



“RENOVATIO”

Toward a program of renewal in the Order:

“The Ordinary General Chapter asks that a commission be established to study religious life and the structures of the Order, to report to the next Intermediate General Chapter on contemporary reality and future prospects, in order to redesign a fruitful model of religious life that responds to the sense of urgency of a communal and prophetic life” (CGO19 no.22).

PREFACE

Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope. (1 Peter 3:15)

1. We are humble followers of Christ who live together in community, profess vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, who find value in personal and common moments for prayer each day, and called to go out to respond to the needs of the Church and the world with prophetic courage in apostolic works and the ministry of evangelization. *It is necessary therefore that the members of every community, seeking God solely and before everything else, should join in contemplation, by which they fix their minds and hearts on Him, with apostolic love, by which they strive to be associated with the work of redemption and to spread the kingdom of God (PC 5).*
2. As we walk together on this journey, we are committed to live as authentic witnesses of the evangelical counsels we profess and to give prophetic testimony to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our world. One of the most basic discoveries of one who sets out on a journey is that each step forward along the path brings a change of perspective of the steps already taken, of the present surroundings, and of the horizon which lies in the future. The goal does not change, but how that goal is perceived changes with each step and with the choices of which path to take along the journey. As we walk on this journey together, we follow Christ, *the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).*
3. Guided and animated by the Holy Spirit, the dedication, sacrifice, time, energy, discernment and decisions already made on our common journey have brought us to this point in history and give us the ability to have a new perspective as we look forward. A collective discernment process impels us to ask the basic question of “why”. When we discern why we are committed to the Augustinian religious life and ask why we proclaim that fraternal life, restless searching, mission, the evangelical counsels, Gospel witnesses, preferential option for the poor, prayer, discernment, new vocations and ongoing and initial formation have value, the answers provide us with the foundation upon which to build and *redesign a fruitful model that responds to the sense of urgency of a communal and prophetic life.*

4. This document provides us with a snapshot of where we are on our common journey and will help to orient us so that we may, with the Lord and with each other, continue to walk together in joyful hope toward the One who calls us to progress forward. *For I know well the plans I have in mind for you—oracle of the LORD—plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope (Jeremiah 29:11).*

OBJECTIVE

The main purpose for you having come together is to live harmoniously in your house, intent upon God in oneness of mind and heart (Rule 1, 3).

5. The reflections contained in these pages are the result of many hours of shared dialogue, encounters, and prayer. In November 2019, the Augustinian Spirituality Institute (ISA) was commissioned by the Prior General, Alejandro Moral Antón, and the General Council to implement the decision of the Ordinary General Chapter 2019 to study our life and structures and to report the findings to the Intermediate General Chapter 2022.

METHODOLOGY

6. The inclusion of as many voices as possible was one of the strategies behind collecting information that was studied and will be shared in this report. The Executive Committee of the Augustinian Spirituality Institute met in the Autumn of 2019 to approve the calendar and method of work. The methodology began with a consultation with the Executive Committee of the Augustinian Spirituality Institute. As the work of the commission for the study of renewal was in its initial stage, we were faced with the challenge of the global COVID-19 pandemic which then compelled us to look at the reality in which we live from a different perspective. The document, *A Time of Hope* was prepared and distributed to all of the friars of the Order. Many individual friars and also communities used that document for discussion and reflection and the results of those reflections and encounters were communicated to the Augustinian Spirituality Institute as the second stage of consultation. This was then followed by a consultation with the regional collaborators of the Augustinian Spirituality Institute. There are 10 regional collaborators, 2 from each region of the Order (Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America, North America, Europe). A simultaneous inventory was conducted with the membership of the International Commissions of the Order and the results were shared with the Augustinian Spirituality Institute in the late Autumn of 2020. In the Spring of 2021, the first stage of the consultative process was completed with the inclusion of the presidents or executive directors of the regional structures within the Order: FANA, OAE, OALA, OSAAP, UAFA. In October 2021, the General Secretariat of the Synod opened a two-year synodal process. The Prior General and Council appointed an international commission to encourage all members of the Order to participate in the initial phases of the synodal process. A synthesis of the results received by the OSA International Commission for Synodality was communicated to the General Secretariat at the Vatican and also to the members of the Order. The proposals deduced from the syntheses were presented to the Prior General and Council in July 2022. These proposals, together with the abundant and rich material that was collected from the contributions received over the past three years, were divided into five themes: A) Spirituality, B) Poverty and Social Justice, C) Apostolate and Evangelization, D) Vocations, E) Formation. The Intermediate General Chapter 2022 approved the document to be distributed throughout the Order.

“Hope of progress and renewal in the Order is not to be placed in the multiplication of laws, but rather in their diligent observance and in the spirit with which we, as free men under grace, obey them. All of us, therefore, should strive frequently to meditate on and apply to ourselves the principles, admonitions, and norms of the Rule and Constitutions” (Constitutions 526).

7. Each of the themes is presented with information requiring us to reflect on the realities in which we are living from our personal perspective, the perspective of our local communities, the perspective of our geographic circumscription, and our perspective as an international religious Order. *An effective renewal and adaptation demands the cooperation of all the members of the institute (Perfectae Caritatis 4)*, and so we encourage all of the members of the Order to dedicate the time necessary to give appropriate and adequate attention to this next phase of our journey.

8. The first step on the path to redesigning a fruitful model of religious life within the Order of Saint Augustine begins with a hopeful commitment to the future. We are compelled to move forward, to keep making progress. The universal church is currently in a period of discernment on what it means to be a synodal church. The three themes of *communion, participation* and *mission* can assist us in our process of discernment in the Order and in renewing our commitment to our fraternal life.

9. In the encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis challenges us to take the risks that can make life more beautiful and worthwhile while keeping hope alive in our hearts. *I invite everyone to renewed hope, for hope “speaks to us of something deeply rooted in every human heart, independently of our circumstances and historical conditioning. Hope speaks to us of a thirst, an aspiration, a longing for a life of fulfillment, a desire to achieve great things, things that fill our heart and lift our spirit to lofty realities like truth, goodness and beauty, justice and love... Hope is bold; it can look beyond personal convenience, the petty securities and compensations which limit our horizon, and it can open us up to grand ideals that make life more beautiful and worthwhile”. Let us continue, then, to advance along the paths of hope (FT 55).*

10. This document is to be used as a tool to assist each of us in the process of discernment as we develop and *redesign a fruitful model of religious life that responds to the sense of urgency of a communal and prophetic life*. The themes introduced here are presented and developed to stimulate reflection, conversation, discernment, and decision. The power of the Spirit will assist us to reach decisions in the areas of spirituality, poverty and social justice, the apostolate and evangelization, vocations, and initial formation. This document is not intended to limit discussion, imagination or innovation but hopefully provides a mechanism for mutual discernment. It is our hope and desire that as we continue our journey as vowed Augustinian religious, we may always make progress, together as brothers, humbly accepting our limitations and frailties as we maintain an awareness that our ultimate goal is to live eternally with God.

“May the Lord grant that by the common striving of all we may be joined to Christ more fervently, the life of the Order may become more vigorous, and our apostolate may bear more abundant fruit” (Constitutions 526).

A. SPIRITUALITY

*The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him:
a spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
a spirit of counsel and of strength,
a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD,
and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD. (Isaiah 11:2-3)*

11. Guided by the Spirit of the risen Christ, we are pilgrims on our common journey toward God. Augustine was a person who surrounded himself with people and it was with them and because of them that he was able to proceed with his journey developing his relationship of love with Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, the life, and the true Redeemer of all. The conversion of Augustine was aided by the prayers and the example of Monica and of the testimony and preaching of Ambrose and the Church of Milan. Our Augustinian Spirituality is one that involves the heart and mind, it creates space for listening to the interior teacher and offers opportunities to experience the body of Christ by going out and being in communion with others. It influences the way we pray, work, recreate, study, and live our lives in our communities and how we serve the people entrusted to our care.

12. *“Common prayer should flow from a generous and intimate sharing among the friars, such that we can reflect upon the prayer which flows from our heart, know how far we have advanced in it, and be moved to even greater growth” (Const. 31).* Evaluating the spiritual aspect of our lives is a critical one that must be considered as we redesign a model for Augustinian religious life that seeks a balance between being religious in community life and in the apostolate, between community duties and the apostolic service we offer. *In the sacrament of the Eucharist the author of life is truly present; he offers himself for us; he shares his life with us; he prays for us; he unites us to himself in the meal of fraternal communion and, through faith and hope, we have a foretaste of the eschatological banquet (Const. 92). “So, if it’s you that are the body of Christ and its members, it’s the mystery meaning you that has been placed on the table of the Lord; what you receive is the mystery that means you” (Ser. 272, 1).*

13. *“The following of Christ is the true and genuine meaning of religious life, and therefore constitutes its fundamental norm. However, since the faithful imitation of Christ demands a deep spiritual life, we must especially accompany him along the path of humility, even to the complete emptying of ourselves: ‘This is the way: walk in humility that you may reach eternity’” (Const. 56).* As a means of nourishing a deeper spiritual life, each friar shall examine his spiritual practices and life and reflect on how he gives due emphasis and attention to his spiritual life. The contemplative dimension of our Augustinian charism demands attention and care and can be nourished when we are active agents, not merely passive recipients. We can do this in a spirit of reciprocity and exchange in activities such as: community and personal prayer and meditation, chaplaincy and spiritual direction, sacraments, spiritual reading, annual retreat, days of recollection, engagement within the local community, with our contemplative nuns, and with our brothers and sisters throughout the world. Personal and communal devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, can illuminate, facilitate, and sustain our journey in the practice of the virtues of faith, hope and charity. Mary, together with all our Augustinian saints helps us to journey together with the Church.

14. *“To continually renew our spirituality, each community, in accord with the proper statutes, should arrange for days of retreat or recollection according to the more important liturgical*

seasons. On these days, or even more frequently, according to the statutes, celebration of the chapter of renewal is recommended” (Const. 102). Time shall be dedicated for all the members of the community to evaluate, discuss, plan and participate in how the spiritual life of the community is realized in its liturgical celebrations and to discern how our spiritual life meets the challenge of responding to our vocation as vowed religious; how reconciliation, forgiveness and healing within the community, the church, and in society is attained; and how our Augustinian spirituality compels us to respond to the needs of the world in which we live. *“Since Eucharistic communion abundantly satisfies the hunger of fraternal charity, we must also satisfy the hunger of the human family, especially of those who hunger for peace, justice, solidarity, and the defense of human rights, and in particular the right to life” (Const. 93).* We are called to strengthen our Augustinian values and to analyze existing synodal structures within the Order (Councils, Chapters, Pastoral Teams, Finance Councils, etc.) to make them more effective and to live a more synodal style of Augustinian life. Community engagement in Chapters of Renewal will assist us to discover why our spirituality is of value in our fraternal life and in the work we are called to do in the world.

15. *“Spiritual communion is that which counts the most, and without it the sharing of life together in the same place is of little value” (Const. 28).* We encourage the major superior and counsel of each circumscription to nominate a friar(s) who serves the circumscription with the specific task of developing programs that contribute to nourishing spiritual communion among the friars in the circumscription, such that it leads to true service in the Order and in the Church. The Major Superior needs to be aware of instances when the demands of ministry on a friar or friars are excessive and jeopardize the conditions for a healthy balance among ministry, common life, and personal spirituality.

16. *“Gathered together as a community, the first service that we render to the Church and humanity as religious is witnessing to the experience of our encounter with God through his Word and the events of history” (Const. 80).* Highlighting our common baptism, since our vocations are not exclusive but complementary, we shall work to grow in communion among each other as brothers, with our sisters of active and contemplative life, and with our lay brothers and sisters. With special emphasis placed on how we give witness to our experience of our encounter with God, we applaud the work of the Augustinian Spirituality Institute (ISA) and encourage the ISA to evaluate its programs in a way that responds to the needs of the Order and the Church. Special attention will be given to the three-month course of Augustinian Spirituality in Rome as well as other formation programs with and for our contemplative nuns and our lay brothers and sisters throughout the Order.

B. APOSTOLATE AND EVANGELIZATION

*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit,
teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.
And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age. (Matthew 28: 19-20)*

17. In our parishes, sanctuaries, mission territories, and centers of education, we have a rich tradition of sharing the pastoral work of evangelization with women and men religious and laity. This strong cooperative tradition continues to accompany our friars in their various ministries and is appreciated by the local churches where we live and serve. The practice of sharing in ministry calls for a coordinated effort in offering formation in our Augustinian tradition. Pastoral ministry is effective when it is shared, in a synodal way of walking together,

making time and space for listening and dialogue, with our collaborators in all levels of administration and leadership. In some instances, this will require transitioning from a merely consultative role to one of shared discernment and decision making.

18. In many of our pastoral activities, the number of friars is decreasing, and this compels us to find new and creative ways to continue our Augustinian presence while facing the reality that soon we may not be physically present in these apostolates. We should reinforce our rich heritage in the pastoral works where our Augustinian presence is essential, to assure that our tradition continues even with a smaller number of friars. In our apostolates that are not experiencing a diminishment of number of friars, cooperating with others helps us to share our Augustinian charism. Circumscriptions where new opportunities for ministry are more abundant, will discover that serving together with religious communities and with lay men and women can help to create relationships that enrich our apostolic works.

19. Another challenge occurs when our apostolates become places where more time, resources, and energy are placed on maintenance and less time, resources, and energy dedicated to mission. Various criteria are used to evaluate whether we can begin, continue, or discontinue to serve in a particular ministry. The most important criteria are those that respond to the needs of the Church and the modern world. Along with this are the criteria of: financial sustainability for the friars to live and serve in the ministry, vocations, service to the poor, projected demographic changes, tradition, vicinity of other Augustinian ministries and communities.

20. *“Because apostolic activity is an expression of our total consecration to God and our way of living out the mystery of Christ, it likewise becomes a very important means of our sanctification. Accordingly, it must necessarily proceed from an intimate union with Christ and always be directed towards him”* (Const. 145). Each friar, in dialogue with his local community is invited to reflect on the nature and value of the pastoral works in which he serves. This reflection should include a consideration of the signs of the times, our charism as Augustinians, and the way in which the community members contribute to the proclamation of the Gospel. Each friar, together with his community, is asked to imagine ministries, community lifestyles and means for Augustinians to proclaim, in a new way, the Good News. They are also to evaluate in what way they collaborate with other religious and lay men and women in sharing in their pastoral works.

21. *“Our apostolic activity offers authentic witness to and service of the Kingdom of God when we ourselves share as our Lord did, in the concerns of the human family. We should take the necessary steps to acquire an adequate knowledge of the needs of this world and explore ways of manifesting solidarity with those in need”* (Const. 146). The apostolic activity of each member of the community is part of and contributes to the total apostolic activity of the entire community. An annual evaluation of the apostolic activity(ies) of the community members can assist in discerning the needs of the Church, the world, and the local community in which the friars live. *“No one ought to be so completely at leisure that in his leisure he takes no thought for serving his neighbor, nor should anyone be so fully active that he makes no room for the contemplation of God”* (City of God, XIX, 19).

22. *“Individual circumscriptions, or several together, should use all available means to meet more effectively the needs of the Church, including cooperation with other religious, with the diocesan clergy, with the laity, with volunteers and other associations. Moreover, it is advantageous that, with the permission and encouragement of the major superior, apostolic initiatives be carried out in keeping with the needs of each nation or region”* (Const. 147). The

situation of the Order, and of our world, impels the major superiors of each circumscription to address possible areas of collaboration with a common goal and effective participation in apostolic ministries with other circumscriptions to better respond to the needs of the Church and to develop the evangelizing dimension of our charism. To this end, and in conformity with Determination #20 of the GCO 2019, they are invited to strengthen and consolidate the regional organizations of major superiors of the Order. In addition, it is very important that, following the spirit of our Order and in search of its integral development, the agreements of inter-circumscription collaboration be known and endorsed by the Prior General.

23. *“As an ecclesial reality, the Order’s sense of mission is an essential part of her identity and vocation. It is thus that apostolic activity, by which we intend to preach the kingdom of Christ throughout the world and make all human beings partakers of his redemption, embraces our whole life, namely, prayer study and activity, in forms consistent with the nature and spirit of the Order” (Const. 144).* It is up to the major superiors to evaluate and assess the missionary activity of their own circumscription so that they are better informed about the preservation of our cultural heritage in these mission areas and the possible implementation of new forms of missionary service.

C. POVERTY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me. (Matthew 25:40)

24. The areas of poverty and social justice are closely related to each other and are addressed here as one theme. The way we are called to live our vow of evangelical poverty and to respond to needs of the vulnerable are interrelated. The ministry of helping our membership become more aware of peace and social justice education, at times, is seen as the work of one or two brothers. The ministry of peace and social justice is the work of all. We have gaps within the Order in areas of promotion of this ministry and especially in advocacy by leaders of circumscriptions. The education aspect of this ministry is a critical component of creating awareness among the membership of the Order, but also creating an awareness, and promoting activities, to the men, women, and youth we serve in our apostolates.

25. Pope Francis is clear in expressing his belief that proclaiming the Gospel message to the world means that the members of the Church must go out into the streets and encounter our brothers and sisters in their reality. We are called as Augustinians not merely to maintenance but to mission and to find prophetic ways of evangelization and ministry. At this time in our history, we are called to give special attention to how to respond to those baptized persons who, for various reasons, feel excluded from the Church. *The Church which “goes forth” is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice... An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people’s daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers thus take on the “smell of the sheep” and the sheep are willing to hear their voice (Evangelii Gaudium 24).*

26. The many themes that make up our prophetic response to issues of peace and social justice can be overwhelming. Sometimes we are prevented from being motivated to act because of not knowing where to begin, not knowing how to respond, and not having enough time or energy to invest in projects that are seen as tangential to our other ministerial commitments.

At other times we are prevented from being motivated to act because of a resistance to change a habit, attitude, or style of life to which we have become accustomed. As we work toward redesigning a fruitful model of Augustinian religious life, we each must examine, as a community and as individuals, our habitual activities, choices, and ministries in light of the Gospel call to follow the poor Christ as we care for our common home and its occupants, especially the least of our brothers and sisters.

27. *“We are obliged to give a coherent and prophetic witness to the preferential option for the poor, and make a serious effort to imitate Christ, showing that we are in solidarity with those who are materially poor and who must live on the margins of society. This prophetic option requires that we examine our way of life and make practical decisions regarding the use of our material goods, in order to clearly manifest our concrete solidarity with the victims of that injustice that arises from the social structures of sin” (Const. 73, Cf: Const. 64,65).* Our vow of poverty compels each of us to examine our use of natural resources and our attitude as consumers of goods in relation to our vocation. Making a list of actions that reflect our commitment to being prophetic witnesses to our preferential option for the poor can assist our communities and circumscriptions to discover practical ways in which we are in solidarity with the poor.

28. *“We are to bring to all our apostolic activities this option for the poor and marginalized of society, who are those most affected by human injustice. We are to establish active groups within our communities, among the faithful and among the students of our schools, not only to provide social assistance, but especially so that they can serve as agents of Augustinian social commitment” (Const. 184, c and d).* The commitment of one or two friars in a community to live simply or to be mindful of the environment and natural resources when making purchases or decisions about recycling, carbon footprint is a productive start. It can be even more productive and encouraging, however, if all members of the community make such commitments. The local chapter can be employed to examine and decide how the community will commit, or continue to commit, to areas of peace and social justice in the way they live in community and as they serve in the apostolate. *“Motivated by this social commitment of ours, we are to listen attentively to the concerns of the Church and of society, and offer assistance so that the questions which the groups among whom we work present to us may be more clearly identified and more easily resolved, such as: the defense of life, human rights, the situation of migrants, the dignity of women, the protection of youth, justice and peace, a more balanced economic order, the conservation of nature, etc.” (Const. 185).*

29. *“It is the duty of the community to provide for the friars whatever is necessary and fitting, according to the norms of the house and the province. But the accumulation and possession of money, as though it were one’s own, is entirely contrary to the vow of poverty and to the nature of the common life. Any payment received for work, therefore, and any gifts, including things other than money, truly belong to the community and are not to be considered personal, even when personal use of them is granted in particular cases” (Const. 67).* An evaluation of attitudes and practices of the friars towards the sharing of common goods, stipends, and salaries, as they relate to decisions regarding investment, purchases, employment, the apostolate, and the care of our common home can be useful in measuring our individual and communal progress in this area. As St. Augustine reminds us: *“I began to gather together brothers of good will, my companions in poverty, having nothing just like me, and imitating me. Just as I had sold my slender poor man’s property-and distributed the proceeds to the poor, those who wished to stay with me did the same, so that we might live on what we had in*

common. But what would be our really great and profitable common estate was God himself (Ser. 355, 2).

30. *“Our Order should witness to solidarity in the circles in which we find ourselves. For this reason, the Order commits itself in a permanent and concrete way to the poor and disadvantaged. Therefore, the Order has assumed a preferential option for the poor”* (Const. 183). The way in which we are living witnesses of our preferential option for the poor varies within our circumscriptions and among the circumscriptions. Communal and individual discernment of why it is valuable to be prophetic witnesses can assist each of us to discover how we can give such testimony.

D. VOCATIONS

The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. (Matthew 9:37-38)

31. It is evident within our Order that, with few exceptions, our sources of vocations lie in new geographical areas for the Order. Vocations in some areas are flourishing while in many countries where we live and minister, we are not attracting many new members. There are studies that evaluate the cultural, social, and religious realities which influence, in both positive and negative ways, a person’s response to a religious vocation. The results vary among the regions where the studies were conducted. We can learn from these results how best to respond to the reality in which we live and how to plan for the future in our particular regions and circumscriptions.

32. The Augustinian International Commission on Initial Formation and Vocational Promotion conducted an extensive survey in 2020-2021 with our formators and vocation promoters and their collaborators as well as with our candidates in initial formation. The Commission also conducted regional on-line encounters to evaluate and validate the information received. The results assist us in reviewing and redesigning how we respond to the current reality in each region and how to respond to existing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Some of the results were specific to particular regions or circumscriptions, others were more global.

33. Vocations is a topic that is frequently presented, discussed, and studied at our General Chapters and international gatherings. Personal and communal reflection and discernment on the topic of vocations to Augustinian religious life will continue to assist us in redesigning a fruitful model of religious life that responds to the sense of urgency of a communal and prophetic life. We need to ask the difficult questions of why Augustinian religious life in some regions and circumscriptions is not as attractive an option as it used to be. Our discernment must reflect on the gospel witness we give in our regions and in the world. We must discern the factors that influence people today in making life choices and decisions. Some factors which influence one’s discernment to respond to a vocation to religious life are: society, family, friends, social media, education, authentic witness of the friars, economic security, scandalous or abusive behavior of priests and religious, the witness of the Pope, local priests, brothers, sisters and bishops, Catholic church doctrine, and the opportunity to give witness to the Gospel. Given the complexities of these factors, it is not easy to arrive at a conclusion that is valid for all. This complexity, however, should not prevent us from the necessary process of discernment.

34. *“The friars should remember that all are obliged to promote vocations to Augustinian religious life, as a specific element of the pastoral mission which the Order exercises in the Church” (Const. 187).* Vocational promotion is not the work of a single person. The friars in every circumscription of the Order are reminded and encouraged to dedicate time each day to pray for new vocations to the religious and ordained life. They are to examine and evaluate how they give an authentic example of vowed religious life that attracts others to follow the call of Christ as an Augustinian. *“Give them an example by your own good lives; and then God who has been with you will be with them as well” (En Ps 50.1).* They are encouraged to develop creative ways of engaging with young people with the specific purpose of sustaining a culture of vocations within the pastoral activity in which they serve the people of God.

35. *“Unceasing prayer, the example of one’s life and catechesis as well as activity in the vineyard of the Lord, constitute the finest recommendation for our Order and the most appealing invitation to embrace Augustinian life” (Const. 187).* A community that prays for vocations, welcomes discerners, and gives authentic witness to our vocation to fraternal life as Augustinians contributes in a significant way to supporting a culture of vocations. For this reason, the testimony that we give with our lives, creates an attractive option for those discerning a vocation to the religious or ordained life. *“How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!” (Psalm 132/133:1)* Thus, the vocation team of each circumscription or its vocation promoter, together with the local vocation promoters, are encouraged to develop a program which nourishes a culture of vocation to the Augustinian religious life. In this way we open our communities so that we can share our Augustinian way of life as it becomes more visible in our apostolates.

36. *“The first care of the major superior shall be the apostolate of vocations, and he shall make the greatest effort that the candidates receive a suitable education according to the mind of the Church and the Order” (Const. 377).* The major superior of each circumscription can best assist the Vocation Promotor of his circumscription by ensuring that he receives appropriate formation in vocational accompaniment prior to assuming this ministry. Vocational promotion needs to be a priority over other commitments the friar may have. Certain circumscriptions may also examine the benefits of creating teams of vocational promoters.

37. *“For the love of the charism we have received, and so that our Order may properly continue its own mission in the Church, we should not only gladly accept those who feel themselves called by God and ask to be admitted to the Order, but we should also promote vocations in every place where the Order is active” (Const. 186).* The International Commission for Vocation Promotion and Initial Formation should maintain contact with those responsible for Vocation Promotion in the circumscriptions and accompany them in their programs.

E. INITIAL FORMATION

He began to teach them many things. (Mark 6:34)

38. *“Augustinian formation not only seeks to strengthen our baptismal commitment and develop the following of Christ on the path of consecrated life, but seeks to do so specifically according to our Augustinian charism, which has as a point of reference both the example and teaching of St. Augustine and builds upon a sound Augustinian tradition” (Ratio Institutionis, 9).* The Plan of Augustinian Formation (*Ratio Institutionis*), approved at the Ordinary General Chapter 2019, is a resource supported by Sacred Scripture, the *Rule* and *Constitutions* of the

Order, the writings of Saint Augustine, the written and lived tradition of the Order, and universal Church documents. It provides an outline and structure upon which the *Particular Plans of Formation* for each circumscription are to be built. The content of the *Ratio Institutionis* is shared throughout the Order. There are, however, distinct details pertaining to the unique circumstances within circumscriptions that must be addressed at the local level. Influenced by regional and local realities, some of the challenges which formation programs are currently facing are:

- i) insufficient resources (human, financial and structural) to effectively respond to number of potential candidates;
- ii) in some circumscriptions small numbers of candidates or no *formandi* in particular stages threaten continuity in the formation process;
- iii) language differences present difficulties for joint programs of formation among circumscriptions;
- iv) lack of preparation or ongoing training for formators and members of the formation teams.

39. “A true and complete formation of our candidates cannot be suitably carried out without the attentive and untiring cooperation of the entire Augustinian family, and especially of that community which makes up the house of formation. This cooperation will be particularly evident through the good example of each of the friars” (Const. 212). A reading of the *Ratio Institutionis* and the *Particular Plan of Formation* for one’s circumscription can help every friar to be educated in the process of initial formation of the Order.

40. “Apostolic activity flows from Augustinian religious life. Thus, candidates are to be initiated into pastoral activity and to participate gradually in carrying out ecclesial activities and social responsibilities, mindful always that formation for these things in the Order requires a concern for the common life” (Const. 197). The members of each local community can dedicate time in a house chapter to discuss and evaluate that which the local chapter can offer our brothers in their pastoral formation. (i.e., Opportunities of prayer and recollection, recreation, education, pastoral opportunities, etc.).

41. “So that they may suitably carry out their duties, formators are to be prepared with adequate spiritual, affective, pedagogical and psychological formation, acquired insofar as possible, in a specialized institute” (Const. 215). The major superior of each circumscription can best assist the new director of initial formation by ensuring that he receives appropriate training prior to assuming his ministry in the level of formation to which he will be assigned. Friars who participate as part of the formation team of a house of formation should also receive training regarding the *Ratio Institutionis* and the expectations and commitments of being on the formation team. “Let us not be too proud to learn what has to be learned with the help of other people, and let those of us by whom others are taught pass on what we have received” (*de doc. chr. Prologue*, 5).

42. Collaborative inter-circumscriptional houses of formation are fundamental, especially in those circumscriptions where the number of *formandi* is small. In developing their *Particular Plan of Formation*, each circumscription is invited to evaluate all aspects of the formation program including the possibilities of collaborating with other circumscriptions or regions. When there are fewer than three novices prepared to enter the novitiate in any given year, efforts must be made to search for alternative solutions (Cf: Const. 206).

43. “In as much as the formation of candidates aims at an integral development of the person, it must be one that is human, Christian, affective, intellectual, religious and Augustinian, as well as apostolic and pastoral. These various aspects complement one another and should be attended to in a greater or lesser degree as age and maturity demand” (Const. 192). The International Commission for Vocation Promotion and Initial Formation shall maintain a database of the *Particular Plan of Formation* for all the circumscriptions. The Commission will also assist those circumscriptions that are having difficulty formulating their *Particular Plan of Formation*. The Commission will also conduct programs of cooperation among formators and enable Augustinian formation of formators.

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For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he may grant you in accord with the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner self, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:14-19)