

Reflection Session
PCO VII
“Our Fraternal Life in Minority”
Assisi 2004

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Plenary councils of the Order (PCO) are held periodically and often once during each 6-year period between General Chapters. They began after the Capuchin renewal that followed Vatican II as a way to help the General Minister govern the Order and have developed into major chapters that explore a single theme in greater detail. To date, there have been seven PCOs since Vatican II.

A PCO is different from the normal General Chapter of the Order that occurs each six years to elect a General Minister and Definitory, and to conduct business of the Order. The General Chapter is the highest authority in the Order. PCOs have no authority, but exercise influence through the convincing logic of its documents.

PCO VII was on “Our Fraternal Life in Minority.” It produced a document of 55 propositions that received support from the majority of brothers who were capitulars of the PCO. There is no necessary logic or order to the 55 propositions; each one was meant to stand on its own. However, the propositions obviously have strong relationships with various other propositions.

To prepare for our reflection, print and read the propositions from PCO VII, which are found at: http://www.db.ofmcap.org/ofmcap/allegati/2573/proposizioni_viicpo-en.pdf

While or after reading the document, attempt to answer in writing as many of the following questions as possible. When we gather for our reflection on this topic, we will have a simple discussion, using our reflections and answers. The discussion will be quite free, though the leader might gently try to keep us on-topic when necessary or push us to greater depth of reflection.

Here are the questions to answer after reading the document, but before our reflection session:

1. How do you define Franciscan minority and why were/are you attracted to it?
2. When talking about spirituality, we are used to going back to Jesus in the Gospels as a source. But PCO VII begins with the Trinity as a way to understand Franciscan minority (Proposition #1)! What do you make of this? How does it affect your appreciation of Franciscan minority?
3. The self-emptying of Jesus is presented as another example of divine humility in proposition #2. How does this example of Jesus help you shape your vision of Franciscan minority?
4. What impact do/can you see minority having on the Capuchin experience of priesthood?
5. Proposition #4 on Franciscan freedom was viewed by many at PCO VII as a core proposition that describes minority as a means to achieving many of our Christian and Franciscan goals. How can you experience minority as “freedom”?
6. How can minority direct Capuchins to work for justice in the world?
7. What is the role of leadership in a group defined by minority?
8. What about minority frightens you?
9. How are poverty and minority related in your personal experience?
10. How do you envision and practice a Franciscan use of power.