercise authority, prudence presides in dialogue with the brothers (164,4), when imposing precepts by virtue of the vow of obedience (162,3), intervening (decisively) in cases of sexual abuse (172,7), when imposing canonical penalties (116,4), in the care of documents contained in the secret archives OG 8/28), granting permission to travel (97,3) and accepting parishes (154,2). Priest-brothers should exercise prudence in the ministry of sacramental reconciliation (152,2).

Justice (in its meaning of equity or fairness) is considered primarily from a social perspective, together with peace (14,5; 63,1; 72,4.5; 107,4; 147,5; 175,4). There is a call for justice as the assumption of responsibility towards the victims of crimes committed by the brothers (OG 7/2). It regulates the norms governing holidays (OG 5/1), our attitude towards those who leave the Order (104,3) and our relations with external collaborators (83,3). One of its more private dimensions is also considered, since a "sense of justice" characterizes our attitude towards women (173,4). However, the biblical value also appears, inasmuch as Christ is defined as one whom God has "made our wisdom and justice" (189,2).

Fortitude or courage is not explicitly mentioned, but it is called for every time one has to "face the cross and persecution, even to the point of martyrdom" (147,8).

Temperance is considered explicitly as a basic support for our ability to live chastely (172,2). It includes moderation and mortification in food and drink (112,2), and generally leads to a "simple and frugal life" (112,1).

5.3. Other virtues specify the new life of the believer expressed through the Franciscan vocation. A special place is given to joy, in which one follows in the footsteps of the poor, humble and crucified Christ (2,1), celebrates the Eucharist (2,2), practises penance (110,1), shares in the mission of the Church (16,5), exercises the apostolate of fraternal life (147,2), seeks alms (67,4), and walks in the contemporary world (108,1).

The role of *simplicity* is important⁵¹. Having repeated that "The first apostolate of a lesser brother is to live the gospel life in the world in truth, simplicity, and joy" (147,2), this virtue – which goes to the heart (149,7) – is invoked to enable us to live in the world the radical call of the beatitudes (181,2), to follow the poverty of Christ (61,1), and to observe the Rule (7,2; 155,2). It is a characteristic of the entire life of the Order (112,1), and therefore of our individual and community style (62,2; 65,2). It leads us to welcome the sometimes fragile historical and institutional manifestations of the Order (145,3) and to confer offices within it (123,2), and to accept to carry out daily domestic work (83,3). Simplicity marks our liturgical celebrations (21:3), our churches and sacristies (74), and the rooms in our houses where we receive visitors (95:3). Simplicity should be our hallmark – in the alternative clothing we may use instead of the habit (OG 2/14), in our presence and closeness to the people (149:7), in our words (150:2), and in teaching the people to pray (55:7).

Another Franciscan mark is the *courtesy* we are to show to guests (104), to women (173.4), and to those outside the Order who work with us (83.4).

7. Having considered the make-up of the human being and his dynamism through relationships, let us consider another aspect of this dynamism, namely the ability to shape the environment and produce symbols and tools. The human person is therefore a cultural being.

7.1. The first expression of human creativity considered by the Constitutions is *work*, to which chapter V of the Rule and chapter V of the Constitutions are dedicated. Work is a response to God's call to participate in the work of creation, and a means to grow in personal maturity and contribute to the growth of society (78,1). Christ has raised it to the dignity of an instrument of salvation (78,2.6), a means of sustenance (78,5) and service (78,7) but also a means of sanctification (78,6), and therefore a "grace" to be welcomed with gratitude, fidelity and devotion (78,4).

7.2. Human creativity, however, goes beyond work as a function of need. The Constitutions therefore teach us to appreciate *science*, which explores creation; but also *culture* (understood

⁵¹ Cf L. IZZO, *La semplicità evangelica nella spiritualità di s. Francesco d'Assisi (Studi e ricerche. 2)*, *Laurentianum*, Rome 1971

as synonymous with the humanities, philosophy and literature), so much so that providence can also manifest itself in the currents of thought (108,4); *art*, which reveals God's gifts (106,3) and leads us to make known his beauty (156,1). The *communications media* are also considered instruments of human growth and tools at the service of the Kingdom of God and evangelization (96,1).

7.3. The text mentions other instances of the human capacity to manipulate reality and to fashion symbols and tools for organizing life in the environment:

Food (158,3) and *drink* (112,2), which is necessary, without excluding the mortification of taste and also abstention through fasting (112,2).

The *habits*⁵², made in the form of a cross, is "a reminder of conversion, a sign of consecration to God, and of belonging to the Order" (35,3), an instrument by which we express our "condition as lesser brothers" (35,3) and give our witness to poverty. Therefore where the use of the habit of the Order is impossible, it is replaced by simple clothing (OG 2/14).

The *house* appears not only in its juridical sense as the stable setting of a fraternity of the Order, or even in the transferred sense of a group of friars living in common, but precisely in the specific sense of a dwelling place. A Capuchin house should be humble and poor, as befits pilgrims and strangers (73,1), consistent with the living conditions of the poor of the region (73,2), and never appropriated to ourselves (66,1). It combines functionality with the needs of prayer, study and privacy of the brothers who live there and their commitments to work and the apostolate. At the same time, it is accessible to all, especially the humble (73,2.3; 95,1). Therefore, there is a distinction between rooms reserved for the brothers and rooms for receiving and meeting guests (95) The house requires care and maintenance (83,2; OG 4/9) and daily services in which all, have a share (90,4). The house is a symbol of each brother, called to be the dwelling place of the Trinity (59,3), and of every local fraternity, understood as "a house and school of communion" (94,4).

*Money*⁵³ appears once again, and norms are provided to regulate its use (68-70; 73,4; 76,1; 85,3; OG 4/3.4), so that we avoid accumulating it and make it instead an instrument of sharing.

8. Human beings have been placed by God within a wider setting, that of creation. The Constitutions present a vision of the cosmos based on biblical and Franciscan foundations⁵⁴. In fact, God the Father has made all things with wisdom and love (78:1), and has sown good and beautiful things in the human heart and in the harmony of creation (156:1). Indeed, imprinted

⁵² Cf. C. ROBERTO, *Nei panni di Francesco. Il ruolo dell'abito nella vita del Santo di Assisi*, Stilo, Bari 2009

⁵³ Cf A. Caciotti – M. Melli, *I francescani e l'uso del denaro*, Biblioteca Francescana, Milano 2011; M. Carbajo Núñez, *Economia francescana. Una proposta per uscire dalla crisi*, EDB, Bologna, 2014.

⁵⁴ Cf M. DE MARZI, *S. Francesco d'Assisi e l'ecologia*, Borla, Rome 1981; L. MATHIEU, *La Trinità creatrice secondo san Bonaventura*, Franciscan Library, Milan 1994; F. URIBE (ed.), *Il "Liber naturae" nella "Lectio antoniana"*, Antonianum, Rome 1996; L. PROFILI, *Il libro della creazione letto con San Francesco*, Porziuncola, Assisi 1997; G. BESCHIN, "La creatura simbolo del creatore in san Bonaventura alla luce della ragione e della fede", in *Doctor Seraphicus* 47(2000), 43-64

in every creature is the image of Christ, the firstborn and Saviour. (13,1). This is why, when contemplated through science, the works of creation appear "magnificent, amazing and mysterious. They lead us to worship the Father". (105,3). In response, the human person is called to encounter every creature with a brotherly spirit, and offer the praise of creation to God (13:2)⁵⁵.

9. The space of creation is also the place of *time*. This is considered in its chronological or sequential aspect, as a "precious gift" (87,2) that is not to be wasted, because each moment is unique and unrepeatable, and calls for planning and organization (87,3). Time spans the phases of a brother's formation, his ministries, quite simply his whole life (21,4). It is a resource to be devoted to prayer and spiritual care (15,3; 53,3; 55,2.3; 56,2; 57,3; 161,1), to formation (26; 34; 82,3), to fraternal life (94,3), to the apostolate (15,3), but also to rest and care of oneself (86). However, the text also captures the aspect of time as "Kairos" - and thus it becomes *history*⁵⁶. In fact, "the Lord comes to meet us in time and makes us grow towards the fullness of salvation" (87,4), revealing himself and his providence through the signs of the times (87,4) and the experiences of life (108,4).

The "uniqueness of each moment and of every favourable opportunity" (87,2) is a stimulus to us to live life intensely and responsibly, and time becomes the place of discernment, vigilance and patience (87,4).

10. The present moment, however, is also full of concerns that can turn out to be futile, and from these we must free ourselves (108,2), taking our bearings from *eschatology*. Faith in the risen Christ sustains the hope (51,2) of eternal life (182,3), of good things that never end (63,2), things that last for ever (189,1), in other words, the hope we have for God Himself, Father, Son and Spirit, the God of all ages (189,3). The liturgy associates us with the eternal song of praise of the Lamb (49,2; 189,3); the Eucharist, in particular, is celebrated while awaiting that Sunday which never sets, and which will usher man "into the eternal rest of God" (52,2). Our brotherhood itself is marked by eschatology, in that it offers "a distinctive proclamation of the future life, in which those who have risen are brothers and sisters in the presence of God, who will be all in all for them" (169,6).

Meanwhile, as we await the last day, our communion with our departed brothers and sisters is kept alive through an exchange of spiritual gifts and prayers. (51,2).

3.4. *The Mother of the Lord and the Saints*

⁵⁵ The Constitutions use the generic term creature. Neither angels (including fallen ones) nor animals appear, although they have a place in salvation history and Franciscan spirituality. Cf. F. CARDINI, "Francesco d'Assisi e gli animali", in *Studi francescani* 78(1981), 7-46: Id., "Il lupo di Gubbio. Dimensione storica e dimensione antropologica di una "leggenda"", in *Studi francescani* 74(1977), 315-343.

⁵⁶ In the Franciscan context, the now classic reference is to J. RATZINGER, *San Bonaventura. La teologia della storia*, Nardini, Firenze 1991 (or. 1959).

Finally, eschatology leads us to fix our gaze on the Mother of the Lord⁵⁷.

Our Lady is considered in various aspects of her earthly history. She is the bride of Saint Joseph (52:7), and at the same time "the sublime example of complete consecration to God and of love for that divine Beauty" (170:2) and she carries in her heart the "words of salvation" (1:5). She gave birth to Christ, the light and salvation of all nations, (181:3), and also "shared in the poverty and sufferings of her Son". (52,6). Indeed, she is "the way to the spirit of Christ poor and crucified" (52,6). After the Resurrection, on the morning of Pentecost, overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, she presided in prayer at the dawn of evangelisation (181:3).

The titles by which she is proclaimed are of biblical, magisterial, liturgical and devotional derivation. Mary is recognized as Immaculate (21,4; 52,6; 170,2), and therefore "all beautiful" (170,2), "blessed" (1,5; 111,5; 170,2; 181,3). She is the Mother of Christ (171,2; 181,3), and therefore Mother of the Good Shepherd (181,3) but also Mother of God (52,6; 188,2), and more articulately "daughter and handmaid of the Father, mother of the Son and spouse of the Holy Spirit" (52,6). Furthermore, Mary is recognized as Virgin (1:5; 52:6.7; 111:5; 170:2; 171:2; 181:3), or rather as "Virgin made Church" (52:6).

With particular regard to the Order, Mary is called "mother, advocate, and patroness" (52,6; cf. 188,2). She is a guide and example in the profession of vows (21,4), a helper as we seek to observe the Constitutions (188,2), a special support in observing chastity (170,2). We should therefore venerate her "with particular devotion, especially with liturgical worship, the Angelus and the Rosary" (52,6), cultivating "an intense relationship and close union" with her (170,2), fasting in preparation for the solemnity of her Immaculate Conception (111,5), and promoting devotion to it also among the people (52,6).

Other figures of holiness are called forward by the pages of the Constitutions. Saint Joseph is hailed as the "faithful spouse of the Virgin Mary, guardian of the Redeemer and humble worker" (52,7). Martha and Mary of Bethany are presented as examples of the harmony of contemplation and action (15,4). In general, the efficacious patronage and fruitful devotion of all the saints is recognized (21,4; 52,6.8).

It is obvious that, in the ranks of the saints, Saint Francis and Saint Clare occupy a unique place (52,8; 101,3; 173,4), as do the Capuchin saints (7,2; 52,8; 110,2; 112,2; 177,2; 187,1), but this would be more appropriately examined in a separate study of the presence of Saint Francis and Franciscan spirituality in the Constitutions⁵⁸.

⁵⁷ On Franciscan Mariology cf. the booklet *Quaderni di spiritualità francescana* 22(2000); S. Cecchin, *Maria Signora Santa e Immacolata nel pensiero francescano*, Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis, Città del Vaticano, 2001; G. Salonia, "Maria: via della bellezza come via della salvezza", in *Italia Francescana* 78(2005), 67-84

⁵⁸ Cf. F. ELIZONDO, Cf F. Elizondo, "Cristo y San Francisco en la constituciones capuchinas de 1536", in *Laurentianum* 24(1983), 76-115; O. Schmucki, *La figura di S. Francesco nelle prime Costituzioni Cappuccine del 1529* (I Frati Cappuccini. Sussidi per la lettura dei documenti e testimonianze del I secolo. 4), CISPCap, Roma 1989; Id., *La figura storica e spirituale di S. Francesco nelle Costituzioni Cappuccine del 1536* (I Frati Cappuccini. Sussidi per la lettura dei documenti e testimonianze del I secolo. 5), CISPCap, Roma 1989; J. Kazmierczak, *San*

4. *The Constitutions of the Post-Conciliar Church (and theology)*

Let us now complete this first examination of the Capuchin Constitutions in their present form, and offer some concluding assessments.

1. In the first place⁵⁹, the Constitutions fully express the Church of Vatican II, both in terms of the conciliar sources and of post-conciliar developments. In fact, in addition to the biblical and liturgical sources (which should be the subject of a specific study), the Constitutions contain uninterrupted quotations from the documents of Vatican II. Again, there are numerous references to the magisterium of Popes Paul VI⁶⁰, John Paul II⁶¹ (1996), and Benedict XVI⁶², as well as references to the documents of various Episcopal Synods and Congregations. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* hardly appears at all, while the *Code of Canon Law* is continually quoted.

2. However, certainly the greatest new contribution to the current text of the Constitutions comes from the Post-Synodal Exhortation *Vita consecrata*. It is mainly to this source that we owe the two most significant additions.

The first is certainly the space assigned, most appropriately, to the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Certainly, it was already present in the previous Constitutions⁶³, but in the current text its value is rightly and amply demonstrated, as we have set out in the previous pages (§ 3.1). The Trinity is present both in its immanent dimension and in its action in salvation history. Indeed, in the Constitutions, it is in the love of the Trinity that the whole of life has its source: the Church herself (10.1), the experience of St. Francis (2.1), our vocation (16.3) and the Order in its various aspects: profession (33), the vows of poverty (60,1) obedience (158) and chastity (169), formation (23,1), fraternal life (88,1), prayer (45), governance (117,1), work (78,1-3), the

Francesco nelle Costituzioni dei Frati Minori Cappuccini (Dissertationes ad Doctoratum. 323), Antonianum, Roma 1991.

⁵⁹ For the impact on the Franciscan world cf. P. MARTINELLI (ed.), *Il rinnovamento della vita consacrata e la famiglia francescana*, EDB, Bologna 2007. For the Capuchins cf. F. Neri, "La ricezione del Vaticano II nell'Ordine dei Frati Minori Cappuccini", *ibid*, 167-183.

⁶⁰ The main references to the Magisterium of Paul VI include the Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam suam* (1964), the Apostolic Letter *Ecclesiae Sanctae* (1966), the Apostolic Constitution *Paenitemini* (1966), the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelica Testificatio* (1971), the Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis cultus* (1974), the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975). Cf also PAUL VI, *Cari Cappuccini...*, Frate Indovino, Perugia 1985, a collection of eleven speeches made between 1963 and 1976.

⁶¹ There are quotations and references to the Encyclical Letter *Laborem exercens*. (1981), the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio* (1981), the Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptionis donum* (1984), the Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater* (1987), the Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987), the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici* (1988), the Apostolic Letter *Euntes in mundum* (1988), the Apostolic Letter *Mulieris dignitatem* (1988), the Apostolic Letter *Redemptoris missio* (1990), the Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (1994), the Encyclical Letter *Oriente lumen* (1995), the Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae* (1995), the Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini* (1998), the Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte* (2001). Cf also JOHN PAUL II, *Cari frati cappuccini... (Omellie, discorsi, lettere. 1978-2005)*, ed. F. Neri, Italia Francescana, Roma 2006.

⁶² His encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (2009) and the Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* (2010) are quoted.

⁶³ Cf. F. NERI, "Il mistero trinitario nelle Costituzioni dei Cappuccini", *cit.*, 275-278

apostolate (146). The work done in this area is remarkable and, while still subject to improvement, is very satisfying.

The other important addition is the introduction of the *via pulchritudinis*, the way of beauty. God, in the words of St. Bonaventure, is "He who is beautiful". (156,1) and his beauty is reflected in the beauty of created things (156,1), eminently in Our Lady, the *Tota Pulchra*, "the sublime example of love for divine beauty" (170,2). Following the Exhortation *Vita consecrata* (19), life in consecrated chastity is also seen as a "reflection of the divine beauty" (169,3), through the action of the Holy Spirit, who arouses love for divine beauty (169,4). The beauty of God is the only beauty that can "totally satisfy the human heart" (170,2); it fills Saint Francis with amazement (60,5; 173,2), and moves him to invite all creatures to praise and glorify the Lord (156,1). Continuing along these lines, the brothers are committed to making it known "through the spoken and written word, and also through Christian art." (156,1). The subject has been concentrated into the five paragraphs indicated, and could be applied more widely and given a more Trinitarian structure.

3. The other great source of the Constitutions is obviously the Franciscan heritage. Through literal quotations and also indirect references, St. Francis and St. Clare appear in its pages in their writings and original biographies. There are very frequent quotations from the Earlier and Later Rules, and from these the Constitutions have taken the idea of organizing the text into twelve chapters. The Testament, too, is given an important place.

There are also references to the primitive sources of the Statutes of Albacina and the Constitutions of 1536 (and other later editions). The reports and letters of the General Ministers also appear, namely Brs. Rywalski, Carraro, J. Corriveau, M. Jöhri, and the proposals of the seven Plenary Councils.

Taking an overall view, the theology of the Constitutions appears as a composite, in other words, a blend of many sources, and formed by the reception of a *theologia communis*, anchored in biblical, liturgical and magisterial sources. To save it from the danger of being too generic, it would be important to promote ongoing efforts to make it more Franciscan.

Among the original (indispensable) sources, and the more recent ones which sometimes refer to contingent problems, it would be appropriate to include the main Franciscan theological themes in general, and Capuchin ones in particular – at least when it comes to interpreting and assimilating them. A suitable tool for doing this might be a project comprising in-depth studies of topics and historical themes, with the aim of passing on to the present-day generation of friars the centuries-old treasure of Franciscan theology and spirituality.

In addition to listening to a broader range of Franciscan voices, it would be appropriate once again to save the anthropological themes from a fragmentary treatment, by reading these too in a Franciscan key. This time the tool could be a suitable *Ratio Formationis*, which would

accompany the brother on his entire journey as a baptised and consecrated person, ensuring that the wisdom of the Gospel is translated into appropriate human maturity⁶⁴.

4. Regarding the question of how far the first Constitutions have remained throughout the centuries, it might seem that the post-conciliar Constitutions, right up to the current version, have taken an overly flexible course.

But, on the one hand, the renewal begun by Vatican II, in its breadth and potency, finds a precedent only in the Council of Trent, and it was precisely at that moment that the Capuchins began their own journey. The full assimilation of the conciliar event, with its dynamic call to return to one's origins and to update accordingly, and then all its succeeding ebbs and flows, called for a commitment spread over time. Neither can the task be said to be finished, because the "Pope Francis moment" needs to be assimilated into the Order's awareness. This began after the drafting of the Constitutions, but it cannot fail to have an impact on the Order's way forward⁶⁵.

On the other hand, the contemporary world is changing rapidly and continuously, provoking the Church, and the Order within it, to frequent reflection, and so it will be in the future. It will then be necessary to have a flexible mental attitude, which, without changing the structure of the Constitutions too often, will still be able to read the signs of the times and to work out the Order's journey in a globalized, complex and constantly changing society.

In this way, being rooted in their history and in the developing tradition of the Order, having analysed in depth the pillars of the theology that inspires them - which have remained substantially unchanged for centuries - supported and supplemented by the tools by which they are updated and encultured in each moment of history and in the different geographical regions, the Constitutions will continue to be what they have been for nearly five hundred years: a code of spirituality and formation that has accompanied a bright multitude of brothers, too numerous to count, to the fullness of holiness. They are the first vehicle for the transmission and sharing of the charism, and therefore of communion in the Order.

SUMMARY

The Capuchin Constitutions approved by the Holy See in 2013 mark the culmination of the Order's journey of renewal in the conciliar and post-conciliar Church. They embrace every theological subject. While not being a treatise, the text nonetheless embraces in varying degrees every topic in dogmatic theology, and presents the Trinitarian, ecclesiological and anthropological dogmatic statements. Following the mandate to comply with and enrich the previous edition, the current constitutional text displays considerable enrichment, especially

⁶⁴ The Constitutions often explicitly demand human maturity in its spiritual, intellectual, psychological, affective and sexual aspects (19,3f; 26,4; 30,2; 31,1; 32,1.3; 42,3; 78,1; 96,1; 172,1). Cf. G. SALONIA, "Maturità", in *Dizionario di Scienze dell'Educazione*, LAS-LDC-SEI, Rome 1997, 662-665.

⁶⁵ Cf A. SPADARO, "Svegliate il mondo!". Colloquio di papa Francesco con i Superiori generali", in *La Civid. Ità Cattolica* 164(2014/1), 3 nota 1. The letter *Identità e appartenenza dei Frati Minori Cappuccini* explicitly refers to what the pope said at that meeting.

being more firmly centred on the three persons, with the emergence, in particular, of the link between the mystery of the Trinity and the consecrated life, and the adoption of the *via pulchritudinis*.