

MINISTER GENERALIS
ORDINIS FRATRUM MINORUM CONVENTUALIUM

Prot. N. 555/2020

Rome, July 14, 2020

Subject: Sabbatical Period - General Norms (see Constitutions, art. 181, §§ 1-2)

Dear brothers,
Peace be with you!

The 2018 Extraordinary General Chapter in Nemi and the 2019 Ordinary General Chapter in Assisi - Collevalenza, provided the Order with updated and revised legislation, namely, the Constitutions and the General Statutes. All Provinces and Custodies are now required to update and revise their Statutes, so that they are in conformity with the proper law of the Order.

The Constitutions, art. 7, § 4 stipulate that before Provincial Statutes are promulgated they are to be sent promptly to the Minister General who, with his Definitory, “verifies and declares their conformity to the proper law of the Order.”

One of the issues that must be regulated by the Provincial or Custodial Statutes is the question of the sabbatical period. In fact, article 181, § 2 of the Constitutions reads:

§2. The Minister or Custos, with the consent of his Definitory, may grant to the friars who reasonably request it a period of sabbatical. Sabbatical policies are to be determined in Provincial and Custodial Statutes.

In order for the government of the Order to declare that the “policies” regarding the sabbatical period, which are to be contained in the revised Provincial or Custodial Statutes, are in conformity to the proper law of the Order, it is necessary to provide some clarification on this matter.

The sabbatical period is described in *Franciscan Discipleship*. Since the General Chapter of 2019 did not approve the new text, the 2007 Franciscan Discipleship remains in effect. Two difficulties arise here. First, the 2007 Franciscan Discipleship is a text that is to be revised, according to the mandate of the General Chapter of 2019 (cf. *Approved Motions*, 4.1). Second, the description of the sabbatical contained there is no longer in accordance with the existing law.

All this said,

- by virtue of the authority conferred by law upon the Minister General, in keeping with the norms of the CIC, can. 622, and the Constitutions, art. 203, according to the CIC, can. 31, § 1;
- in order to provide the Provinces and Custodies the precise indications and legal instruments they need to determine the policies for granting a sabbatical period (cf. *Constitutions*, art. 181, § 2);
- having obtained the positive opinion of the General Definitory, given on July 4, 2020, with this letter, I hereby issue the following Decree:

DECREE


General Norms Regarding the Sabbatical Period (cf. *Constitutions*, art. 181, § 2):

- a) For friars, a sabbatical period is one of the "adequate means at their disposal for their spiritual growth and for staying current with cultural change" (cf. *Constitutions*, art. 181, 1). A sabbatical is offered to a friar at a significant moment in his life, such as his jubilee of solemn profession (and/or priestly ordination), that is, every twenty-five years. It may also be offered in exceptional cases, for example: after a long period of Mission *ad gentes* or service as a Major Superior, etc. Nevertheless, such cases are to be examined in discernment with the friar's Minister Provincial/Custos;
- b) The sabbatical period is *to be lived normally inside a friary of the Order*. Otherwise, for example, in the case of studies undertaken at an educational institution which does not belong to our Order, the friar must scrupulously follow the norms for absence from the religious house, for a period of not more than one year, once in his lifetime (extra domum ex CIC, can. 665, 1), or he must follow the norms for an *extra claustra* indulgence of not more than three years, even if those years are non-consecutive (ex CIC, can. 686, 1);
- c) the *maximum sabbatical period* may not exceed twelve months;
- d) the *purposes and the program* of the sabbatical period must be proposed by the applicant, and subsequently agreed upon and approved by the Major Superior (can. 620);
- e) the *expenses* for the sabbatical period are to be detailed and agreed upon in advance with the major Superior, who must approve them with his Definitory according to the financial means of the Province or Custody;
- f) During the sabbatical period, the friar is absolutely *forbidden to take on ecclesiastical offices or posts*, even temporarily, such as: pastor, parish vicar, chaplain, teacher, etc.;
- g) The granting of a sabbatical period, under the above conditions, is the responsibility of the Minister Provincial or Provincial Custos, with the consent of his Definitory, by means of a *Decree* through which the interested party is notified, which specifies, at least in summary form, the terms indicated above. If necessary, a specific contract can be attached to this document, in analogy with the provisions of similar cases (cf. *General Statutes* 47 §5).


The norms established by this Decree must be taken into consideration during the revision of the Provincial or Custodial Statutes, in order for those Statutes to be declared in conformity with the proper law of the Order (see *Constitutions*, art. 7, § 4).

This Executive General Decree goes into effect today, July 14, 2020.

In faith,


Friar Tomasz Szyńczak
Secretary general




Friar Carlos A. Trovarelli
Minister General