One hundred years ago, on 4th October 1909, Pope Saint Pius X published the Apostolic Letter \textit{Septimo iam}, on the occasion of the 700th anniversary of the approval of the Franciscan Rule. The Letter, however, does not specifically deal with the historical event it commemorated, namely the approval of the \textit{Forma vitae} of Saint Francis by Innocent III in 1209. Rather, it dwells upon a thorny problem brought about by the turn of events during the last decades of the 19th century, which culminated in the unification of the \textit{Ordo Fratrum Minorum de Regularis Observantia} (Order of Friars Minor of the Regular Observance) on 4th October 1897, with the publication of Leo XIII’s Bulla \textit{Felicitate quadam}, whereby the four autonomous families of the same Order under the obedience of one Minister General, namely the Observants, Riformati, Alcantarines and Recollects, were to unite under one family simply known as \textit{Ordo Fratrum Minorum}, Order of Friars Minor.

A detailed history of these events has already been published in 1994 in the doctoral dissertation of Maurice Carmody. We shall be basing the historical account of what happened on this scholarly work, but at the same time we shall take into consideration the contents of \textit{Septimo iam}, as well as those of another Apostolic Letter published shortly afterwards by Pius X, entitled \textit{Paucis ante diebus}, on 1st November 1909.

The unification of the Order was not an easy task. Many factors and persons had contributed to make its implementation very difficult both for Pope Leo XIII as well as for the Minister General Luigi da Parma (1889-1897), the architects of the process of unification. There was staunch opposition to unification especially from within the ranks of the Riformati, who feared that their relative independence from the Observant mainstream would be lost. In fact, it was they, the Riformati, who continued to oppose unification, considering it to be a deliberate fusion of provinces and friaries in order to create a homogenous family. The Riformati went even as far as to ally themselves with other Franciscan families, especially the Capuchins, to hinder any peaceful transition to a united family known simply as Order of Friars Minor, which would naturally become the largest among the families of the First Franciscan Order.

It seems anachronistic on our part to mention divisions and disagreements that have long since been healed, thanks to a spirit of true fraternity and common sense among all the families of the First Franciscan Order. However, out of justice for historical truth, we cannot refrain from mentioning the great difficulties encountered by the administration of the Friars Minor in order to implement the union of what, \textit{de facto}, were four families of Franciscan friars under the obedience of one Minister General and with mutual differences and customs that would today look ridiculous, to say the least. Out of a sense of justice to our own tradition, and with a serene spirit of self-criticism, we are aware of the fact that unification from the top was bound to a partial failure, and that the Order of Friars Minor was never a compact and centralised religious family, and might have seemed to resemble more a confederation of provinces than a strongly-bonded religious Order. These characteristics, however, had their advantages, in the sense that the spirit of democratic freedom and personal
initiative present in the Order of Friars Minor was instrumental in the great achievements of provinces and individual friars in the areas of missionary evangelisation, studies, and the establishments of charitable institutions.

The unification of the Order of Friars Minor, without any other distinctive adjective, was bound to create tension with the other two great Franciscan families of the First Order, namely the Friars Minor Conventuals and the Friars Minor Capuchins.

“Unfortunately for Luigi da Parma, yet another controversy broke out at this time. The Capuchins and Conventuals, happy enough with the proposed unification, were nevertheless alarmed that the new entity was to be known simply as the Order of Friars Minor, rather than «Friars Minor of the Regular Observance». The Capuchins were the first to react. Their Minister General, Bernardo d’Andrematt, had written to Antonio Agliardi, Cardinal Protector of their Order, requesting his assistance. The title «Order of Friars Minor», he asserted, belonged to each of the three families which followed the Rule of 1223. No one of them could lay claim to it individually.”

This assertion was, in fact, an error. When Leo X had united all the reform movements in the Order and placed them under the Observants, giving the latter the seal of the Order and separating them from the unreformed, or Conventual friars, he had given the Order an option, namely to adopt the official name of *Ordo Fratrum Minorum de Regularis Observantia*, or simply to choose the name *Ordo Fratrum Minorum*. Because of the intense sense of belonging to the Observant movement born in 1368 in Italy, the Order continued to insist in using the adjective *de Regularis Observantia*.

The protests of the Capuchins were soon joined by those on the Conventual part, presented by the Minister General of the Friars Minor Conventuals Lorenzo Caratelli. Cardinal Agliardi presented both protests to the Congregation for Bishops and Regulars, for a closer examination. On their part, the Conventuals and Capuchins were insisting that the newly unified Order should continue to be known as *Ordo Fratrum Minorum de Regularis Observantia*, in order to place it side by side with the *Ordo Fratrum Minorum Conventualium* and the *Ordo Fratrum Minorum Cappuccinorum*. As a proof of the historical truth of what they were requesting, they presented the testimony of the famous Franciscan historian Luke Wadding.

Luigi da Parma, on his part, defended the name *Ordo Fratrum Minorum* without any further specifications. “The title was lawful, most appropriate and necessary, he declared. Lawful, because that was the official name of the Order as approved by Pope Honorius III in the Bull *Solet annuere* in 1223. In 1517, Leo X had united the various reform groups existing at that time. As one family, they were henceforth known exclusively either as the Order of Friars Minor or as Friars Minor of the Regular Observance. Subsequent legislation confirmed this. In particular, Luigi drew attention to the Decrees of the Sacred Congregation of Rites issued on March 22 and April 12, 1631. According to this legislation, the seal of the Order with the title «Minister General of the Whole Order of Friars Minor», had been transferred from the Conventuals to the Friars Minor of the Regular Observance.

It was also most appropriate that the title should be retained by those religious who had constantly professed the Rule as confirmed by Honorius III. These were the friars of the Regular Observance. Neither the Capuchins nor the Conventuals had any right to the title. The Capuchins because they had come into existence after 1517, and the Conventuals because they were dispensed from observing key points of the Rule itself. Furthermore, Luigi argued, the Conventuals had not legally existed until 1517.”
The end result of this controversy was that the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation assured Luigi da Parma that nothing would change in the plans to unify the Order, with one set of Constitutions, under the official name Ordo Fratrum Minorum. For the time being it seemed that the protests of the two other branches of the Franciscan First Order had died down. They would resurface more than ten years later, that is, in 1909, twelve years after the Bull of unification Felicitate quadam. We shall first see the contents of the Apostolic Letter Septimo iam, which rekindled the whole question, its aftermath in Paucis ante diebus, and finally see who were the instigators who convinced Pope Saint Pius X to insist upon inventing the title «Order of Friars Minor of the Leonine Union», that was fortunately never used neither in official Church documents nor in the Order’s own official documents.

The contents of Septimo Iam

The Apostolic Letter Septimo iam of Pope Saint Pius X was published on 4th October 1909, on the occasion of the 700th anniversary of the beginnings of the Franciscan Order, with the approval of the primitive Forma Vitae by Innocent III in 1209.

The longest section of the Letter, which opens the document, speaks about the history of the Franciscan Order as an important institution in the Church. Pius X lists a number of papal documents, which gave honour and privileges to the Friars Minor, ever since the time of Gregory IX. The Letter mentions, in a particular way, the Apostolic Letters Recolentes qualiter (29th April 1228) and Mirificans (16th May 1230), published on the occasions of the building of the Basilica of Saint Francis and the transfer of the relics of Saint Francis to the new church in Assisi.

The Pope then refers to two important documents in the history of the Franciscan Order, which are considered a papal interpretations of the Rule of 1223, namely Exiit qui seminat (14th August 1279) of Pope Nicholas III, and Exivi de paradiso (6th May 1312) of Pope Clement V. The Pope underlines the observance the Rule, in a life of humility and poverty, modelled upon that of Saint Francis.

Proceeding along the principal moments of Franciscan history, Pius X then mentions the Bulla Ite vos of Pope Leo X (29th May 1517), which marked the union of all the reformed families under the Order of Friars Minor of the Regular Observance, separating it from the unreformed group, known as the Order of Friars Minor Conventuals. This document insists upon the fact that the Franciscan form of life is inspired upon the way of life of Christ and the Apostles.

The Pope then mentions the Apostolic Letter Divinae (29th August 1587) of Pope Sixtus V, himself a Franciscan Conventual, in which Saint Francis becomes an exemplar of perfection in his stigmata and in the fact that his Order was enriched by the presence of bishops, archbishops, patriarchs, cardinals, kings and popes.

Referring to the Portiuncula as the place where Francis sui Ordins fundamenta iecit (placed the foundation of his Order), Pius X quotes the Apostolic Letter Neminem (7th February 1832) of Pope Gregory XVI.

The pontificate of Leo XIII, which preceded immediately that of Pius X, is given great importance. The Pope quotes Leo XIII’s Encyclical Letter Auspicato, published on 17th September 1882, on the occasion of the 700th anniversary of the birth of Saint Francis. He recalls the famous vision of Saint Francis supporting the Lateran Basilica, which Pope Innocent III saw in his dream. Then the Pope arrives at the important Apostolic Letter Felicitate quadam, published by Leo XIII on 4th
October 1897, which marked the unification of all the various reformed families falling under the obedience of the Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor of the Regular Observance (Observants, Riformati, Alcantarines, Recollects) under one denomination, namely that of *Ordo Fratrum Minorum*, Order of Friars Minor. The Letter stated that the religious Orders founded by Saint Francis had, by that time, become officially three, namely the Observants, the Conventuals, and the Capuchins. He insisted that all the reformed families in the Franciscan Order were truly sons of Saint Francis, and quotes various Apostolic Letters of the Popes, containing such a declaration, particularly Leo X regarding the Friars Minor of the Regular Observance, Clement VII regarding the Friars Minor Riformati, and Paul V, Urban VIII and Clement XII regarding the Friars Minor Capuchins.7

The Pope then affirms: “We would like to affirm, it is our will and our command, that whoever one considers to be first among the three families of the Franciscan Order, all of them are not only brothers, but twin Brothers, all of them have been founded by Francis and all of them observe the same pattern of religious life and the same Rule.”8

After this introduction, Pope Pius X presents his official version of the constitution of the Franciscan Order.

First of all he states: “The First Order of Saint Francis, who is the Father who founded it, is one religious family that observes the same Rule. It is divided into three families, who are governed by their own laws and Constitutions, approved by the Apostolic See. These families are: the Friars Minor, who used to be called of the Regular Observance, when they had four distinct families within their ranks, namely the Observants, the Riformati, the Alcantarines, and the Recollects. These families have been revoked by Leo XIII and have returned to full unity, under the one family known by the name *Order of Friars Minor*. The other family is that of the Friars Minor Conventuals, and the third family is called Friars Minor Capuchins.”9

The Pope then says: “The family, or Order of Friars Minor, whose proper name was that of the Regular Observance, after having been unified from various families by Leo XIII, can now be called of the Leonine Union, and it is correct to call it by such a name. As our Predecessor states in his Constitution *Felicitate quadam*: «Out of an act of concession on the part of the Holy See this family has the first honour among the other Franciscan families to be known by the simple name of Friars Minor, a name which it accepted from Leo X». However this name should not be interpreted in this way, namely, that it would seem that the entire Order of Minors is represented only in this family. Such an interpretation is very far away from the truth, and it is highly insulting to the other Minors. Therefore, in order that the name *Order of Friars Minor* without any other addition to it, would not be the cause of ambiguity, it seems to us opportune that the family of which we are speaking, both on the part of its Moderators and its members, and especially for the sake of public acts, should add a peculiar note to its name, and we hereby establish and command that it should be known as the *Order of Friars Minor of the Leonine Union*, and its Moderators and members should be known as belonging to the *Order of the Friars Minor of the Leonine Union.*”10

This new name dropped like a bombshell upon the Minister General Dionysius Schüler and the Order of Friars Minor. A close look at what the Pope states indicates that he had become aware of discontent among many quarters regarding the official name *Ordo Fratrum Minorum*, and that somebody had convinced him that the Friars Minor wanted to usurp this name as if it belonged only to them, and as if they were the only true sons of Saint Francis in whom the pristine name of the Order had been
preserved. What is surprising to the reader is that Pius X bases his arguments not on sound historical truth, but on the supposition that he wanted to put an end to discontent in the entire Franciscan Family by placing the three families of the First Order side by side without any regard for plain and simple facts of history. Then he continues to draw his conclusions from what he states.

The title of Minister Generalis totius Ordinis Minorum, enjoyed by the Minister of the Friars Minor of the Leonine Union was to be interpreted solely as an honorific title, and implied no jurisdiction over the other Franciscan Orders. Precedence among the three Ministers General was to be maintained, in such a way that the first among them would be the Minister General of the Friars Minor of the Leonine Union, followed by the Minister General of the Friars Minor Conventuals and the Minister General of the Friars Minor Capuchins. The Pope insists once again that all three Orders had been founded by Saint Francis and were true sons of Saint Francis.11

The basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi, officiated by the Friars Minor Conventuals, should hold the place of honour of being the most sacred among Franciscan sanctuaries, since it is the burial place of the founder of the Order, and is the caput et mater (head and mother) of the Order of Minors, and was constituted Patriarchal Basilica and Papal Chapel by Pope Benedict XIV. The Pope, however, reminds that he himself, in the Apostolic Letter Omnipotens ac misericors Dominus, had elevated the basilica of Saint Mary of the Angels of the Portiuncula, officiated by the Friars Minor of the Leonine Union, to the rank of Patriarchal Basilica and Papal Chapel. The celebration of the feasts of Franciscan Saints who had lived before the separation of the Order in 1517 could not be reserved to any one of the families, but they were common patrimony of all the three families of the First Order.12

The Pope concludes the Apostolic Letter exhorting all the members of the three Franciscan Orders to observe mutual charity and respect. He quotes the Later Rule, chapter 3 (non litigent) and chapter 10 (caveant ab omni superbia, vanagloria, invidia), as well as the idealistic description of the first fraternity given by Thomas of Celano in his Life of Saint Francis, 38.

The Pope finally concedes the same privileges to all the Franciscan families of the First Order, calling upon them to celebrate the feasts of the Dedication of the Basilica of Saint Francis and of the Portiuncula on an equal liturgical rank of double of the second class. He states that in the presence of the Holy Father all three Ministers General present themselves as equals, although respecting the law of precedence explained above. He also gives the three Orders the same faculties regarding indulgences, privileges, celebrations of pious devotions, and pastoral care of pious sodalities entrusted to their jurisdiction. All Apostolic Letters giving privileges and praising one of the Franciscan families were to be considered as being equally applicable to all the other families of the same Franciscan Order.

The aftermath: the Apostolic Letter Paucis ante diebus

On 1st November 1209 Pope Saint Pius X published another Apostolic Letter, Paucis ante diebus, addressed to the three Franciscan Ministers General Dionysius Schüler OFM, Dominic Reuter OFMConv, and Pacifico a Seano OFMCap.13

The contents of this Apostolic Letter intended to clarify further what the Pope had expressed in Septimo iam, and to put an end once and for all to the controversy
regarding the name Fratres Minores de Unione Lenoniana given to the Order of Friars Minor.

The Pope begins by stating that Saint Francis founded one Order and called his brothers Fratres Minores. This same Order eventually developed and became two families (OFMObs and OFMConv), and shortly afterwards a third family was born (OFMCap).

Secondly, the Pope explicitly states that “the Minor Conventuals did not exist as a distinct family before 1517. However, on a similar basis, the Minors of the Regular Observance began to exist legitimately as a separate family on that same year and day in which the Conventuals began to exist. Before Leo X had published the Constitution Ite et vos, on 29th May 1517, the Order of Minors was not composed only of Conventuals or Observants, but of both families.”

The Apostolic Letter then speaks about the dignity of the Conventuals and Capuchins as true Friars Minor. Regarding the Conventuals it states: “It is false to deprive the Conventuals in their name from their being considered as Friars Minor, as if they do not observe the Rule of Saint Francis in its entirety. It is an insult to these religious men, who although having as their highest norm the Seraphic Rule, are nevertheless allowed benevolently by the Holy See to follow a more mitigated form of life, to state that they do not observe the precepts and counsels contained in the same Rule.”

Regarding the Capuchins, the Letter states: “Since the Minors Capuchins were born out of the Minors of the Regular Observance, they are not to be considered as being in any way in an inferior condition, and they cannot be deprived of their name of being pure and simple Friars Minor. Indeed they are Franciscan brothers who observe the Seraphic Rule and who were living community life within the Family of the Observants from their very beginnings, and then continued to observe the same Rule in a more strict form of life. They form an integral part of the family of Minors, and have been canonically constituted as such under the authority of the Apostolic See, with the addition of their proper name Capuchins.”

The Letter considered an error the affirmation that Saint Francis is the legitimate and authentic founder of the family of the Friars Minor of the Regular Observance. It is an insult to deny the right of the Conventuals and Capuchins to be regarded as members of the First Order.

A close examination at the wording of the document shows that the Letter was intended to be a type of condemnation of the thesis of those who wanted the Order of Friars Minor simpliciter dicit to be considered as the only true family dating from the time of Saint Francis and having the Minister General of the entire Order, or to state that the succession of the Ministers General from the time of Saint Francis belonged only to the family of the Regular Observance, since only their Minister was declared to be the Minister Generalis totius Ordinis Minorum.

These strong statements seem to have been a direct attack against the Manuale Historiae Ordinis Fratrum Minorum, published by Herbert Holzapfel OFM in 1909. This well-prepared study on the history of the Franciscan Order was considered by the opponents of the Friars Minor as another attempt by the Observant family to present Franciscan history according to a specific interpretation that went against the Conventuals’ thesis that they were the direct descendants of the Friars Minor founded by Saint Francis in 1209, and against the Capuchins’ thesis that their reform was the most successful synthesis of all Franciscan reform movements, including that of the Regular Observance.

The Letter criticizes those who were stating that it was not possible to have two or three Ministers General of the Minors at the same time, one for each Order,
since Saint Francis in his Rule speaks of only one Minister General, and states that when these persons based their assertion upon the fact that the Church had only one Pope they were mixing divine law instituted by Christ, regarding the hierarchic nature of the Church, with canon law regarding religious Orders, which fell under the control of the same supreme authority of the Church.

The interpretation of Leo XIII’s *Felicitate quadam* is given great importance, regarding the role of the Minister General of the Friars Minor, the *Minister Generalis totius Ordinis Minorum*. The Letter states that this title does not mean in any way that the Minister General exerts any juridical power over the other Franciscan Ministers General.

The Apostolic Letter *Paucis ante diebus* seems to attack the Order of Friars Minor frontally regarding the fact that they alone did not have any other addition to the official name of the Order. The Letter uses tones, which not only surprise the reader, but which also place a great doubt over whether Pope Saint Pius X really was the brain behind such expressions. We shall see that other distinguished prelates were lobbying hard with Pius X to insist upon calling the Friars Minor with the name «Friars Minor of the Leonine Union», to the point of indicating a dubious historical proof, namely that the two Popes who united all Franciscan reforms into one family in 1517 and 1897 were both called Leo (Leo X and Leo XIII)!19

As a proof that the Franciscan family has to be regarded as one undivided whole, the Letter mentions the case of Franciscan saints, who are the common patrimony of all the Franciscan families, particularly those who lived before 1517, but even the other saints and blessed in the Franciscan calendar.

The Letter ends with two surprising notes. The Pope insists that the name *Friars Minor of the Leonine Union* has to be maintained, and that it was an insult on the part of the Franciscan Friars Minor to deny this name and choose the ambiguous name of Friars Minor without any other addition. He nevertheless gives the Friars Minor a choice to revert to their old name of *Friars Minor of the Regular Observance*, if they so wished. Finally the Pope imposed perpetual silence on the matter. *Roma locuta est. Causa finita est!*20

The instigators behind the name «Friars Minor of the Leonine Union»

Fortunately for the Friars Minor, “apart from the Secretariate of State, none of the Sacred Congregations chose to use the new title in their official communications. [Dionysius] Schüler [Minister General 1903-1911] also claimed that neither Vives y Tuto [Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for Religious] nor the Pope himself ever used the title *Order of Friars Minor of the Leonine Union.*”21

The brains behind *Septimo iam* seem to have been those of Cardinal José de Calasanz Vives y Tuto, who was a Capuchin friar and Prefect for the Congregation of Religious. He was born on 15th February 1854 at San Andrés de Llavaneras in Spain from a humble family. After studying in Barcelona he requested to be received among the Capuchins, and was accepted by Segismundo de Mataró, who was searching for new vocations in Guatemala. He entered the Capuchin Order in 1869 taking the name José Calasanz de Llavaneras. He continued his formation in California and eventually terminated his studies in Toulouse in France. He suffered from a nervous disorder, and in 1875 went to the Capuchin mission in Ecuador, but had to return to Europe the following year because of his illness. He was ordained priest on 26th May at Perpignan in 1877. After the suppression of religious Orders
from France, in 1880 he transferred to Barcelona. In 1884 he went to Rome to discuss the problem of the Spanish Capuchins, who had separated from the Order in 1804. The Capuchin Minister General Bernardo de Andrematt nominated him councillor to the cause of the reorganisation of the Order. His career in Rome progressed when Leo XIII nominated him councillor of various Congregations and visitator general to the Spanish Capuchins. He was one of those responsible for the organisation of the Latin American Plenary Council on 18th June 1899, and that same year he was created Cardinal Deacon of San Adriano al Forno. On 26th October 1908 Pope Pius X nominated him first Prefect of the Congregation for Religious. He was also instrumental in the redaction of the new Code of Canon Law. He died on 7th September 1913 when he was still 59 years old, probably because of his nervous disease.

According to Carmody, “Dionysius Schüler was convinced that the Ministers General of the Capuchins and Conventuals, with the added connivance of Cardinal Vives y Tuto, had collaborated in the production of the letter [Septimo iam]. He cited a document written by a certain Father Ladislao Bisconti. Bisconti had revealed information from a highly placed source in the Roman Curia to the effect that Vives y Tuto had commanded the Capuchins to compose a statement which had subsequently become the Pope’s apostolic letter, Septima iam.”

The reaction of Dionysius Schüler and the government of the Order was strong. The historical events that unfolded after the publication of Septimo iam led eventually to the great crisis that the Order faced in 1911, when Pope Pius X deposed Schüler and chose Pacifico Monza as Minister General. Monza was a member of the Venetian Province of ex-Riformati, and was staunchly against the unification of the Italian provinces, which followed upon Felicitate quadam. He tried to do all he could to convince the Pope to re-divide the Italian Provinces according to the old model of Observant and Riformati Provinces, and he eventually succeeded in doing so, again with the help of Cardinal Vives y Tuto, in such a way that by 1911 nearly all the Italian Provinces had been divided along the old model. This, however, is another story, that merits a separate paper.

Conclusion

We are aware that the historical facts we have outlined might be of little interest to Franciscan friars nowadays. Unfortunately we have tended to become less interested in our recent history, and do not always learn from our past mistakes. In the name of a vague sense of unity and uniformity, we tend to regard the Order’s tensions of a century ago with a sense of naiveté, and to criticise the Order’s choices then as anti-evangelical and anti-Franciscan. And yet, as history often shows, there were many intrigues behind the events that led to the unification of the Order of Friars Minor, and that also led to an attempt to bring about a total failure of that same unification. A hundred years have passed and we can now take a more serene approach at the turn of events in 1909. But let us not forget that what we are today is still largely the result of the successes and failures of that time, and that our merits and demerits are still reminiscent of what we came to be when the men at the top judged it expedient to unify four families of venerable historical and spiritual tradition into the one great family that came to be called simply «Order of Friars Minor».
NOTES

1 Giuseppe Melchiorre Sarto was born at Riese (Treviso), in the Veneto region of Italy, on 2nd June 1835, in a poor family. He entered the seminary in Padua and was ordained priest on 18th September 1858. He was a good pastor and governed the vacant see of the diocese of Treviso from 1878 to 1880. He also taught dogmatic theology and moral theology at the seminary in Treviso. On 12th June Pope Leo XIII made him Cardinal Priest of San Bernardo alle Terme, and then Patriarch of Venice. On 20th July 1903 Leo XIII died. On 4th August 1903 Cardinal Sarto was elected Pope and took the name Pius X. He chose the motto Instaurare omnia in Christo and embarked upon the revision of the liturgy, particularly the Breviary and the practice of frequent Holy Communion to be given even to children, the formation of the Code of Canon Law and the Catechism of the Church. He also took a strong stand against Modernism, by adopting a conservative theology based on Thomistic teachings. Pius X died on 20th August 1914 when he was 79 years old, Pope Pius XII declared him Blessed on 3rd June 1951, and then a Saint on 29th May 1954.


3 CARMODY, The Leonine Union of the Order of Friars Minor, 168.

4 LUKE WADDING, Annales Minorum, Vol. XVI, n. 209: “Ejusdem sunt parentis filii Observantes, et Capuccini, ejusdem Regulae professores: frates sunt, si non gemelli, saltem germani, eadem excisi petra, eodem utero progeniti.” (“Observants and Capuchins are sons of the same parent [one could also add Conventuals since they have the title of anteriority over the others], professing the one Rule. If not twins, they are brothers, full brothers at the least, carved from the same rock, children from the same womb”). English translation in CARMODY, 170.

5 CARMODY, The Leonine Union of the Friars Minor, 171.


8 PIUS X, Septimo iam, in AAS 1,18 (1909) 731: “Hae ipsa Nos affirmantes, volumus, iubemus, ut quotquot sunt de tenuis disciplinis Franciscalis Ordinis priimi, omnes non solum germani sed gemelli Fratres, omnes eodem Francisco nati eisdemque religiosae vitae documentis ad unam ipsius Regulam excului.”

9 PIUS X, Septimo iam, in AAS 1,18 (1909) 732: “Ordo primus sancti Francisci, si Patrem legiferum a quo conditum, si Regulam, qua utitur, specie, una est religiosorum familia: si vero rationem regimenmin et Constitutiones, quibus ex Apostolicae Sedis prae scripto gubernatur, in tres familias dividitur: quorum una est Fratrum Minorum, quae olim a Regulari Observantia dicebatur, quaque quum in quatuor sodalitias esset distincta, id est in Observantes, Reformatos, Alcantarinos, a Leone XIII fel. rec. ad unitatem revocata est, Ordinis Fratrum Minorum indito nomine; altera est Fratrum Minorum qui Conventuales audient; tertia Fratrum Minorum qui Capuccini appellantur.”

10 PIUS X, Septimo iam, in AAS 1,18 (1909) 732-733: “Familia, seu Ordo, Fratrum Minororum, cui quondam a Regulari Observantia nomen fuit, postquam a Leone XIII ex variis sodalitiis in unum redacta est, si ab Unione Leoniana appelletur, recte appelletur. Ea quidem «ex concessu Sedis Apostolicae antecedit loco et honore» ceteras Franciscalium familias, eiusque alumni «Fratrum
Minorum merum nomen a Leone X acceptum retinent», ut ait in Constitutione Felicite quadam Decessor Noster: sed tamen non sic hoc nomen interpretandum est, quasi in ipsa tantum familia omnis Ordo Minoriticus videatur consistere. Patet interpretationem huiusmodi et longe abesse a vero, et valde reliquis Minoritis non paucis esse inuersonam. Quoties igitur appellatio Ordinis Fratrum Minorum sine ullo apposito ambiguittatem haberet, oportere hanc familiam de qua loquimur, eiusque Moderatores et sodales, praesertim in actis publicis, propria peculiarique adjecta nota designari, vocarique Ordinem Fratrum Minorum ab Unione Leoniana, Moderatores et sodales Ordinis Fratrum Minorum ab Unione Leoniana, statuimus et sancimus.”

11 PIUS X, Septimo iam, in AAS 1,18 (1909) 733-734: “Titulus Ministri Generalis totius Ordinis Minorum, quo titulo utitur Minister Generalis familiae eiusdem quam ab Unione Leoniana appellamus, meri honoris est, nec quicquam iurisdictionis aut potestatis in ceteras Franciscalium familias notat. Minister Generalis Fratrum Minorum ab Unione Leoniana, item ex concessu Sedis Apostolicae, in omnibus coetibus sacris publicis, ubicumque lex de praesentia loci obitnet, Ministerum Generalem Conventualium, uteque autem Ministem Generalem Capucinorum praecedit. Tres Ordinis Minoritici familiae, quasi totidem rami sunt nobilissime arboris, cuius radix ac truncus Franciscus est. Propretiae Frateres Ministri non ad Uniones Leonianae, tum Conventuales, tum Capucini pari plenoque iure vero Franciscales, verique Fratres Minores et sunt et haber debent. Iademque non aliis antiquiores dicendi sunt, quandoquidem eorum omnium originem verum est repeti ab ipsa instituta Regula Seraphica, eius omnes observantiam sine uta intermissione continuaturn.”


14 PIUS X, Pauscis ante diebus, in AAS 2,18 (1910), 706: “Minores Conventuales profecto, ut corpus distinctum, ante annum MDXVII non exitterum: sed pariter Cum Reguli Observantia, ut corpus distinctum, ipso dumtaxat anno ac die, quo Conventuales, legitime esse coeperunt. Ante editam a Leone X Constitutionem Ite et vos, quae quidem prodiit die XXIX maii anni MDCCVII, non ex Conventualibus tantum, nec ex solis Observantibus constabat Ordo Minorum; sed ex utrisque.”

15 PIUS X, Pauscis ante diebus, in AAS 2,18 (1910), 706: “Nec vero fas est a Conventualibus nomen propriamque rationem abuicicare Fratrum Minorum, quasi Regulam Sancti Francisci in maximis quibusdam rebus non observent. Iniurium hoc est iis religiosis viris, qui, licet in quibusdam Regulae Seraphiche capitis, ex venia Sedis Apostolicae, mitiorem sequantur disciplinam, praecipita tamen consiliaque, in quibus ipsius Regulae summa consistit, numquam non observavant.”

16 PIUS X, Pauscis ante diebus, in AAS 2,18 (1910), 707: “Quod autem Minores Capucinii e Minoribus Regularis Observantiae orti sunt, non idcirco inferioris conditionis sunt habendi, multoque minus Fratrum Minorum pura simplicique appellazione privandi. Ipsi enim non aliis sunt, quam Franciscani sodales, qui, quam Regulae Seraphiche observantiam in sinu Familiae Observantium communiter usque a principio inuissent, eam ipsum deinde continuare cum severioris disciplinae studio
instituerunt, coalescentes seorsum in corpus Minoricum, canonice constitutum et Apostolicae Sedis auctoritate recognitum, sub Capuccinorum cognomine.”

17 PIUS X, Paucis ante diebus, in AAS 2,18 (1910), 707: “Persuadere autem velle, Familiam Fratrum Minorum Regularis Observantiae esse unicum, cuius perpetuas vitae legittimae inde a beato Franciscos ad hanc diem et historiae monumentis et iuris argumentis ostendi possit, contumeliosum est in duas reliquis Franciscalium Familias, ipsarumque iuri, ab Apostolica Sede sancto, contarium [...] Item falsa et duabus aliis Minorum Familias injuriosa sunt illa: vel successionem non interruptam pristini Minorum Ordinis tantummodo in Familia Fratrum Regularis Observantiae atque in serie Ministrorum eius Generalium inveniri, vel successorem Sancti Francisci legitimum, ob non interruptum decessorem seriem, nullum esse nisi Ministrum Generalum tutius Ordinis Fratrum Minorum, seu Regularis Observantiae.”

18 H. HOLZAPFEL, Manuale Historiae Ordinis Fratrum Minorum, Fribourg 1909. The Apostolic Letter Paucis ante diebus, AAS 2,18 (1909) 710, explicitly mentions Holzapfel’s study and challenges the historian’s thesis that it was a pity that the Friars Minor continued to use the adjective of the Regular Observance until 1897, when Leo X himself had given them the faculty to be simply known as Ordo Fratrum Minorum already in 1517: “Quin etiam huiusmodi appellatio apud ipsos Fratres in amore semper et in usu fuit: qua de re inimustam hanc querelam habet recens quoddam Manuale Historiae Fratrum Minorum (ubi alia non paucu insunt minime prohabe): «Dolendum est quod Ordo titulum Regularis Observantiae ita adavat, ut eum retineret ad annum usque 1897?» (It is to be regretted that the Order retained that title of the Regular Observance up till 1897, instead of simply accepting the designation which St. Francis had given and the Pope had expressly confirmed).”

19 PIUS X, Paucis ante diebus, in AAS 2,18 (1910), 709-711: “Nomen merum Fratrum Minorum Fratribus Regularis Observantiae certe Leo X dedit, idque, ut datum a Decessore fuerat, Leo XIII confirmavit. Sed utrusque Pontificis non ea mens fuit, ut huiusmodi appellatio nullum usquam appositum admitteret, etiam si ad vitandum ambiguamitatemvideretur necessarium; coeque minus, ut ipsa in instrumentum vereteretur inanis gloriae ad sodales ceterarum Familiae deprimendos. Etenim Leo X Fratribus, de quibus loquimur, facultatem quidem fecit, non necessitatem imposuit utendi eo mero nomine: nam, quom eo solemniter nuncupasset Fratres Minores Sancti Francisci Regularis Observantiae, nihilominus licturum eis dixit, vel simul vel disiunctive, usurpare hunc titulum, id est expresso tacitove cognomine Regularis Observantiae. Vix autem attinet dicere, hoc titulo non solum significari disciplinae laudem eorum sodalium propriam, sed etiam peculiaris notam, quae ipsos a ceteris Fratribus Minoribus distingueret. – Id vero, nec alid quidquam, voluisse Leonem X ex eo appareat, quod ipse paucis diebus post editam Constitutionem Ite et vos, in Litteris Apostolicis Cum in honorem die VI Iunii MDXVII, ac deinceps in alii plurimis Fratres Minores quos conuexarat, eos Fratres Minores appellat Regularis Observantiae, vel de Observantia, vel Ordinis beati Francisci Regularis Observantiae. Praeterea, Fratres commemorans duplicitias Familiae Minoriticae ab ipso constitutae, sic eos vocat, Fratres Observantes et Conventuales [...] Ceterum qui Leonem X subsecuti sunt Pontifices, similiter eodem Fratres Minores ab ipso coniunctos adiecto Regularis Observantiae cognomine designare consueverat. Ita Hadrianus VI, Clemens VII, Paulus III, Iulius III, Paulus IV, Pius IV, Pius V, Gregorius XIII, Xystus V, Clemens VIII. Neque aliter reliqui facieatamexcesseres Nostri usque ad promulgatam Constitutionem Felicitate quadam, qui fere, quem de his Minoritis loquerentur, appellationem Regularis Observantiae usurparunt. 

Hic igitur titulus sexcentis Apostolicius Litteris, maxime ab anno MDXVII ad annum MDCCCXCVII usitus, honestissimus fuit semper atque erat Familiae Minoriticae, de qua loquimur. Sed non minus honestus est ille quem Nos eidem attribuimus Fratrum Minorum ab Unione Leoniana: quippe recordationem continet duplicitis facti, uti memoria dignissimi, unionis scilicet semel a Leone X per Constitutionem Ite et vos, iterum a Leone XIII per Constitutionem Felicitate quadam peractae. Quod si tamen quis contederet, oportere semper nomen Fratrum Minorum adhiberi, omni appositione reiecta, ille sane suspicionem moveret, non tam se suae Familiae vindicare titulum, qui numquam tributus est ut proprius et peculiaris, quam velle abuit hoc ipso titulo ad ceteras deprimendas Familias, suam extollendam.

Summum Moderatore Fratrum ab Unione Leoniana saepissime Romani Pontifices non Ministrum Generalum totius Ordinis Fratrum Minorum, sed Ministrum Generalum Minorum de Observantia, vel Regularis Observantiae, vel Ordinis beati Francisci Regularis Observantiae, vel Ordinis Sancti Francisci de Observantia appellare soliti sunt. Ita Leo X post Unionem prosecute, eiusque proxime successorum in plurimis Litteris; ita ceteri decessores Nostri in non paucis usque ad Leonem XIII factitaturum, quemadmodum Apostolicae Sedis acta testantur. Quare is quidem titulum Ministri Generalis totius Ordinis Fratrum Minorum et ipse adhibere suo arbitrato poterit, et exigere a suis subditis, ut adhibeant; verumtamen, si sapit, indigne non feret, quod ab iis praesertim, qui suae ditionis
non sunt, ambiguitatis praeceptu vitae causa, cum appositione nominetur aut Unionis Leonianae, quae nota est historica, aut Regularis Observantiae, quod est insigne Familiae.”

20 PIUS X, Paucis ante diebus, in AAS 2,18 (1910), 712-713: “Praeterea quid sit causa, cur titulus historicus Unionis Leonianae nequeat Fratribus Minoribus, quibus inditus est, placere, non videmus; quam utriusque Leonis, X et XIII, magna in eam Familiam promerita indicet. – Item quare iste titulus Unionis Leonianae unionem ipsam intimam in discrimine adducat, quam Fratres non pauci ideo maxime ampleni sunt, ut simplex Fratrum Minorum nomen obtinerent, non appareat; nisi quod eos fefellit opinio, tribuentes huic nomini vim cuiusdam primatus supra ceteros Franciscales, quem quidem Apostolica Sedes numquam concessit. – Affirmare autem hoc titulo Unionis Leonianae magnam ignominiae notam Ordinis Minorum inustam esse, id enimvero inuirosum est Apostolicae Sedi, et longe alienum a Seraphico spiritu. Titulum in honorem duorum Pontificum et in memoriam duplicis praecelissimi facti datum, eumque per Litteras amoris benevolentiaeque plenas erga universam Minorum gentem, quibus Litteris honorifica quaedam privilegia Minoriticae a Regulari Observantia Familiae rata sunt, huiusmodi, inquimus, titulum nefas est vertere in ignominiam ipsius Familiae, quum eius potius cedat in gloriam. Sed enim ipsis tantum videri potest minus honestus, quibus obstat, quominus se sodalibus per iniuriam superiores iactent.

Nihilominus tamen, si Fratres Minores Unionis Leonianae malunt, quoties praesertim merum Fratrum Minorum nomen videbitur ambiguum, adhibeat titulum, antea usque ad Constitutionem etiam Felicitate quadam usitatum, Regularis Observantiae, id Nos quidem eis libenter concessuric sumus. Postremo universis et singulis Fratribus Minoribus trium Familiorum de quaestionibus huiusmodi perpetuum silentium imponimus; volunque ut ex omnibus is, utpote filius gemellus eius Patris sanctissimi, cor unum fiat et anima una.”

22 CARMODY, The Leonine Union of the Friars Minor, 208.