

AD SERVITIUM ET COMUNEM UTILITATEM FRATRUM

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The concept of government of the fraternity according to the mind of Saint Francis

Saint Francis of Assisi envisaged a new form of government in the Order of friars Minor. In a time when the prevailing model was the monastic and Benedictine model of the abbot or prior as father and head of the community of monks, Francis introduced the figure of the minister and servant of the fraternity of brothers, calling him by various names, like *minister*, *custos*, *guardianus*.

The *Earlier Rule* of 1221 is clear about the office of government in the Franciscan Order: “No one is to be called prior, but let everyone in general be called friars minor. And let one wash the feet of the other.” (cfr. Jn 13,4)¹

The model of government presented by Francis to the brothers is that of Christ who washes the feet of the disciples, thus accomplishing the duty of a slave and servant toward his master. The idea of serving is aptly expressed by the terms *minister et servus*,² with which Francis indicated the office of those who were to govern the fraternity. The minister had the duty to be the *custos*,³ or custodian of the brothers, or, to use another term dear to Francis, that of being the *guardianus*,⁴ a term denoting the same meaning.

¹ *RegNB* 6,3: “Et nullus vocetur prior, sed generaliter omnes vocentur fratres minores. Et alter alterius lavet pedes (cfr. Joa 13,14)”. FRANCESCO D’ASSISI, *Scritti*, Edizione critica a cura di C. Paolazzi, Frati Editori di Quaracchi, Fondazione Collegio S. Bonaventura, Grottaferrata 2009, 252.

² The terms *minister et servus* recur in *RegB* 10,6 (“nam ita debet esse, quod ministri sint servi omnium fratrum”); *RegNB* 4,6 (“Et recordentur ministri et servi quod dicit Dominus: *Non veni ministrari, sed ministrare* (Mt 20,28), et quod commissa est eis cura animarum fratrum, de quibus, si aliquid perderetur propter eorum culpam et malum exemplum, in die iudicii oportebit eos reddere rationem (cfr. Mt 12,36) coram Domino Jesu Christo”). FRANCESCO D’ASSISI, *Scritti*, 334, 248.

³ The term *custos* recurs in *EpCust I*,1 (“Universis custodibus fratrum minorum”); *EpCust II*,1 (“Universis custodibus fratrum minorum”); *EpMin* 16-17 (“Similiter per obedientiam teneantur eum mittere custodi suo cum socio. Ipse custos misericorditer provideat ei, sicut ipse vellet provideri sibi, si in consimili casu esset”); *EpOrd* 47 (“Ego frater Franciscus, homo inutilis et indigna creatura Domini Dei, dico per Dominum Jesum Christum fratri Helie ministro totius religionis nostre et omnibus generalibus ministris, qui post eum erunt, et ceteris custodibus et guardianis fratrum, qui sunt et erunt, ut hoc scriptum apud se habeant, operentur et studiose reponant”); *RegB* 8,4-5 (“Et si aliquo tempore appareret universtitati ministrorum provincialium et custodum, predictum ministrum non esse sufficientem ad servitium et comunem utilitatem fratrum, teneantur predicti fratres, quibus electio data est, in nomine Domini alium sibi eligere in custodem. Post capitulum vero Pentecostes ministri et custodes possint singuli, si voluerint et eis expedire videbitur, eodem anno in suis custodiis semel fratres suos ad capitulum convocare”); *Test* 31-32 (“Et qui inventi essent quod non facerent officium secundum Regulam et vellent alio modo variare, aut non essent catholici, omnes fratres ubicumque sunt per obedientiam teneantur quod ubicumque invenerint aliquem ipsorum, proximiori custodi illius loci ubi ipsum invenerint debeant representare. Et custos firmiter teneatur per obedientiam ipsum fortiter custodire sicuti hominem in vinculis die noctumque, ita quod non possit eripi de manibus euis, donec propria sua persona ipsum representet in manibus suis ministris”). The terms *minister et custos* recur in *EpOrd* 2 (“Reverendis et multum diligendis fratribus universis, fratri H[elie] generali ministro religionis minorum fratrum domino suo, et ceteris ministris generalibus qui post

The art of government is interpreted by Francis as being a *ministerium fratrum*, a ministry to the brothers. In his writings, besides the texts we have already quoted in the notes, Francis refers to the *minister* of the brothers in other writings.⁵

The first duty of the minister is that of visiting the brothers. “Let the brothers who are the ministers and servants of the others visit and admonish their brothers and humbly and charitably correct them, not commanding them anything that is against their soul and our rule.”⁶ On their part the brothers are to show respect and obedience to their ministers. “Let the brothers who are subject, however, remember that, for God’s sake, they have renounced their own wills. Therefore, I strictly command them to obey their ministers in everything they have promised the Lord to observe and which is not against their soul or

eum erunt, et omnibus ministris et custodibus...”); *RegB* 4,2 (“Tamen pro necessitatibus infirmorum et aliis fratribus induendis, per amicos spirituales ministri tantum et custodes sollicitam curam gerant secundum loca et tempora et frigidam regionem, sicut necessitati viderint expedire”); *RegB* 8,2 (“Quo decedente, electio successoris fiat a ministris provincialibus et custodibus in capitulo Pentecostes, in quo provinciales ministri teneantur semper insimul convenire, ubicumque a generali ministro fuerit constitutum”); *RegB* 4-5 (“Et si aliquo tempore appareret universitati ministrorum provincialium et custodum, predictum minister non esse sufficientem ad servitium et comunem utilitatem fratrum, teneantur predicti fratres, quibus electio data est, in nomine Domini alium sibi eligere in custodem. Post capitulum vero Pentecostes ministri et custodes possint singuli, si voluerint et eis expedire videbitur, eodem anno in suis custodiis semel fratres suos ad capitulum convocare”); *RegEr* 9 (“Et isti filii non loquantur cum aliqua persona nisi cum matribus suis et cum ministro et custode suo, quando placuerit eos visitare cum benedictione Domini Dei”); *Test* 35 (“Et generalis minister et omnes alii ministri et custodes per obedientiam teneantur in istis verbis non addere vel minuire”). FRANCESCO D’ASSISI, *Scritti*, 146, 154, 166, 220, 332, 400, 402, 210, 328, 332, 344, 402.

⁴ The term *guardianus* recurs in *EpMin* 12 (“Et istud denuties guardianis”); *EpMin* 14 (“Si quis fratrum instigante inimico mortaliter peccaverit, per obedientiam teneatur recurrere ad guardianum suum”); *EpOrd* 47 (“Ego frater Franciscus, homo inutilis et indigna creatura Domini Dei, dico per Dominum Jesum Christum fratri Helie ministro totius religionis nostre et omnibus generalibus ministris, qui post eum erunt, et ceteris custodibus et guardianis fratrum, qui sunt et erunt, ut hoc scriptum apud se habeant, operentur et studiose reponant”); *Test* 27 (“Et firmiter volo obedire ministro generali huius fraternitatis et alio guardiano quem sibi placuerit michi dare”); *Test* 30 (“Et omnes alii fratres teneantur ita obedire guardianis suis et facere officium secundum Regulam”). FRANCESCO D’ASSISI, *Scritti*, 164, 220, 400.

⁵ The term *minister* by its own is found in *EpMin* 1 (“Fratri [N.] ministro, Dominus te benedicat”); *RegB* 12,1-3 (“Quicumque fratrum divina inspiratione voluerint ire inter saracenos et alios infideles, petant inde licentiam a suis ministris provincialibus. Ministri vero nullis eundi licentiam tribuant, nisi eis quos viderint esse idoneos ad mittandum. Ad hec per obedientiam iniungo ministris, ut petant a domino papa unum de sancte Romane Ecclesie cardinalibus, qui sit gubernator, protector et corrector istius fraternitatis”); *RegNB* 5,3-14 (“Verumtamen omnes fratres qui sunt sub ministris et servis, facta ministrorum et servorum considerent rationabiliter et diligenter, et si viderint aliquem illorum carnaliter et non spiritualiter ambulare pro rectitudine vite nostre, post tertiam admonitionem, si non se emendaverit, in capitulo Pentecostes renuntient ministro et servo totius fraternitatis, nulla contradictione impediende. Si vero inter fratres, ubicumque sint, fuerint aliquis frater volens carnaliter et non spiritualiter ambulare, fratres, cum quibus est, moneant eum et instruant et corripiant humiliter et diligenter. Quod si ille post tertiam admonitionem noluerit se emendare, quam citius possunt, mittant eum vel significant suo ministro et servo, qui minister et servus de eo faciat sicut sibi secundum Deum melius videbitur expedire”). FRANCESCO D’ASSISI, *Scritti*, 164, 336, 338, 248, 250.

⁶ *RegB* 10,1: “Fratres qui sunt ministri et servi aliorum fratrum, visitent et moneant fratres suos et humiliter et caritative corrigan eos, non precipientes eis aliquid quod sit contra animam suam et Regulam nostram.” FRANCESCO D’ASSISI, *Scritti*, 334. English text in FRANCIS OF ASSISI, *Early Documents*, Vol. 1 (FAED I), Edited by R.J. Armstrong, J.A. Wayne Hellmann, W.J. Short, New City Press, New York – London – Manila 2003⁴, 105.

our Rule.”⁷ The reference to ministers is to be taken normally as applying to the general minister of the Order. However, in many instances the same reference could be applied to the provincial ministers, who were obviously closer to the brothers living within the territories falling under their jurisdiction.

The minister then has the duty of taking spiritual care of the brothers. He is to supervise over the prudence of granting the permission of preaching to the brothers. “Let no brother preach contrary to the rite and practice of the Church or without the permission of his minister. Let the minister be careful of granting it without discernment to anyone.”⁸

In the case of brothers who find it difficult to observe the Rule in a spiritual way, Francis lays down the procedure to be followed by the minister. “Wherever the brothers may be who know and feel they cannot observe the Rule spiritually, they can and should have recourse to their ministers. Let the ministers, moreover, receive them charitably and kindly and have such familiarity with them that these same brothers may speak and deal with them as masters with their servants, for so it must be that the ministers are the servants of all the brothers.”⁹

The minister also has the duty of discerning the opportunity of sending brothers “among the Saracens and other non-believers”, taking care to send those brothers who are really worthy of facing such a challenge.¹⁰

On the part of the friars obedience to their ministers means that they are to believe that God works through the same ministers for their own good, even when they personally are aware of a better way in which they can serve the Lord or of a better spiritual benefit that they can receive. A case of this kind is echoed in *Admonition 3*, entitled “Perfect Obedience”: “That person who offers himself totally to obedience in the hands of his prelate leaves all that he possesses and loses his body [...] And should a subject see that some things might be better and more useful for his soul than what a prelate commands, let him willingly offer such things to God as a sacrifice; and, instead,

⁷ *RegB* 10,2-3: “Fratres vero qui sunt subditi, recordentur quod propter Deum abnegaverunt proprias voluntates. Unde firmiter precipio eis, ut obediant suis ministris in omnibus que promiserunt Domino observare et non sunt contraria anime et Regule nostre.” FRANCESCO D’ASSISI, *Scritti*, 334. English text in FAED I, 105.

⁸ *RegNB* 17,1-2: “Nullus fratrum predicet contra formam et institutionem sancte Ecclesie et nisi concessum sibi fuerit a ministro suo. Caveat vero sibi minister ne alicui indiscrete concedat”. FRANCESCO D’ASSISI, *Scritti*, 268. English text in FAED I, 75.

⁹ *RegB* 10,4-6: “Et ubicumque sunt fratres, qui scirent et cognoscerent se non posse Regulam spiritualiter observare, ad suos ministros debeant et possint recurrere. Ministri vero caritative et benigne eos recipiant et tantam familiaritatem habeant circa ipsos, ut dicere possint eis et facere sicut domini servis suis; nam ita debet esse, quod ministri sint servi omnium fratrum.” FRANCESCO D’ASSISI, *Scritti*, 334. English text in FAED I, 105.

¹⁰ *RegB* 12,1-2: “Quicumque fratrum divina inspiratione voluerint ire inter saracenos et alios infideles, petant inde licentiam a suis ministris provincialibus. Ministri vero nullis eundi licentiam tribuant, nisi eis quos viderint esse idoneos ad mittendum.” FRANCESCO D’ASSISI, *Scritti*, 336. 338. English text in FAED I, 106. The *RegNB* 16,3-4, which is the first document in the Order and in the Church legislating the practice for sending missionaries among “Saracens and other non-believers”, states: “Unde quicumque fratrum divina inspiratione voluerint ire inter saracenos et alios infideles, vadant de licentia sui ministri et servi. Minister vero det eis licentiam et non contradicat, si viderit eos esse idoneos ad mittendum; nam tenebitur Domino reddere rationem (cfr. Lc 16,2), si in hoc vel aliis processerit indiscrete.” FRANCESCO D’ASSISI, *Scritti*, 264. 266. English text in FAED I, 74.

let him earnestly strive to fulfill the prelate's wishes. For this is loving obedience because it pleases God and neighbour."¹¹

In the *Admonitions* Francis uses the term *praelatus* to refer to the office of governance in the Order. The Latin term was typical in medieval ecclesiastical environments, and shows a kind of influence of monastic literature on the *Admonitions*.¹² Francis gives it a new meaning when he applies it to the office of governing in the Order. The best example of this novelty is found in *Admonition 4*: "Let those who are placed over others boast about their prelacy as much as they would if they were assigned the duty of washing the feet of their brothers. And if they are more upset at having their prelacy taken away from them than at losing their position at their feet, the more they store up a money bag to the peril of their soul."¹³

The serious responsibility that falls on the shoulders of the ministers is even more onerous due to the fact that they are to render to God an account on their commitment to take care of the spiritual welfare of the brothers. In the *Earlier Rule* Francis is very clear and straightforward about the risk of accepting the responsibility of ministering to the brothers: "Let the ministers and servants remember what the Lord says: I have *not come to be served, but to serve* (Mt 20,28); and because the care of the brothers' souls has been entrusted to them, if anyone of them is lost on account of their fault or bad example, they will have *to render an account* before the Lord Jesus Christ *on the day of judgment* (Mt 12,36)."¹⁴

Maybe the most touching text regarding the love and mercy that a minister should show to his brothers is found in the *Letter to a Minister*. In this Letter Francis is addressing an unknown brother minister (provincial), who was feeling persecuted by the brothers for some unknown reason. Francis not only refuses the request of this minister to be relieved of his onerous responsibility of ministering to the brothers and escape to a

¹¹ *Adm 3,3-6*: "Ille homo reliquit omnia que possidet, et perdit [animam suam et] corpus suum, qui se ipsum totum prebet ad obedientiam in manibus sui prelati. Et quicquid facit aut dicit quod ipse sciat quod non sit contra voluntatem eius, dum bonum sit quod facit, vera obedientia est. Et si quando subditus videat meliora et utiliora anime sue quam ea que sibi prelati precipiat, sua voluntarie Deo sacrificet, que autem sunt prelati, opere studeat adimplere. Nam hec est caritativa obedientia (cfr. 1 Petr 1,22) quia Deo et proximo satisfacit." FRANCESCO D'ASSISI, *Scritti*, 356. English text in FAED I, 130.

¹² The term *praelatus* comes from Old French *prelat* (*prélate* in Modern French) and directly from Medieval Latin *praelatus*, referring to a clergyman of high rank. In Latin the term *praelatus* literally means "one preferred", the noun derived from the past participle of *praeferre* (English "prefer"), from *prae* (before) and *latus* (borne, or carried). Internet: <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=prelate> (accessed on 12 January 2016).

¹³ *Adm 4,2-3*: "Illi qui sunt super alios constituti, tantum de illa prelatione gloriantur, quantum si essent in ablundi fratrum pedes officio deputati (cfr. Joa 13,14). Et quanto magis turbantur de ablata sibi prelatione quam de pedum officio, tanto magis sibi *loculos* (Joa 12,6) ad periculum anime componunt." FRANCESCO D'ASSISI, *Scritti*, 358. English text in FAED I, 130.

¹⁴ *RegNB 4,6*: "Et recordentur ministri et servi quod dicit Dominus: *Non veni ministrari, sed ministrare* (Mt 20,28), et quod commissum est eis cura animarum fratrum, de quibus, si aliquis perderetur propter eorum culpam et malum exemplum, *in die iudicii* oportebit eos *reddere rationem* (cfr. Mt 12,36) coram Domino Jesu Christo." FRANCESCO D'ASSISI, *Scritti*, 248. English text in FAED I, 66-67. The Rule of Saint Benedict, chapter 2, also speaks about the responsibility of the abbot on taking spiritual care of the monks entrusted to him: "(The abbot) should keep in mind that he has undertaken the care of souls for whom he must give an account". *The Rule of St. Benedict in English*, Editor T. FRY, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota 1982, 24. For the critical text: *La Règle de saint Benoît*, t. I à III, *Sources Chrétiennes*, t. 181-183, (*Textes Monastiques d'Occident*, t. XXIV-XXVI), Edition du Cerf, Paris 1972

hermitage, but he also recommends to him the qualities of a good minister who should be merciful and full of forgiveness to this brother who was making life miserable for him. The words of Saint Francis suffice to explain the way in which the saint looked at the ministry of serving the brothers. They need no further explanation:

“And if you have done this, I wish to know in this way if you love the Lord and me, His servant and yours: that there is not any brother in the world who has sinned – however much he could have sinned – who, after he has looked into your eyes, would ever depart without your mercy, if he is looking for mercy. And if he were not looking for mercy, you would ask him if he wants mercy. And if he would sin a thousand times before your eyes, love him more than me so that you may draw him to the Lord; and always be merciful with brothers such as these. And you may announce this to the guardians, when you can, that, for your part, you are resolved to act in this way.”¹⁵

These words are an excellent examination of conscience of each and every minister and servant in the general, provincial or local fraternities of the Order.

The minister is at the service and the common usefulness of the friars. Analysis of RegB 8,4

Saint Francis showed great respect to the figure of the minister general of the Order. He called brother Elias, who was the vicar in the period 1221 to 1227, with the legislative and executive powers of government, although Francis was alive until 3 October 1226, with the name of “lord”. “To the general minister of the Order of friars Minor, its lord [...] to Brother H[elias], the minister of our Order as my venerable lord [...] I beg by all means, as best I can, Brother H[elias], the general minister, my lord, to have the Rule observed inviolably by everyone.”¹⁶ In his *Testament* Francis expresses his deep sense of obedience to the general minister and to his personal guardian in the following terms: “And I firmly wish to obey the general minister of this fraternity and the other guardian whom it pleases him to give me. And I so wish to be a captive in his hands that I cannot go anywhere or do anything beyond obedience and his will, for he is my master.”¹⁷

¹⁵ *EpMin* 9-12: “Et in hoc volo cognoscere si tu diligis Dominum et me servum suum et tuum, si feceris istud, scilicet quod non sit aliquis frater in mundo qui peccaverit quantumcumque potuerit peccare, quod, postquam viderit oculos tuos, umquam recedat sine misericordia tua, si querit misericordiam. Et si millies postea coram oculis tuis peccaret, dilige eum plus quam me ad hoc, ut trahas eum ad Dominum; et semper miserearis talibus. Et istud denunties guardianis, quando poteris, quod per te ita firmus es facere.” FRANCESCO D’ASSISI, *Scritti*, 164. English text in FAED I, 97.

¹⁶ *EpOrd* 2: “Reverendis et multum diligendis fratribus universis, fratri H[elie] generali ministro religionis minorum fratrum domino suo”; *EpOrd* 38: “Confiteor preterea Domino Deo, Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto, beate Marie perpetue Virgini et omnibus sanctis in celo et in terra, fratri H[elie] ministro religionis nostre sicut venerabili domino meo”; *EpOrd* 40: “Ideoque per omnia oro sicut possum fratrem H[eliam] generalem dominum meum ministrum, ut faciat Regulam ab omnibus inviolabiliter observari.” FRANCESCO D’ASSISI, *Scritti*, 210. 218. English text in FAED I, 116. 119.

¹⁷ *Test* 27-28: “Et firmiter volo obedire ministro generali huius fraternitatis et alio guardiano quem sibi placuerit michi dare, et ita volo esse captus in manibus euis, ut non possim ire vel facere ultra obedientiam et voluntatem suam, quia dominus meus est.” FRANCESCO D’ASSISI, *Scritti*, 400. English text in FAED I, 126. The fact that Francis called for a personal guardian is recorded by the Sources during the occasion of the choice of Peter of Cattanio as vicar of the saint (29 September 1220 – 20 March 1221). *The*

We have already seen briefly the qualities that the minister was called to possess in order to exercise in a responsible manner the duty of ministering to the brothers. What we intend to analyse at this point constitutes the primary objective of our presentation, namely, what Francis says regarding the case in which a minister, for whatever reason, has to leave his office. The text which we are called to analyse is found in the *Later Rule*, chapter 8, dealing specifically with the election of the general minister of the fraternity and the chapter of Pentecost. We propose here our own translation of the text from the original Latin:

“All the friars are bound always to have one of the friars of this Order as their general minister and servant of the entire fraternity, and they are firmly bound to obey him. When he dies, the election of his successor is done by the ministers provincials and custodians in the chapter of Pentecost, in which the provincial ministers are always bound to convene together in whatever place the general minister may have decreed; this should be done once every three years, or within a greater or lesser limit of time, according to what the aforesaid minister has ordered. If it should occur at any time, for the totality of the ministers provincial and custodians, that it becomes evident that the said minister is no longer adequate for the service and common usefulness (general welfare) of the brothers, the same brothers, upon whom the responsibility of election falls, are obliged in the name of the Lord to elect another brother to replace him as custodian. After the chapter of Pentecost, if they want to do so and see it as expedient, the ministers and custodians can personally convoke, during the same year and in the same way, their friars to the chapter.”¹⁸

The figure of the minister general in this chapter of the *Later Rule* has the aim of insisting upon the solid centrality of the Order of friars Minor. The Order had, in fact, been divided into administrative sections, or provinces, already in 1217, but this was a decision linked with the need of expansion for missionary purposes and did not diminish the authority of the general minister, authority at that time still enjoyed by Francis as founder of the Order. When Francis renounced his role as leader of the fraternity during

Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul (2C) 151 (FAED II, 344), states: “He not only resigned the office of general, but also, for the greater good of obedience, he asked for a special guardian to honour as his personal prelate. And so he said to Brother Peter of Catanio, to whom he had earlier promised obedience: ‘I beg you for God’s sake to entrust me to one of my companions, to take your place in my regard and I will obey him as devoutly as you. I know the fruit of obedience, and that no time passes without profit for one who bends his neck to the yoke of another.’ His request was granted, and until death he remained a subject wherever he was, always submitting to his own guardian with reverence.” Cfr. *LM* 6,4 (FAED II, 571); *AC* 11 (FAED II, 125); *MP* (*Sabatier*) 46 (FAED III, 292). At the point of death Francis also obeyed his personal guardian, Brother Angelo of Rieti, who commanded him under obedience to accept a habit as an almsgiving: 2C 215 (FAED II, 386); *LM* 14,4 (FAED II, 642).

¹⁸ *RegB* 8,1-5: “Universi fratres unum de fratribus istius religionis teneantur semper habere generalem ministrum et servum totius fraternitatis, et ei teneantur firmiter obedire. Quo decedente, electio successoris fiat a ministris provincialibus et custodibus in capitulo Pentecostes, in quo provinciales ministri teneantur semper insimul convenire, ubicumque a generali ministro fuerit constitutum; et hoc semel in tribus annis, vel ad alium terminum maiorem vel minorem, sicut a predicto ministro fuerit ordinatum. Et si aliquo tempore appareret universitati ministrorum provincialium et custodum, predictum ministrum non esse sufficientem ad servitium et comunem utilitatem fratrum, teneantur predicti fratres, quibus electio data est, in nomine Domini alium sibi eligere in custodem. Post capitulum vero Pentecostes ministri et custodes possint singuli, si voluerint et eis expedire videbitur, eodem anno in suis custodiis semel fratres suos ad capitulum convocare.” FRANCESCO d’Assisi, *Scritti*, 332. The translation is a literal one, in order to be faithful to the Latin original. Official English text in FAED I, 104.

the chapter of Saint Michael on 29 September 1220, he was succeeded by two vicars in the ordinary government of the brothers, first by Peter Cattanio, who died on 20 March 1221, and then by Elias, who continued in the role of vicar until after the death of Francis, when Giovanni Parenti was elected in the Pentecost chapter of 1227.

The purpose of our study concerns a section of this chapter, namely verse 4, dealing with a concrete situation in which the provincial ministers are called to remove from office a general minister who is no longer adequate for the service and common usefulness, or general welfare, of the brothers. Such a legal provision is interesting, since it shows the importance of maintaining unity and cohesion in the Order in the person of the minister general, and at the same time it expresses the importance of the ministers provincial and custodians as the governing body of the Order in the general chapter.

What does the expression “no longer adequate for the service and common usefulness of the brothers” (*non esse sufficientem ad servitium et comunem utilitatem fratrum*) mean? What are the criteria to discern the concrete case in which a minister (in this specific case, a general minister), needs to be removed from office and substituted by another brother? The whole question hinges upon the meaning of the latin expression *sufficiens ad servitium et comunem utilitatem fratrum*.

We have already seen that the role of the minister is that of being at the service of the brothers. Francis is very clear about this, and his writings give us ample proof of the fact that the authority of the minister resides in his ability to be faithful to his mission as the servant of the brothers, as the one who washes their feet like Christ did during the last supper. It therefore follows that, once a minister no longer qualifies for such a kind of service, he automatically loses his authority in the brotherhood and has to be removed, for the simple reason that he is no longer adequate for the service and general welfare of the brothers.

If one tries to understand what concrete cases could warrant such a decision on the part of the provincial ministers, things become rather complicated since historically there were few instances of removal of ministers general from office. We shall, however, look at some of these cases in the early decades of the Order. They all concerned general ministers who were either too frail in health to govern the Order, or who had, in some way, strayed from the faithfulness to the Rule and life of the Order of friars Minor. A case in point is that of brother Elias, who was removed from the office of minister general in 1239. But on this fact we will return further on.

The general welfare of the brothers was therefore the underlying criterion for the usefulness and adequacy of the person of the minister general. In other words, the minister would truly work for the welfare of the brothers if he fulfilled his role as set down in Franciscan legislation, namely, (1) visiting and humbly admonishing the brothers and correcting them charitably without commanding anything contrary to their conscience or to the Rule; (2) receiving charitably and kindly those brothers who felt they could not observe the Rule spiritually, and having familiarity with them to the point of letting them feel free to express themselves freely as if their minister was their servant; (3) admitting novices to the fraternity after examining them regarding the contents of faith and not hindering them in the way they dispose of their belongings; (4) examining and approving preachers in the Order; (5) providing for the sick brothers and for the clothing of the brothers; (6) imposing with mercy a penance on those brothers who sin mortally in those kind of sins that oblige them to make recourse to their minister; (7)

convoking the chapter of Pentecost; (8) discerning the opportunity of sending those brothers who, under divine inspiration, requested to go among Saracens and other non-believers; (9) requesting the Lord Pope a Cardinal who would be governor, protector and corrector of the Order, thus sealing the Order's filial obedience to the Church of Rome as expressed also in chapter 1 of the *Later Rule*.

In all of these duties the minister is to behave according to the indications of the *Earlier Rule*, chapter 6, namely that he is never to be called "prior" but consider himself as a minister and servant who washes the feet of his brothers. *Admonition* 4 lays down that a minister should be content at having to leave his office in the same way that he would be happy at not having to bend down and humbly wash the feet of the brothers.

From this it is fairly clear that, whenever a minister (in our case, a minister general), fails to comply to these criteria he automatically forfeits his right of exercising his ministry of governing the fraternity. He becomes inadequate for the brothers, since he is not working for their general welfare and thus renders himself an enemy to the common usefulness of the fraternity. He has no right to serve the fraternity and the provincial ministers have the duty of removing him from office.

The Order's legislation, at least from the time of Saint Bonaventure, lays down concrete norms regarding such a situation which might arise from time to time in the Order. The *Constitutions of Narbonne* of 1260 lay down the following norm, namely that, during the chapter of Pentecost, the provincial ministers have the duty of deciding whether they are to correct the minister general or remove him from office. The act of correcting was a normal procedure in which the minister was to accuse himself of his faults before all, and after having being given a fair hearing to express his own defence, the chapter members were to decide whether to correct him or remove him from office.¹⁹ The procedure is again based on the common welfare of the brotherhood, and respects both the right of the minister to defend his actions and that of the brothers to decide whether he is still useful to the fraternity or not.

We shall now pass on to examine some concrete cases of removal of ministers general from office because of the reasons mentioned above. We shall take four cases into examination, but concentrate our attention especially on the case of the dismissal of brother Elias in 1239.

The cases of brothers Giovanni Parenti, Elias, Crescentius of Iesi and Giovanni Buralli da Parma

¹⁹ *Constitutions of Narbonne*, 20, in *Works of Saint Bonaventure*. Vol. V. *Writings concerning the Franciscan Order*, Introduction and Translation by D. Monti, St. Bonaventure University, NY 1994, 133: "Once the vote has been taken and the results announced before all, they shall carry out the majority decision regarding his correction or removal in this way: if he simply is to be corrected, this should be done by the ministers and custodians then and there. However, if he is to be removed, he is again summoned and the aforementioned three tellers individually and privately are to persuade him to resign voluntarily. But if he stubbornly refuses to resign, he is to be considered removed. And so, once he has departed and the door securely locked as before, they immediately are to proceed to the election of someone else, so that on the morning of the following day [Pentecost] the Order might have another general minister, whether he be in attendance at the chapter or not." Latin text in DOCTORIS SERAPHICI S. BONAVENTURAE, *Opera Omnia*, Studio et cura PP. Collegii a S. Bonaventura, Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi) prope Florentiam, 1898, Tomus VIII, 463b.

The period we are dealing with covers the years right after the death of Saint Francis, that is, from 1227, up till the election of Saint Bonaventure as minister general on 2 February 1257. During this period we find four cases of ministers general who, in one way or another, were relieved of their office of ministering to the brothers on the basis of what the *Later Rule* states in chapter 8, as we have already seen. We shall here examine the cases of brother Giovanni Parenti, who resigned from office in 1232, brother Elias, who was dismissed by Pope Gregory IX in 1239, brother Crescentius of Iesi, who was also dismissed by Pope Innocent IV and the brothers because of his lack of usefulness to the fraternity, and brother Giovanni Buralli da Parma, who was asked to resign by Pope Alexander IV in favour of Bonaventure of Bagnoregio.

The resignation of Giovanni Parenti (1232)

Giovanni Parenti was minister general of the Order from 31 May 1227 until the chapter of Rieti in 1232, when brother Elias became minister general. In fact, one can safely state that Giovanni Parenti was the first minister general of the Order after the death of Saint Francis, since Elias had been vicar of the saint from 1221 until after the saint's death in 1227. The account of Parenti's generalate is not very detailed in the medieval sources, but it was a significant generalate in many respects, particularly in the field of development of the Order in its missionary endeavour and in the pursuit for studies. Particularly important was the granting of the Bulla *Quo elongati* of Pope Gregory IX on 28 September 1230, which marks the first official interpretation of the Franciscan Rule by the Holy See.²⁰

Parenti had to face many challenges during his generalate, particularly during the Assisi chapter of 1230, when during the translation of the relics of Saint Francis to the newly built basilica on 25 May the partisans of brother Elias created a difficult situation and disturbed the proceedings of the chapter with the aim of installing Elias as minister general.²¹ Although Parenti succeeded in retaining his position as minister general, he faced increasing pressure, and resigned from office during the chapter of Rieti of 1232, which was not seemingly a general chapter, since the general chapter was due in 1233. Rosalind Brooke shows that Parenti made this decision seemingly because he realised that the brothers were clamouring to have Elias as general, according to their way of judging who would be the best candidate for the welfare of the brothers.

"It seems more probable that the Chapter took place at Rieti. Its date fortunately presents no problem. Jordan (of Giano) is the only source that provides one – 1232 – and there is no reason to suspect that the figures are in error as he confirms it by saying that Elias remained in power for seven years, and his deposition was certainly in 1239. The proceedings of the Chapter are a mystery. We are told that Elias was not canonically

²⁰ ARNALD DE SARRANT, *Chronica XXIV Generalium Ordinis fratrum Minorum*, in *Analecta Franciscana ad Historiam fratrum Minorum spectantia*, edita a Patribus Collegii S. Bonaventurae, Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi) prope Florentiam, 1897, Tomus III, 210-215. A good account of Giovanni Parenti's generalate is given by R.B. BROOKE, *Early Franciscan Government. Elias to Bonaventure*, Cambridge University Press 1959, 123-136.

²¹ THOMAS OF ECCLESTON, *The Coming in England of the Friars Minor*, c. 13, in *XIIIth Century Chronicles*, Translated from Latin by P. Hermann, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1961, 152-153.

elected, and it is usually believed that he owed his appointment either to violence, or to direct Papal intervention, or to a combination of both [...] A General Chapter was not due until Whitsun 1233, and therefore the Chapter at Rieti may well have been only a Provincial or semi-general Cismontane Chapter. If this was the case, ordinary brothers as well as Ministers and Custodians would have been present, and could have made their wishes known. John Parenti was ready to resign, and the brethren, knowing that an election was imminent, may have pressed there and then for the candidate they desired, instead of leaving the matter entirely to the Ministers and Custodians as the Rule prescribed. Elias was popular with the rank and file. Whether from artfulness, conviction, or as a matter of form, he protested his unworthiness, and his supporters cried that they would rather he was dispensed from observing the Rule than have another leader. The Ministers and the majority of the Italian friars being thus divided, the matter was referred to Gregory, who decided for the brethren.”²²

The case of Giovanni Parenti is thus an example of a man who, sensing that he was no longer needed for the general welfare of the brothers, chose to resign from office before the general chapter was due. It is indeed sad that Parenti had to resign because of pressure “from the rank and file” who wanted Elias, but his maturity and sound reasoning in favour of the good of the Order make of him a hero of faithfulness to Franciscan values.

The dismissal of Elias (1239)

Elias is a totally different story. As minister general he was formally dismissed from office during the general chapter of 1239. It will take many pages to explain the pros and cons of his generalate and how he was greatly responsible for his own downfall.²³ Here we shall just concentrate on the motivations that the group of learned brothers presented when they made recourse to Pope Gregory IX, and when they accused Elias formally of his misdeeds during the general chapter of 1239, when the same Pope decided to depose Elias from the office of minister general.

Brooke gives us a very clear judgement of what actually brought about Elias’ downfall, when she says: “It was not the *zelanti* who successfully combined against him, but the learned.”²⁴ It was a question of the clerical brothers, who were always increasing, and who were theologically prepared, being against Elias, who himself was a lay brother, and who was promoting lay brothers to positions of responsibility in the Order. The group of friars who took the initiative to bring Elias’ downfall was made up of theologians from the Ultramontane provinces, namely Alexander of Hales, Jean de La Rochelle, and Haymo of Faversham, who met in Paris in 1236.²⁵ They discussed

²² R.B. BROOKE, *Early Franciscan Government*, 143-145.

²³ G. BARONE, *Brother Elias Revisited*, in *Greyfriars Review* 13 (1999) 1-18; R.B. BROOKE, *Early Franciscan Government. Elias to Bonaventure*, 83-105; 137-167; L. LEMPP, *Frère Élie de Cortone. Etude Biographique* (Collection d’Études et de Documents sur l’Histoire Religieuse et Littéraire du Moyen Âge, Vol. III), Librairie Fischbacher, Paris 1901; G. ODOARDI, *Elia di Assisi*, in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, Vol. 3 (1976) 1094-1110.

²⁴ R.B. BROOKE, *Early Franciscan Government*, 161.

²⁵ JORDAN OF GIANO, *Chronicle*, 61; THOMAS OF ECCLESTON, c. 13, in *XIIIth Century Chronicles*, 64-65; 154-156.

proposals for reform in the Order. The following year, 1237, Elias aggravated the situation by sending many visitators to the Provinces, who abused of their powers by overstaying in the Order's entities, not respecting the authority of the Provincial Ministers, and exacting taxes for the construction of the basilica of St. Francis.

Jordan of Giano gives us a clear account of the reaction of the brothers in Saxony, who appealed to Gregory IX:

"In the year of our Lord 1237 Brother Elias sent visitators to the various provinces with the intention of furthering his own plans; and because of these irregular visitations the brothers were even more incensed against him than they were before.

In the year of our Lord 1238 the brothers of Saxony appealed to the minister general against these visitators; they sent messengers to him, but they gained nothing at all thereby. They were forced therefore to appeal to the lord Pope. When Brother Jordan came to him, having greeted him, he was commanded to go away; but Brother Jordan did not wish to leave; instead he ran joyfully to the couch of the lord Pope, drew forth his bare foot and kissing it, exclaimed to his companion: 'Behold, we do not have such relics in Saxony.' The lord Pope, however, still wished them to leave; but Brother Jordan said: 'No, lord, we do not have anything to ask of you now, for we have an abundance of good things and we are happy; for you are the father of our Order, its protector and corrector; we have simply come to see you.' And thus at last the lord Pope became cheerful, arose, and seated himself on the couch and, asking why he had come, added: 'I know you have appealed; Brother Elias, however, coming to me, said that you appealed by going over his head, and I replied to him that an appeal made to me absorbs all other appeals.' After Brother Jordan had made clear to the Pope the points about which the appeal had been made, the Pope replied that the brothers had done well to appeal. When therefore the various brothers were come together to the curia to pursue the appeal they had made, and after a long discussion had been carried on, in the end the advice of the majority was that nothing should be done except to put their hand on the root, namely, to proceed directly against Elias.

And the brothers sat down together and, after a scrutiny among the brothers who had gathered, they set down in writing whatever they could know and prove from fact or report against Elias. When these things had been read before the Pope, discussions were had concerning the question. The lord Pope quieted the disagreement, saying: 'Go and carry on the discussion among yourselves and write down both the objections and the answers to these objections and present them to me, and I will pass judgment.' This was done. Then, when the lord Pope had heard and read thoroughly the objections and the answers, he decreed that the brothers there assembled should return to their provinces and that from the various provinces, and especially from those which had moved the question of reformation of the Order, twenty mature and discreet brothers should be sent to converse at Rome four weeks before the general chapter and frame regulations for the welfare and reformation of the Order."²⁶

Another Franciscan chronicler, Salimbene de Adam is highly critical of Elias. It is to him more than others that we owe the negative views about Elias as a general minister who betrayed Francis' intentions by his scandalous way of life. Salimbene lists a number of faults in his famous Chronicle, in the section known as *Liber de prelato*.²⁷

²⁶ JORDAN OF GIANO, *Chronicle*, 62-67, in *XIIIth Century Chronicles*, 65-67.

²⁷ *The Chronicle of Salimbene de Adam*, Translation by J.L. BAIRD, 74-87; 91-92; 149-156.

It is Thomas of Eccleston who provides the most complete account of what happened during the general chapter which Pope Gregory IX convened in Rome in May 1239:

“Afterwards, because Elias had upset the whole Order by his worldly living and his cruelty, Brother Haymo moved an appeal against him at Paris; and though Elias was unwilling, many ministers provincial and many of the best brothers from the Cismontane provinces gathered to celebrate a general chapter, Brother Arnulph, the penitentiary of the lord pope Gregory IX, acting on behalf of the Order at the Roman curia. Therefore, after a long consultation, brothers were chosen from the whole Order to provide for the reformation of the Order. When this was done, an account thereof was given in the general chapter before the pope, at which seven cardinals were in attendance too.

After the sermon preached by the pope [...] Brother Elias began to make excuses, saying that the brothers, when they elected him to the office of minister general, said that they wanted him to eat gold and to have a horse, if his weakness demanded it; but now they were offended and scandalized in him. And when Brother Haymo wanted to reply to him, the pope did not allow it until the lord cardinal Robert of Somercote said to him: ‘Lord, he is an old man; it is good that you hear him, for he is sparing in words.’

Brother Haymo, therefore, stood timid and trembling; but Brother Elias sat completely unshaken, as it seemed, and unafraid. Brother Haymo began by briefly praising the words of Brother Elias as the words of a revered father, and then made the point against him that, though the brothers said they wanted him to eat gold, they did not say that they wanted him to have a treasure. Moreover, though they said they wanted him to have a horse, they did not say they wanted him to have a palfrey or a charger. And immediately Brother Elias, losing patience, said openly that he was lying; and his followers began likewise to make like charges and to raise a tumult; and those of the other party began to do likewise against them. Then the pope, much moved, commanded them to be silent, saying: ‘This is not the way of religious.’ Then the pope remained seated for a long time, as though in silence and meditation he would turn them to shame. Meanwhile, the lord Reginald, protector of the Order, suggested openly to Brother Elias that he give his resignation into the hands of the pope; he publicly replied that he would not. Then the pope, first commending his person and the friendship he had had with Saint Francis, concluded that it seemed to him that his ministry had been acceptable to the brothers; but since it did not now please them, as was just shown, he decreed that he should be removed from office. And immediately he released him from the office of minister general. There was then such immense and inexpressible joy that those who merited to be present said they had never seen anything like it.

Therefore the pope went alone into one of the cells and called the ministers and custodes for an election; and before they wrote down their votes, he heard the votes of each one; and since Brother Albert of Pisa, the minister of England was canonically elected, Brother Arnulph, the penitentiary, who in particular had forwarded the whole business, announced the election and began the *Te Deum Laudamus*. And because Brother Elias, it was said, had never made profession of the *Regula Bullata*, and for which reason his conscience permitted him to receive money, it was immediately arranged that he should make profession of this Rule and then under the same formula the whole chapter, and the whole Order. And so it was done. Therefore after the minister general had said Mass, the pope said to the brothers who had not been part of the chapter:

‘You have now heard the first Mass ever celebrated by a minister general of your Order. Go now with the blessing of Jesus Christ to your places.’”²⁸

These accounts speak volumes about what we have seen in the *Later Rule* regarding the *ministerium fratrum*. Gregory IX deposed Elias on the grounds that, even though he had originally been a faithful disciple of Saint Francis, Elias had acted in such a manner that, by 1239, he was no longer useful for the welfare of the brothers. When Elias rebelled against the papal invitation to resign out of his own free will, the Pope deposed him. Alas, this is one of the few instances in the history of the Order that the provisions of the *Later Rule* were observed in such a just and impartial way.

The dismissal of Crescentius da Iesi (1247)

Crescentius da Iesi was elected minister general after the death of Haymo of Faversham. He was elected during the Pentecost chapter in Genoa, on 22 May 1244. Brooke states that “Crescentius, who had joined the Order late in life, was an educated man, qualified both in canon law and in medicine, but not particularly distinguished.” He had to face the trouble of the *zelanti* in his native province of the Marches, and as minister general proved very harsh towards those friars who were keen on observing the Rule in a strict way without making recourse to papal interpretations. It was a good opportunity for a comeback of Elias, who could now defend himself since Haymo of Faversham, who had proved to be an adversary, was now dead. “Elias had just returned from a successful mission to the Eastern Empire, and had brought back precious relics, including a fragment of the True Cross, which he hoped would secure for him a favourable reception. He came to the Chapter and was allowed a hearing. But he mishandled his audience. Instead of humbling himself, or seeking forgiveness, he took the line that the Order and not he had been at fault. He asserted that he had been unjustly deposed, and his object clearly was not simply to be accepted back as a brother but to be reinstated in office. His proud and ambitious speech was answered with contumely and he was forced to retire in confusion.”

“Crescentius’ Generalate had little constitutional significance. The Minister himself had little opportunity and seemingly little inclination to contribute new law. The only General Chapter at which he resided was that of his election. He summoned no General Chapter while in office, and when after three years had elapsed the Pope assumed that duty and summoned a Chapter to wait on him at Lyons in the summer of 1247, Crescentius failed to attend and was promptly deposed.”²⁹

Crescentius was deposed on July 13. In 1252 he was consecrated bishop of his native town of Iesi. Again we are faced with the figure of a minister who, although not guilty of any faults against the Rule, proved very unuseful to the brothers. He seems to have been a harsh minister who showed little mercy towards the *zelanti*, and took arbitrary decisions without ever convoking a general chapter. For this reason, Pope Innocent IV thought it wise to depose him when his first three years of minister general had elapsed.

²⁸ THOMAS OF ECCLESTON, c. 13, in *XIIIth Century Chronicles*, 154-156.

²⁹ R.B. BROOKE, *Early Franciscan Government*, 248-250.

The spontaneous resignation of Giovanni Buralli da Parma (1257)

The last case we consider is that of Giovanni Buralli da Parma, elected during the chapter of Lyons on 13 July 1247. He is considered to have been one of the holiest ministers general in the history of the Order, and yet he had to yield to pressure to resign after ten years in office.

Angelo Clareno, writing in his *Chronicle or History of the Seven Tribulations*, echoes the thesis of the *zealots*, later on, Spirituals, when he sees in John of Parma a champion of rigorous observance of the Rule:

“Brother Giles, indeed, inspired by the Spirit like a seer of future things, said: ‘You have come well and at an opportune time, but you have come too late.’ Brother Giles said this, moreover, because he knew that turning the brothers back to the solid and secure origins of the first and holy way of life begun by Saint Francis was impossible, even though Brother John aspired with all his strength to recall the brothers to their beginnings.”³⁰

During his period as general minister Giovanni held three Chapters, one at Genoa in 1251, one in Metz in 1254, and the last one in Rome on 2 February 1257, when Bonaventure was chosen as general.

John was a candidate who would have been acceptable to both the majority of the friars and the *zelanti*. He led a very simple and poor way of life, and was held in great esteem for his holiness. Salimbene states that “he was the first Minister General to make trips in order to visit all the various provinces of the Order, a fact which (with the exception of Brother Haymo who travelled to England, his birthplace) was never the custom before.”³¹ During the Chapter of Metz John advised the brothers not to multiply the Order’s legislation and constitutions, stating that it would have been better for them to know and observe the ones already existing.

Giovanni was a humble and holy friar who tried to keep the peace among warring factions, but he ended up being an object of their hostility, especially since he was regarded, maybe unjustly, as being sympathetic to the prophecies of Joachim of Fiore, who had inspired the ideals of the *zelanti*.

“When Gerard (of Borgo San Donnino’s) book was condemned as heretical on 23 October 1255 Alexander IV ordered the bishop of Paris to proceed with the utmost circumspection so that no blame or dishonour should attach to the Order because of it. The Pope also forbore to incriminate or condemn along with Gerard’s extravagances the genuine utterances of Joachim of Flora that had inspired them. Nevertheless John of Parma’s manifest Joachimism could not but be regarded now as somewhat discreditable and the Pope intimated to him privately that he wished him to resign. Once this had been said to him John felt he could not continue in office any longer, and he summoned the General Chapter to meet early so that he could lay down his charge as soon as possible. The brothers assembled at Rome on 2 February 1257, in the presence of the Pope, and John announced his intention to abdicate. So popular was he that the Ministers refused to

³⁰ ANGELO CLARENO, *A Chronicle or History of the Seven Tribulations of the Order of Lesser Brothers*, Translated from the Latin by David Burr and E. Randolph Daniel, Franciscan Institute Publications, St. Bonaventure University, NY 2005, 95-96.

³¹ *The Chronicle of Salimbene de Adam*, 298.

accept his resignation and argued and pleaded with him for a whole day, and at length John had to explain to Peregrinus of Bologna, who was acting as intermediary, that he was not free to accede to their desires on account of Papal objections. The Ministers had then no choice but to release him, but as a mark of their confidence in him they requested him to designate his successor. 'Father, you have visited the Order and know the character and condition of the brethren; assign us one suitable brother, whom we may appoint to this office in your stead.' John promptly nominated St. Bonaventure, saying that in the whole Order he knew of none better than he, and the Ministers agreed to elect him forthwith."³²

This fact provides us with the example of a holy man who spontaneously agreed to back off from his post as minister general when he understood that his liberality with the *zelanti* had placed Pope Alexander IV in difficulty, and that if he stayed on he would not have been useful to the general welfare of the fraternity. His resignation was an honourable one. He was even asked to indicate his successor, and he did so by indicating the figure of a moderate but scholarly leader, brother Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, who was to prove to be a strong leader. Giovanni's foresight saved the Order at that moment. He is an example of holy maturity in accepting one's limits and taking the right decision for the good of the brotherhood. Once again, his example has, alas, been imitated by only a handful in the history of the Order and its provinces.

Conclusion

A *minister and servus* is elected for the service and general welfare of the brothers entrusted under his care. Francis of Assisi conceived of such a style of government when he dictated the *Later Rule*, or *Regula bullata*, confirmed by Honorius III on 29 November 1223, and binding all Friars Minor to its observance to this very day.

We have taken a brief look at the meaning of *ministerium fratrum* in the Order, and particularly of the case in which a minister general entrusts himself to the judgment of the fraternity regarding his usefulness to its general welfare, implying faithfulness to the same Rule which all friars profess. We have also indicated some examples of ministers general in the early decades of the Order, who were either prudent and holy men who realised that they had to leave their office for the good of the brothers, or else were adamant in clutching on to power at all costs, and were duly deposed by the Church's highest authority.

The conclusions we can draw from our analysis are obvious for all times and for all levels of government in the Order. Although the Rule speaks explicitly about the minister general and his unique responsibility to minister to the brothers, one cannot help feeling that the same principles apply also to the lower echelons of government in the Order, particularly to provincial ministers and local guardians. A deep reflection on such an issue could trigger a sincere conversion and change in the minds and hearts of many, freeing our Order from the temptation of thirst for power and prestige at the expense of the spiritual good of the brotherhood, in whom true power in our Order resides, and for the benefit of whom any minister is chosen simply as an unworthy servant.

³² R.B. BROOKE, *Early Franciscan Government*, 270-271.