

Reflection questions to animate a community discussion of chapter two of our new Constitutions

17.2 states, “we must renew ourselves constantly if we wish to give clear testimony” to our Capuchin way of life. What leads to the need for renewal in your personal life and our shared community life? What have been the most effective means of renewal during your Capuchin life?

17.3 strongly states that every friar and every community needs to promote vocations. How do you and your community do that in an ongoing way? 17.4 encourages us to select ministries that promotes vocations. How effectively does our newest pastoral plan do this?

The previous version of our Constitutions defined initial formation as beginning with reception into postulancy and ending with perpetual profession. That seemed to assure that initial formation would be the same for all the brothers, cleric and lay. Perhaps the biggest change in chapter 2 in the latest version is that initial formation is now defined as lasting through ministry formation (23.4). One purpose of the change was to clearly assert that ministry is part of our vocation and that each of us needs to be formed for ministry to be a Capuchin. How might this challenge our province?

The same change seems to make a very subtle claim on our ongoing formation. Before, initial formation might have been viewed more as for our life, excluding ministry. If ongoing formation follows initial formation, ministry formation might not have seemed too important in that ongoing process. Now that ministry formation is clearly part of initial formation, it also is clearly part of ongoing formation. How do you continue your ministry formation? Should the province establish expectations for ongoing formation for ministry? Our sabbaticals are often for “personal renewal.” Should they more explicitly contain an element that develops or deepens ministry skills (Cf. 41.3)?

Formation is the work of the Holy Spirit (24.1). Does your initial or ongoing formation show the energy of the Spirit? Hopefully, declaring this the work of the spirit does not lead us to lay back and do nothing!

Our province went a long time with few new vocations. How has the recent renaissance of vocations to our province affected your own vocation? How do you want to contribute to the formation of our new members?

The last two sentences of Chapter two are very challenging for everyone. How do you stack up? “3. Let us also beware, brothers, of apostasy of the heart, which occurs when, because of tepidity, someone hides a worldly heart beneath a religious exterior, abandons the spirit and love of his vocation, and yields to a worldly spirit of pride and sensuality.

Remembering the apostle's admonition: “Do not be conformed to this world”, let us, rather, avoid whatever savours of sin and weakens religious life.

4. Therefore, now that we have left the world, let us strive to desire nothing else, to wish for nothing else, to take pleasure in nothing else, than to follow the Spirit of the Lord and His holy power at work in us and to please Him always, so that we may truly be brothers, poor, meek, thirsting for holiness, merciful and clean of heart, men, in fact, through whom the world may know the peace and goodness of God” (44.3+4).