



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS AT THE GENERAL CHAPTER
OF THE ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR CAPUCHIN**

Clementine Hall

Friday, 14 September

2018 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Extemporaneous speech of the Holy Father Prepared speech of the Holy
Father

EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEECH OF THE HOLY FATHER

There is a prepared speech here, but it is too formal to share with you Capuchins; it will be consigned to the Father General.... Here it is, this is the official one. But I prefer to speak to you this way, from the heart. I wish you [turning to the newly elected General Minister, Br Roberto Genuin] the best: you are the fourth General I have met. First I met Flavio Carraro, with whom we were associates in the 1994 Synod; then, John Corriveau, who robbed us of a good Capuchin in Argentina to make him a counsellor, but then I vindicated myself and he was made bishop *[laughter]*. Then Mauro [Jöhri], who, as a good Swiss, brought things forward with good sense — *good* sense —, with a sense of concreteness, of reality; and, as with all those who are able to speak languages but also dialects, he is one who gets into the details of life. And now you, the fourth. I wish you the best [to him and to the new counsellors].

This morning I was thinking about you. There is a word you said in your discourse: first of all Capuchins are “friars of the people”: it is one of your traits. Closeness to the people. Being neighbours to the People of God, neighbours. And closeness gives us that science of concreteness, that wisdom — it is more than a science: it is wisdom. Closeness to everyone, but above all to the smallest, the most discarded, the most desperate. And also to those who have distanced themselves. I think of Fra Christopher *[in “The Betrothed”]*, of ‘your’ Fra Christopher. Closeness: I would like this word to stay with you, as a programme. Closeness to the people. Because the people have great respect for the Franciscan habit. Cardinal Quarracino once told me that, in Argentina, at times some ‘anti-clericals’ would say a swear word to a priest, but a Franciscan habit was never, ever insulted, because it is a grace. And you Capuchins have this closeness: preserve it. Always be close to the people. Because you are friars of the people.

Recently, in [Dublin,] Ireland, I saw your work with the most discarded and I was moved. It is a beautiful thing that the Superior of that house said, the elderly founder. He said: "Here we do not ask where you come from, who you are: you are a child of God". This is one of the traits. To really understand the persons, by 'smell', unconditionally. Come in, then we will see. Closeness is your charism. Preserve it. Then, another thing typical of Capuchins: you are men capable of resolving conflicts, of making peace, with that wisdom that comes precisely from closeness; and above all to make peace in consciences. That 'here we do not ask, we listen', that I said of that Irish Capuchin, you exercise a great deal in the Sacrament of Confession and Penance. You are men of reconciliation. I remember your church in Buenos Aires: so many people, from all over the city, would go to make confession there. Because these men listen to you, smile at you, do not ask you things, and forgive you. This does not mean being 'over-indulgent', no. This is the wisdom of reconciliation. Preserve the apostolate of confession, of forgiveness: it is one of the most beautiful things you have, to reconcile people. Both in the sacrament and in families: reconcile, reconcile. It requires patience for this, not words, few words, but closeness and patience.

Then, another thing that I have seen in your life: simple prayer. You are men of prayer, but simple. A face-to-face prayer with the Lord, with Our Lady, with the Saints.... Preserve this simplicity in prayer. Pray a lot, but with this simplicity. Men of peace, of simple prayer, men of the people, men of reconciliation. This is how the Church wants you to be: preserve this. And with that freedom and simplicity that is precisely your charism.

I thank you for all that you do for the Church. I thank you very much. Continue this way. Continue this way, '*alla cappuccina*' [*Capuchin style*]... [*laughter*] Thank you!

PREPARED SPEECH OF THE HOLY FATHER

Dear Friars Minor Capuchin!

I am pleased about this encounter, which allows me to greet you personally on the occasion of your General Chapter. I thank the new General Minister, Br Roberto Genuin, expressing wishes for good work to him and his Council. In these days of study and fraternal discussion, you have set your attention on the theme "*Learn from me ... and you will find*" (cf. Mt 11:29), in order to identify apostolic and formative perspectives to offer to your confreres spread throughout the world. Indeed, in addition to the election of the new government of your Fraternity, you have dedicated ample space to the *Ratio Formationis Ordinis*, an important document to guide the consecrated person in the heart of the Gospel, which is Jesus' form of life spent totally for God and for brothers and sisters, especially the least and the marginalized.

In the footsteps of the Divine Master and following the example of Saint Francis who, in meeting lepers, learned humility and service, strive to live relationships and religious activities in gratuity,

humility and weakness. In this way you can realize with tangible daily gestures the 'minority' that characterizes Francis' followers. It is a precious gift of great necessity for the Church and for the humanity of our time. This is how the Lord acts: he does things simply. Humility and simplicity are God's ways; and this is the way that we Christians are all called to assume in our life and in our mission. True greatness is making ourselves small and servants.

With this minority in heart and in lifestyle, you give your contribution to the Church's great task of evangelization. You do so in generously bringing the apostolate forward, in direct contact with different peoples and cultures, especially with many who are poor and suffering. I encourage you in this effort, which in the Chapter you have shared at the international level, exhorting you not to lose heart in the face of difficulties, including the decrease in the number of friars in certain areas, but to renew each day your trust and hope in the support of God's grace. May the joy of the Gospel, which irresistibly fascinated the *Poverello* of Assisi, be the source of your strength and your steadfastness, so that with reference to the Word of Jesus everything appears under a new light, that of God's providential love. Each time we draw from the wellspring to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new paths appear, new pastoral approaches and creative methods relevant to current circumstances.

Our time shows the signs of clear spiritual and moral discomfort, due to the loss of certain and comforting references of faith. What great need people have today to be welcomed, listened to, illuminated with love! And what great tradition you Capuchins have of simple closeness to people, of participating in concrete issues, of spiritual meeting and of administering the Sacrament of Reconciliation! Do not fail to be teachers of prayer, to cultivate robust spirituality, which communicates to all the call of the 'things in heaven'.

In this you will be more persuasive if your communities and your structures also express sobriety and parsimony, the visible sign of the primacy of God and of his Spirit to which consecrated people commit themselves to bear clear witness. In this perspective, even the transparent and professional management of economic resources is the image of a true family that walks in co-responsibility and solidarity among its members and with the poor. Another important aspect of the life of your communities is unity and community, which are achieved by dedicating ample space to listening and dialogue in order to strengthen fraternal discernment.

The history of your Order is rich with many courageous witnesses to Christ and to the Gospel, many of whom have been proclaimed Saints and Blesseds. Their holiness confirms the fruitfulness of your charism and shows the signs of your identity: total consecration to God unto martyrdom, where required, a simple life among the people, sensitivity to the poor, spiritual accompaniment as closeness, and the humility that allows for welcoming everyone. In following your quintessential way of life, may you walk animated by renewed zeal so as to impel you, with prophetic freedom and wise discernment, on courageous apostolic paths and missionary frontiers, always cultivating cooperation with the Bishops and other members of the ecclesial Community.

Your charismatic identity, enriched by the cultural variety of your religious Family, is valid now more than ever, and is an attractive proposal for many young people in the world, who are in search of authenticity and the essential. May fraternity shine as a qualifying element of your consecrated life, distancing from you every elitist attitude, urging you to always seek encounter among yourselves and with everyone, especially with those thirsty for the merciful love that only Christ can offer us.

May the Lord fill you with his graces and, in the spirit of Saint Francis, may you continue, happy and secure, always in the grateful awareness of belonging to the holy faithful People of God and to serve Him with humility. May the Apostolic Blessing, which I wholeheartedly impart to you, Chapter Fathers, and to your entire Order, accompany you. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!