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EDITORIAL

FIVE CENTURIES OF DIVISION?

On 29 May we are commemorating 500 years of the publication of Leo X's Bull *Ite vos in vineam meam* in 1517. This papal document marks the definite division of the Franciscan Order in the two families of the Friars Minor of the Regular Observance and the Friars Minor Conventuals. Ironically enough, it should rather mark the unification of all the varied reformed families in the Franciscan Order under the umbrella of the Regular Observance. In itself, the same Regular Observance was divided in the Cismontane and Ultramontane families.

The year 1517 marks a watershed in Franciscan history. It is noteworthy that, during that same year, Martin Luther, and Augustinian friar and professor of moral theology at the University of Wittenberg, Germany, published the *Disputatio pro declaratione virtutis indulgentiarum*, or Ninety-five Theses of Disputations on the Power of Indulgencies, which marks the beginning of the Protestant reformation. 1517 marks the year of division in the Church and in the Franciscan Order.

Just as the Friars Minor of the Regular Observance became the most numerous and strongest among the Franciscan families, with the *Minister Generalis totius Ordinis* being chosen from their ranks and holding on to the seal of the Order, it seemed that the fate of the Friars Minor Conventuals was sealed. Yet they managed to survive. The Church saw to it that this family of unreformed Franciscans kept to its privileges and traditions, and continued along its journey in relative stability, even though it was relegated to an inferior prestige than the Regular Observance.

Just some years later, the Regular Observance was in crisis. It faced internal and external dissension and divisions. In 1525 the Friars Minor of the Eremitical Life appeared, who were to become the Friars Minor Capuchins. Within the same Observance, new reform families were born, not without tension and misunderstandings, as was the case of the Reformed Friars Minor, the Discalced or Alcantarines (who pre-existed the 1517 division under the Conventual nonreformed leadership as a reform *sub ministris*), and the Recollects. Political intrigues and interests played a major role in fomenting discord between the Cismontane and Ultramontane families of the Regular Observance. All was brought to an end in 1897 by Leo XIII with the reunification of the Regular Observance in the present family of the Order of Friars Minor.

To commemorate such an event seems to be an attempt to glorify the scandalous divisions within the Order. Many would today opt for a total annihilation of these divisions and for the birth of a unique Franciscan Order. They would say that time is now ripe, since ancient traditions and misunderstandings are overcome. More so, because we now face an acute shortage of manpower in all the Franciscan families. Some have even

advocated “leaving history to the study of the historians” and going forward in a new and fresh form of life.

Indeed, the divisions within the Order were a sign of decadence and weakness. Maybe they also created scandals. But few are aware that it was precisely in division that the Franciscan Order grew strong and was rejuvenated time and again. All reforms were born as seemingly divisive initiatives. The struggle to keep the Order united during the 15th century ended up miserably, for the simple reason that the reformed families in the Observance wanted the Conventuals to relinquish their nonreformed status, whereas the Conventuals did not want to relinquish their leadership role in the Order, even though their numbers had dwindled and the majority of the friars vowed allegiance to the Observant Cismontane and Ultramontane Vicars and only nominal obedience to the Conventual Minister General.

Leo X decided to turn tables in favour of the Regular Observance, without undue detriment to the Conventuals. His plans might also have been politically motivated, but he acted in good faith. Indeed, the time was ripe for a sweeping change in the Church, not only because of the Protestant reformation, but also because of the need to evangelise the New World. The Franciscan Observants were instrumental in venturing in this apostolate, with the help of the Spanish royals who were interested in reformed religious Orders in their new realms.

The knowledge of these historical factors is important to be able to look at 1517 as an opportunity for the development of the Order, and not only as a year of division and scandal. 500 years on we are now embarking upon the celebration of another *capitulum generalissimum* in order to recall this event, this time with the aim of showing how united we are. Thumbs up for the organisers of such an event. It marks a strong sense of goodwill on the part of the Franciscan family to move on forward in a spirit of mutual collaboration and unity. This, however, must not be done to the detriment of not being faithful to history and to the traditions we have inherited.

Experience has shown that, at every stage of our history, the Franciscan family has expressed its unique charism in varied and interesting ways. One of the ways is that of being faithful to one's own traditions and customs in the various families of the First Order. The care of the artistic and architectural patrimony of the Order, coupled with zeal for study and pastoral activity characteristic of the Conventuals; the decentralised structure of the style of government of the Friars Minor, in which provinces have been instrumental in furthering missionary activity and study, and the ability to live in international fraternities like the Custody of the Holy Land; the zeal for missions and popular pastoral care of the least in society characteristic of the Capuchins; these are just a few of the characteristics that have been handed down to us and which need to be shared with respect to the integrity of each family. To create an amorphous mould of these qualities in a new structure that does away with so-called divisions spells the death knell of what we have achieved with so much sacrifice.

This tendency is common when one feels numerous and spread out. It is less evident when one is more circumscribed in numbers and influence. To be able to work together, to create inter-Franciscan initiatives (such as one single Franciscan university), is praiseworthy, if it means that such initiatives do not forget the *quiddity* of what it means to be a Franciscan friar in one of the great families of the First Order. The Rule of Saint Francis binds us all together. History does not. It never has. From the very beginning. To respect this fact is not to foment division, but to nurture mature growth in true unity.

Noel Muscat ofm

THE BULL "ITE VOS IN VINEAM MEAM" 29 MAY 1517

Noel Muscat ofm

On 29 May 1517, exactly 500 years ago, Pope Leo X published the Bull *Ite vos in vineam meam*, by which he united all the reform families of the Franciscan Order into the one family of the Order of Friars Minor of the Regular Observance, and separated them from the non-reformed family of the Order of Friars Minor Conventuals. *Ite vos* marks a watershed in the history of the Franciscan Order. After half a millennium has passed we take a look at its contents and its implications in the subsequent unfolding of Franciscan history.

The event of the *Capitulum Generalissimum* of 29-31 May 1517 was the end result of a long history of reform and division in the Franciscan Order. It has been the object of study by many scholars of Franciscan history, all of whom have expressed their positive or negative judgements regarding its outcome and after-effects.¹ My aim is that of presenting the immediate preparations for this Chapter, the contents of *Ite vos*, and the subsequent unfolding of the Order's history, with the aim of providing a reflection on the continuing importance of this event in contemporary Franciscan history.

Conventuals and Observants during the 15th century

The Council of Constance (1415-1418) marked the end of the Western Schism. In 1417 a new Pope was elected for the entire Church, and he began to reside in Rome. His name was Martin V (1417-1431). The General Chapter of Forlì in 1421 elected Angelo Salvetti as Minister General. His successor was Antonio da Massa Marittima (1424-1430). Guglielmo da Casale was the next on the list of Ministers General (1430-1442). His generalate marked an important moment in the development of the Observant reform of the Order.

In 1430 Pope Martin V convoked a General Chapter in Assisi. During this Chapter new Constitutions were published, known as *Martinianae*. The author of this new set of Constitutions was Saint John Capistrano, and he wrote them with the aim of safeguarding the unity of the Order. In fact, Guglielmo da Casale accepted the principle of reform in the Order, particularly regarding the theme of poverty. But on 23 August 1430 the same Minister General renounced to the agreement stipulated between the Conventual and Observant families, and requested the Pope to dispense the Conventuals from the observance of the Martinian Constitutions. Martin V then published the *Breve* entitled *Ad statum*, in which he gave the Conventuals permission to retain and administer their common property through procurators. This document is known in history as the *magna charta* of Conventualism in the Franciscan Order.

"It was not long before a number of friars sought from Martin V absolution from the oaths which they had so lightly taken at Assisi. Among those who sought such relief was no less a person than William of Casale, the new Minister General, who begged the pope to allow him some relaxation of his oath before he set out on his long journey on a visitation of the provinces. Martin seems to have looked with favour upon these petitions, in spite of the fact that they threatened all hope of unity in the Order. The edifice so carefully built up by Capistrano was already beginning to crumble. The pope destroyed it altogether when, on 23 August 1430, he issued the bull, *Ad statum*, in which he gave the friars permission, through their procurators, to retain and enjoy any kind of property, real or personal, as long as legally it belonged to the Holy See."²

When Martin V died, the new Pope, Eugene

IV (1431-1447) became a staunch supporter of reform in the Franciscan Order.³ On 15 March 1431 Eugene IV published the Bull *Vinea Domini*, in which he explained how he would support the reform of the Friars Minor. He gave permission to the Observants to have their own Vicars General for the Cismontane and Ultramontane families. In 1431 the friary of La Verna passed over to the Observant reform. In 1434 Eugene IV declared that the Franciscan Observants were to be the sole custodians of the Holy Land.⁴ In 1437 the Pope nominated Saint Bernardine of Siena as Vicar General of the Cismontane Observants. During the exile of Eugene IV, in 1439, an antipope was elected, namely Felix V. This antipope was supported by the Franciscan provinces of Germany, and they elected Matthias Döring as a minister general of that faction within the Order.

Guglielmo da Casale died in 1442. The Chapter of Padua in 1443 was asked by Eugene IV to elect as Minister General Alberto da Sarteano, who had been Vicar General of the Cismontane Observants. The Conventuals, however, were against this nomination, and Alberto had to resign. Instead they elected Antonio Rusconi da Como (1443-1449), while John Capistrano was nominated Vicar General of the Cismontane Observants, and John Maubert as Vicar General of the Ultramontane Observants. At this stage it became clear that the division between Conventual and Observant families was inevitable.

On 11 January 1446, Eugene IV published the Bulla *Ut sacra Ordinis Minorum Religio*, which sealed the future separation between Conventuals and Observants. The Bull gave the Observants the right to elect their own Vicars General. The Minister General had to confirm them, and retained the right to visit all the friaries of the Order. No Observant friar could transfer to the ranks of the Conventuals, but the Conventual friars were free to pass over to the Observant reform if they so desired.

In 1445 the friary of Aracoeli in Rome was given to the Observants. In 1449 John Capistrano was re-elected Vicar General of the Cismontane Observants, and in 1450 Bernardine of Siena, who had died in 1444, was declared Saint. His canonisation was a triumph for the Observants. However, even before the definitive division of the Order, we cannot say that the Observant movement was truly united. There had already been various attempts at autonomy from the Vicars of the

Cismontane and Ultramontane families on the part of a good number of small reform families. This was especially the case in France and Spain, where many of the reforms preferred to remain *sub ministris*, rather than depend upon the Ultramontane Vicar General. The Cismontane Observants followed the Martinian Constitutions, whereas the Ultramontane Observants, as from 1451, chose to observe the Barcellona Constitutions, or *Statuta Barcenonenses*, published in that year by the General Chapter of the Ultramontane Observants.

Under the direct influence of Saint James of the Marches, on 2 February 1456, Pope Callistus III published the *Bulla concordiae*, which was an attempt to reconcile the Observants and the Conventuals. The Observants were ordered not to appropriate the friaries of the Conventuals.

The road towards the division of the Order (1464-1517)

In 1464 Francesco della Rovere was elected Minister General (1464-1469). Later on he would become Pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484). The Conventuals, after having lost the large friary of Aracoeli to the Observants, made their headquarters in the friary of Santissimi Apostoli in Rome. Francesco della Rovere tried to reform the Order, but with little success. It was during the time when he was Pope Sixtus IV that the Vicar of the Observants, Marco da Bologna, tried in vain to defend the cause of the reform during a consistory in front of the Pope, which marked an attempt to revoke the provisions of the Bulla *Ut sacra Ordinis* of Eugene IV.

Between 27 February and 10 April 1472, Pope Sixtus IV convened a consistory, in which he wanted to revoke the wide autonomy which the Observants enjoyed from the Conventual Minister General's jurisdiction, and which had been given to them by Eugene IV. It was during this meeting in front of the Pope that Marco da Bologna accomplished a courageous and risky act, which left the Pope dumbfounded, and convinced him to abandon his project of revoking the Bull *Ut sacra*. In front of all the participants to the consistory, Marco took the Rule of Saint Francis out of his sleeve and threw it in the middle of the consistory hall, and raising his eyes to heaven, shouted: "O most holy Father Francis, now you defend your Rule, since I cannot do anything else!" These

words surprised all those present, including the Pope.

During the General Chapter of Urbino Francesco Nanni Samson was elected Minister General (1475-1499). He was a moderate General in his approach to reform, and also tried to favour the Observants, but he was personally a convinced Conventual friar. He was against the efforts of Cardinal Francisco Ximenes de Cisneros, archbishop of Toledo, who with the authority of the royal family of Spain, was trying to forcibly reform all Franciscan Conventuals in Spain and make them submit to the authority of the Observant Vicar General.

The General Chapter of Terni elected Egidio Delfini as Minister General (1500-1506). He tried to encourage the reform of the Conventual family, and also asked the help of Pope Julius II (1503-1513). In 1506 he convoked a General Chapter in Rome to deal with the issue of reform, but his projects for the unity of the Order failed.⁵ He issued an encyclical letter in which he announced that the General Chapter had drafted a new set of Statutes, aimed at reforming the Order. These Statutes were approved by Pope Alexander VI on 7 April 1501, and are known as the *Statuta Alexandrina*. He travelled a lot, and tried to bring back the Conventuals to a less relaxed way of life, but also tried to compel the Observants not to break away from the Order, and not to hold on to their friaries, but to join the large Conventual houses. Both families rejected his pleas. He also tried to stop the effort of Cardinal Ximenes de Cisneros to boost the Observant reform in Spain to the detriment of the Conventuals, but even in this endeavour he failed miserably. The same thing happened in the case of the French Colettan friars, who were not ready to accept the Observant Vicars in the envisaged union of the whole Order which the Minister General was planning to achieve.

Pope Julius II, who succeeded Alexander VI and Pius III, was a strong supporter of the Order, and was surprised at the great success which the Observants had by now achieved in Europe, to the point that even secular princes were threatening to oust the Conventuals from their realms if the Pope did not show support towards the Observants. In the meantime, Egidio Delfini had summoned a *capitulum generalissimum* for October 1504, but it never met. The Observants had by now decided that they did not want to cooperate with a Minister General who wanted to unite them at all costs

with the relaxed Conventual family. At long last, Julius II himself convened a Chapter at Aracoeli in Rome, which relieved Egidio Delfini from his office and elected Rainaldo Graziano di Cotignola as Minister General.

The last Minister General before the definitive separation of the Order was Bernardino da Prato (1513-1517). By the beginning of the 16th century, the division between the Conventuals and Observants had assumed levels of a public scandal, and separation seemed to be the only option remaining in order to save the Order. Pope Leo X (1513-1521) decided to bring it about. On 11 July 1516 the Pope called for a *capitulum generalissimum* to convene in Rome for Pentecost, 31 May 1517, obliging all Franciscan families and reforms to be present, namely the Conventuals, Cismontane Observants, Ultramontane Observants, Amadeiti, Coletani, Clarení, *Fratres de caputio*, Reformed Conventuals and Discalced.

The Capitulum Generalissimum of 29-31 May 1517

The *capitulum generalissimum* met in Rome on 29 May 1517. From the beginning it was clear that the Observants were not favourable to a division of the Order, but at the same time they could not accept a Minister General who would not be a reformed friar. On their part the Conventuals defended their right to hold on to the papal privileges with a tranquil conscience. Leo X decided to publish the Bull *Ite vos in vineam meam* (29 May 1517). In the Bull he informed the Conventuals that they would have to renounce their right to elect the Minister General from among their ranks. The Order was to have one Minister General chosen from among the reformed families. Regarding all the other reformed families, the Pope ordered them to unite all together under the Observant reform, to drop all their different names, and to adopt the official title of *Ordo Fratrum Minorum* to which they could add *de Regularis Observantia*. The *Minister Generalis totius Ordinis Minorum* (Minister General of the entire Order of Minors) was henceforth to be elected from their ranks, for a period of six years, alternatively from the Cismontane and Ultramontane families. The seal of the Order would pass over to the new Minister General. Regarding the Conventuals, the Pope said that he would also provide for them in a future document.

Thus *Ite vos* marks the Bull of union of the Order, in the sense that it unified in a single family of the Regular Observance all the various reformed branches. At the same time it was also the Bull that declare the *de facto* separation between the Conventual and Observant families of the Order of Friars Minor.

Text of the Bull “Ite vos”

In order to better understand the importance of the Bull *Ite vos* and its effects on the subsequent history of the Order, I will present here my personal translation of the document from the original Latin version.⁶

“*You go into my vineyard* (Mt 20:4), said that landlord who had planted a vineyard. The Saviour and Redeemer of the world, our Lord Jesus Christ, although taking care of everybody, guides in a special way whatever he himself accomplishes. However, among the other plantations that through his heavenly Father he has planted in the Church militant, there is a certain vineyard, towards which he has shown such an ardent love, that he wants to call it as his very own wherever it is found. The farmer takes such a great care of this vine in a zealous and faithful manner, that he calls some to work in it early in the morning, others during the third hour, others during the sixth, ninth, tenth and even eleventh hour. This vineyard is the holy Religious family of the friars Minor, which is adorned with evergreen leaves, through the work of apostolic men, and extends its branches from one sea to another and from the river to the ends of the earth. It irrigates the mountains with the wine of wisdom and fills all the earth. This is the holy and immaculate Religious family, in which, as if in a spotless mirror, one can contemplate the presence of the Redeemer, namely the life of Christ and the form of life of the apostles, through which the primitive foundations of the Church gave the norm of life in the eyes of all Christian people. In all ways this way of perfection conforms to Christ, and it is not undeserving to say that it represents a way of conforming oneself to him. As soon as the sun rose, in the early morning, God sent the Founder to work in it, like the angel who ascends from the rising sun, bearing the seal of the living God, namely Saint Francis, who together with his company of holy men, first placed the foundations of this life. He was succeeded by holy friars

who, with Saint Bonaventure, then constructed the boundary wall of this vineyard, in order to preserve it from menacing ruin, during the third hour, with the power and help of the Trinity. After them, during the sixth hour, there arose several friars who were full of spiritual fervour, who were sent by the Council of Vienne, as if it was God himself who sent them and comforted them, in order to establish the rules of discipline, and return to its principles. During the ninth hour, which was the hour in which the Lord died, during times of evil and scandal for those who worked in this vineyard, the Lord aroused the youthful spirit of some friars, the leader and inspiration of whom was the Name of Jesus, taught with authority by Saint Bernardine, with the approval of the sacred Council of Constance. These friars gave new life to the Order in the entire world, since it was languishing and nearly dying out. In these last days, as if we were living the final hour, other men appeared who showed zeal for the house of Israel, at a time when some threw dust and tried to demolish the sacred place; in this way, with God’s help, wherever sin abounded, they cured it with the introduction of the rule of reformation, so that grace might be superabundant. But, just as occurred in the case of the parable of the Gospel regarding those workers of the vineyard, a great tumult and grumbling ensued, so that many kings, princes, communities and peoples spoke out; there were many serious disputes and contentions, which were the occasion of scandal to the superior level of perfection. As we have come to know, these have occurred among those who profess this Religious life in the entire world, and they are growing in intensity day by day.

§1. Since we were young we nurtured an ardent devotion towards those who profess the life of this Order and towards the entire Order itself. Since we are sustaining, without any merit on our part, the common care of the pastoral government, we need to recompose these disputes among the workers of the vineyard and to sedate the grumbling. In this way we can promote in a more ardent way the care of the evangelical way of life, and with an intent mind we can cultivate again the healthy fruit, which can continually be born out of their exemplary life and out of the healthy doctrine of the universal Church.

§2. We must not omit to recall the continual pleas of the Christian princes, especially our most dear son in Christ the emperor Maximilian,

Francis, the most Christian king of France; Charles, the Catholic king of Spain; Henry the eighth, king of England; as well as Emmanuel of Portugal and Algarve; Louis, king of Hungary and Bohemia; Sigismund king of Poland; as well as the illustrious king of the Christian Dacia, together with many other princes, dukes, counts, peoples and communities, who have addressed to us pious supplications and who do not cease to make recourse to us in the present, in order to placate the divisions that have arisen in the Order of Saint Francis.

§3. We have therefore convened to a secret consistory some of our venerable brothers their Eminencies the Cardinals, in order to study diligently the causes and concrete effects of these disputes, and to look for opportune remedies, in order to calm down these controversies, and we have examined them diligently. After mature discussions, which have been accomplished in a most diligent and faithful manner according to the provisions of law, we have made a report, and also thought about what actions we could take, and examined and treated them in our deliberations, in order to work for unity. Therefore, after serious and mature deliberation that we have carried out in this same consistory together with the cardinals of the Church of Rome, and with their unanimous counsel, we are now presenting our decisions in the words that will follow.

§4. The first thing that is evident to us is that there is a diversity of prelates, that is causing the disputes and divisions from the other friars who are not reformed, and that this state of affairs can go on without any limitation. For this reason we will and order that, as is laid down in the Rule of Saint Francis, there should be one single minister general for the entire Order, who will exercise full powers over all and single friars of the same Order, in all those matters that pertain to his office according to the Rule, and all the aforementioned friars are in conscience bound to firmly obey him in all those things which do not go against God, against their souls or against the Rule. This same minister general is to exercise his office for six years at the most; during this period, if it is evident at any time to all the ministers provincial and custodians that this minister general is not capable any longer for the service and common good of the friars, the same brothers are bound in conscience to organise the election of the minister general, and in the name of the Lord to elect another minister

for themselves. When the six-year mandate (as we have explained) expires, the minister general is *ipso facto* absolved from the office of general and thus absolved he should be considered by all.

§5. The election of his successor is the sole competence of the reformed ministers provincial and custodians, both those Cismontane and Ultramontane, gathered for the general chapter of the said Order, on the feast of Pentecost, in the place where the minister general, with the general chapter immediately preceding, has indicated. To this chapter all the ministers and custodians, in other words, all those called to participate, both Cismontane and Ultramontane, are obliged to be present. And in order that the head might not appear to be dissimilar from the body, we will and also order that no friar can be elected to the post of minister general, if he does not lead a reformed way of life, and if he is not considered to be a reformed friar by the community of the reformed friars. In this aforementioned election the minister general will not have a voice if he is not a reformed and if he is not considered to be a reformed friar by the congregation; in this way, if in the future anyone would attempt to do anything contrary to this disposition, let him know that his action will be considered invalid.

§6. Therefore, the upcoming election of the future minister general, to be held on the feast of Pentecost, in the friary of Aracoeli in Rome, is to be conducted according to what we have ordered in our letters where it is briefly described, and we order that all the reformed ministers and custodians, as well as the vicars and discreets of the Observants or of the Family are obliged to celebrate such an election. In this election of the minister general, which is to be done according to what is stipulated in the aforementioned Rule by the provincial ministers and custodians, and in order that the same election be celebrated without any scruples, we declare that all the provincials and vicars of the friars of the Family or of the Observance are truly to be considered to be ministers, and for the effect of the same election, we order and institute them to be ministers. We also declare that the discreets are similarly to be considered as being custodians. In this way we will that in those provinces, where up till now there have not been any reformed ministers, nor have they been considered to be such, and in which there are some reformed friaries, two friars should be elected from the aforementioned reformed

friaries, according to what we have expressed in the other letters we wrote briefly, in such a way that they make up for the voices of the non-reformed ministers and participate instead of them. The friars who are members of the congregation of the Amadeiti, Clarení, of the Holy Gospel, or of the *Caputio*, for each province, in which they have a friary, we concede that besides being represented by their vicars, they are to send two friars only for this election. We therefore define and also declare that these are the conditions so that this election, to be done by the aforementioned friars in order to elect their minister general, be canonical according to the Rule of the friars Minor and the form handed down to them by Saint Francis in the same Rule.

§7. So that within the Order, inasmuch as can be done with God, peace can be conserved, and so that there will be the utmost charity between the Cismontane and Ultramontane friars of the same Order, we order that whenever the minister general is elected for six years from the Cismontane friars, during the following six years he is to be elected from the Ultramontane friars; we will that this method should be observed alternatively by them in perpetuity. Truly, since we see that the same Order has spread in a marvellous way in the universal Christendom, and because of the great number of friars there should not lack the benefit of pastoral government, we order that whenever a minister general is elected from the family of the Cismontanes, in the Ultramontane section a general commissary is to be appointed, and he is to be elected by the same Ultramontane friars, in order to represent the minister general and govern over the Ultramontane friars in his stead, as it seems best to the general chapter. Also we order that the mentioned commissary should be subject to the minister general, as all the other prelates of the Order are subject, so that all will be bound to observe in every aspect whatever the Rule obliges.

§8. Whenever a minister general is elected from the ranks of the Ultramontane friars, in the same way a Cismontane commissary general is to be instituted, as has been explained and decreed above. The general commissary exercises his office for a period of three years; after three years have passed, a new commissary is to be chosen by the minister general in the general chapter, according to the way in which the Ultramontane family should take care to institute a commissary. On his part, the minister general, who is present for six years in his section of the Order, if he wants

to go to the other section of the same Order, for the period of time in which he is absent, he can leave the commissary in his place, on the counsel and according to the acceptance of the definitors of the general chapter. In those parts in which there is no general commissary for those six years, the minister general is obliged that during the first triennium of those six years he is to celebrate a general chapter, to which he is to convene all those on whose part he was elected; similarly he is to celebrate another chapter in that part from which he was not elected, either by being personally present or through the presence of his commissary. All the friars convened are obliged to go to that chapter; above all these friars must act according to what the general chapter has decided to be the course of action.

§9. Furthermore, regarding the ministers provincial in their provinces, in which the ministers up till now have not been reformed friars, or else in which there are no reformed friars, we decree, order and command, that the vicars of the friars of the Observance or of the Family of those respective provinces, from now onwards in perpetuity, are to be considered and called true ministers of those same provinces without any shadow of doubt. All the friars and each and every single one of them, as well as the friaries and hermitages of the same friaries, in those provinces, we order to be fully subject to them. We also concede in perpetuity to the general and other provincial ministers that authority and power that the general and the other provincials enjoyed before, namely to those who up till now were called Vicars or members of the Family, and we order that this attribute be given to them. We order the aforementioned friars also to observe in purity and simplicity the Rule of Saint Francis, so that, according to what has been decreed and ordered by us, they are to obey in all things the same ministers of those provinces, as the Rule prescribes.

§10. Finally, so that the ministers provincial will not lead once again the Order into ruin, we will and order in perpetuity to the same provincial ministers that they cannot continue to stay in their office for more than three years; after the three years have elapsed, they are absolved of their office by all the other friars.

§11. They can, however, within those three years, according to the custom (of the Order) and to (the prescriptions of) the Rule, be absolved from their office of provincials by the provincial

chapter, if they are found to be unworthy to the common good of the friars; the same procedure should be followed in everything in the case of the custodians.

§12. No friar can be elected to the office of provincial or custodian, or can have any voice in the same election, if he does not lead a reformed way of life, and is in communion with the reformed friars of his own province, by whom he is chosen to be in charge; all that which is done contrary to this provision is *ipso facto* null and void.

§13. Furthermore, since the Reformed friars observe the Rule of Saint Francis purely and simply, as we have often mentioned in our preceding paragraphs, we will and decree, that under the name Reformed and as being those who observe the Rule of Saint Francis purely and simply, one is to understand all those friars and each single friar of whom we speak, namely the Observants, both those of the Family, as well as those who are Reformed *sub ministris*, and the friars who are called Amadeiti, Colettani, Clareni, of the Holy Gospel, or *de Caputio*, and the Discalced, as well as all others, who are known by any other name and who observe the same Rule of Saint Francis purely and simply. Out of all these aforementioned friars who make up one and the same body, we will to unite them together in perpetuity, in such a way that from now onwards, they are to drop the diversity of the various names by which they are called, and they are to be called, and can and should be called **friars Minor of Saint Francis of the regular Observance**, either with or without this adjective. All of these friars and every single friar among them, as we have said, are to be united under one minister general and under the provincial ministers and custodians in the respective regions in which they live, and they are to be subject to them in everything and for all that is prescribed by the Rule. The Conventuals who want to continue living according to their privileges, are likewise obliged to be subjects and to obey the same minister general and the provincials, according to what we shall declare to be published in future documents.

§14. For the rest, in order that the stain of dissensions, scandals and party divisions be erased from this Order, we firmly decree and command, under pain of excommunication given *latae sententiae* and applicable *ipso facto*, from which nobody, except in the case of imminent death, can be absolved if not by us or by the Apostolic See, that no one among the friars of the Order of Saint

Francis can call another friar of the same Order with malicious names, with names that ridicule him or are abusive, such as “privileged colettan”, “bullista”, “amadeita”, “clareno”, “de Evangelio”, or “Caputio”, bigot or any other name, even if it is newly invented, from now and in the future, which would generate occasion for the return of the prior divisions of the same Order or constitute a threat to our holy institution and union, which have been formed through the grace of the Holy Spirit. No one can impose any kind of name for the sake of ridicule, or to be offensive, or to be abusive. All the friars, both clerics and lay, are to avoid that they personally, or through other persons who speak out for them, use the such names to refer to other friars in order to ridicule them or speak maliciously of them, but all the friars of this Order, as we have already stated, should be called friars of the Order of friars Minor or of Saint Francis.

§15. We also decree that, from now onwards, no reformed friar or prelate of the Order, not even the minister general, can send any friar to live in a friary which is not reformed or which is not prepared to receive a reformed way of life; an exception is made if the provincial chapter sees it convenient to let a friar who is considered to want to live a reformed life to go and live with the non-reformed. In this case the prelates can send the friar or other reformed friars to live with non-reformed friars. It is prohibited, under pain of excommunication *latae sententiae*, to all and to each Conventual friar who live according to the privileges, to receive among their fold friars who are reformed, except in the case mentioned above. In the same way, the aforementioned reformed friars, under the same pain of excommunication, cannot be exempt in any way from obedience to their own minister. And, in order that no new divisions be introduced in this Order, and so that no new conflicts be introduced in the Order, we will and firmly command under the power of holy obedience that, from now onwards, no new factions or reforms can be introduced in the aforementioned Order, without the express permission of the minister general or of the reformed ministers provincial in their respective provinces. We also command that all these reforms should be subject in all respects to the minister general and reformed provincials according to the Rule, as we have expressed above regarding all the other reformed friars.

§16. Therefore all the friaries, hermitages and other places where the friars of the Observance

or of the Family, or the other reformed friars *sub ministris*, with whatever name they were called in the past, and in which they now live and possess, we place subject to, and incorporate under the jurisdiction of, the same minister general and reformed provincial ministers in perpetuity. These same places can in perpetuity be held, possessed, governed and led by these same ministers and their successors who are reformed. Whenever there is a dispute regarding these, it should be presented in front of the ordinary or delegated judges, as well as in front of their Eminence the Cardinals and the protector of the Order, or in front of the auditors or apostolic commissaries of our holy Palace, both in the Roman Curia as well as in any other place subject to it, in any state or level, both regarding rights of possession or petition, or also regarding any other pretence that anybody might have on the rights pending on such places, even if these same places used to belong and to fall under the Obedience of the chapter of the friars Conventuals of the same Order. We now reserve to ourselves and extinguish all these pretences, and we impose silence on all the parties involved. All sentences and processes that have been handled by any judge, and all that has followed from these disputes, regarding places, friars or the goods that belong to them, and any other matters that were occasioned or caused by such disputes, we now declare extinct and annul.

§17. And nevertheless we command, order and decree that these same Conventual friars, as well as any other judges or any other person whatsoever, cannot go against this declaration of ours, by institutions, innovation, union or incorporation, whether in judgement or outside, and they cannot presume to attempt, procure, judge or pronounce, even in the case when these judges were instituted by us, or will be instituted in the future, under pain of excommunication *latae sententiae* and the privation of their benefices, which they have obtained, and any other abilities that they can obtain in the future.

§18. Then, according to the needs of the friaries, persons and customs, which are seen to lead to maintaining the reforms which, with divine grace have been introduced for the entire Christianity in this Order, in order to have just, providential and discreet statutes and ordinances, we want that the *capitulum generalissimum* that will now be celebrated will have as deputies and examiners, doctors and some among the most expert friars,

taken from diverse regions, so that everything and every single matter which pertain to the reform and to the true observance of the Rule and to the execution of these our constitutions, they should judge to accommodate, so that they will collect all these provisions into one set of laws to be approved by the entire chapter, or by the majority of its members, and in order to have them empowered by our apostolic confirmation.

§19. Nevertheless the existent general auditor *pro tempore* of the Apostolic Chancery, as well as all the archbishops and ecclesiastical prelates, and whoever is constituted as a person to ecclesiastical dignity, through this apostolic writing we command that they and each and every one of them should accept these our letters, and when it is their duty to do so, and whenever on the part of the aforementioned general or reformed provincial ministers or anyone who represents them are requested to do so, they should solemnly publish, and be efficacious to defend these friars and give them all their assistance, so that they ensure that all and each one of these said friars can peacefully enjoy and make good use of these provisions, and they should not permit anybody, whatever his authority may be, to hinder them in any undue manner. In the case of those who contradict the ecclesiastical censures and other remedies of law, if need be, one can invoke the help of the secular arm, so that they are silenced.

§20. In spite of any other apostolic letters and indults, also those of the sacred Councils of Constance, the friars of this Religious order, the families and congregations or any one among them, both their authors and institutors, Conventuals or reformed friars of the Family, under any form of words, solemn declarations and powerful and unusual clauses, given or maybe to be given in the future, even if such provisions exist, and even if they are of a special tenor, which is expressed, individual or a word referring to what has already been decreed, and whatever has been permitted, we hereby derogate from all these provisions, and from everything which is contrary to them whatever its nature.

§21. For the rest, since it is difficult for our present letters to be sent to all the places, wherever these provisions should be executed, etc.

No one is therefore authorised, etc.

Whoever dares to attempt to do so, etc.

Given in Rome at Saint Peter, the year of the Incarnation of the Lord one thousand five hundred

and seventeen, on the 4th day of the calends of June, the fifth year of our pontificate.

(29 May 1517).

The Bulla unionis becomes a Bulla divisionis

On 29 May 1517, the same day in which Leo X published *Ite vos*, he appointed Bernardino Prati da Chieri, the last Conventual Minister General of the unified Order of friars Minor, as bishop of Athens *in partibus infidelium*. By doing so he cleared the way for the election of the new *Minister Generalis totius Ordinis Minorum*, who was to be chosen from the ranks of the newly-unified reform branch of the Order, namely the Family of the Observants. On 30 May the Conventuals proceeded to elect their new *magister generalis* (Master General) in the person of Antonio Marcello da Cherso, who would now reside in the friary of Santissimi Apostoli in Rome. Their fate was not yet clear, since the Pope said that he would provide a document relating to the status of the Conventuals, as we shall see. In fact, they never accepted the fact that their superior general would be called *magister* and not *minister generalis*, and continued to refer to him as the Minister General, directly descending in the order of minister generals from Saint Francis.

Sunday 31 May was the solemnity of Pentecost. The following day, 1 June 1517, in the friary of Santa Maria in Aracoeli, the ministers and custodians of the Family of the Cismontane and Ultramontane Observants, with the delegates of the congregations of what used to be the reformed friars *sub ministris*, namely the Amadeiti, Clarenì, Colettani, and friars of the Holy Gospel, or Guadalupensi, met to elect the minister general of the Order from among the ranks of the Observants. The Bull *Ite vos* had the aim of being the Bull of union of all these various families of reformed Franciscans, but at the same time it had divided them from the family of the unreformed Conventuals. Three cardinals presided over the election, the cardinal protector Domenico Grimani, Pietro degli Accoliti and Lorenzo Pucci, sent as personal delegates of Pope Leo X. At the first ballot the majority of votes went to Cristoforo Numai da Forlì (1517-1518), who had been Vicar General of the Cismontane Observants. He received the title of *minister generalis totius Ordinis Minorum*, as the 44th in line in the list of ministers general from the time of Saint Francis.

On 1 July 1517, exactly one month after his election, Pope Leo X created Cristoforo Numai as cardinal.

The problem of the Conventual family of the Order was still pending. The Pope decided that he had to provide a fair status to the unreformed family of the Order, which had, up till 1517, been at the helm in the government of the unified Order. Indeed, one can say that, ever since *Ad statum* of 1430 and maybe even going back to the time of Gerard Eudes (1329-1342), conventualism had been very much at the forefront in the Order of friars Minor, and had coexisted with the various efforts at reform and return to the primitive simplicity of the Rule, starting with the Spirituals (and the Fraticelli, condemned in 1317), on with the first reform movement in Umbria by Giovanni da Valle in 1334 and Gentile da Spoleto in the friary of Brogliano, to develop in the Italian reform of the Observance by Paoluccio Trinci da Foligno in 1368. Ever since the Italian Observants had increased in strength and numbers, particularly with the fame of the “four pillars” of the reform, Bernardine of Siena, John Capistrano, James of the Marches, and Alberto da Sarteano, the Conventuals had decreased considerably. However, they still retained the leadership of the Order, with the Observants having the autonomy of living under the obedience of their respective Cismontane and Ultramontane Vicar Generals. Now that the various reforms, including the ones who had sought refuge under the Conventual ministers (reforms *sub ministris*) had been forcibly unified into the large Order of friars Minor of the Regular Observance, the Conventuals had to defend their position and status for the future, also in face of the fierce opposition that they were finding in countries like Spain, where the Catholic royal family and Cardinal Francisco de Cisneros of Toledo worked hard to make all Franciscans of the Conventual family join the reform movement or else face extinction.

That is why Pope Leo X taught it wise to defend the Conventual family by publishing his own dispositions regarding their Order in the Bull *Omnipotens Deus* of 12 June 1517. We shall now present a partial translation of the contents of this important document, and afterwards draw the conclusions of the initiative of Leo X, both regarding the union of the Observants and all reform families and regarding the status of the Conventuals.

*The Bull “Omnipotens Deus” (12 June 1517)*⁷

“God Almighty, whose works are perfect, and who made everything in his wisdom according to its number, weight and measure, and who governs all creatures with his intelligence, established the Roman Pontiff on the Catholic Church, so that he would know what is best for the honour of God and for the salvation of the faithful ... In these last days we have convened the *Generalissimum Capitulum* of the entire Order of Saint Francis, and we ordered that it be celebrated in the friary of Aracoeli in Rome, with the aim of bringing about the universal union of the aforementioned Friars under one reformed leader ... With our Apostolic authority we have established and ordered that, from now onwards in perpetuity, the Minister General of the entire Order of Saint Francis will be chosen only by the reformed Friars of this Order, who live without privileges concerning their temporal goods. All Friars and each single Friar are obliged to obey and to be subject to him according to the Rule of the same Saint Francis.

From now onwards, the Conventual Friars who want to hold on to the privileges that the Apostolic See has conceded to them, including their incomes and possessions, and the other temporal goods that pertain to them according to the same privileges, have the permission to do so empowered by our other declarations and ordinations. We order that they elect one of these same Friars Conventuals who lives an exemplary way of life, who will be called their **Master General**. He has the duty to take care of the same Friars Conventuals with the privileges they enjoy. His election has to be confirmed by the aforementioned Minister General of the entire Order, as has already been fully explained in our preceding declarations.

In the *Capitulum Generalissimum* celebrated in the friary of Aracoeli by the reformed Friars, in which with our authority were present the Protector of the same Order, and other two Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church who acted as our deputies, in the day which we fixed, the Friars who had active voice to elect the Minister General, chose our dear son Cristoforo da Forlì, who had since then been Vicar General of the Friars Minor of the Family. He was thus chosen in the post of Minister General of the entire Order of Saint Francis according to the rule of law. The Friars Conventuals, who

live, as we have said before, according to their privileges, have gathered legitimately in the friary of Santissimi Apostoli in Rome, belonging to the same Order, and have chosen our beloved son Antonio Marcello, of a praiseworthy life, to the post of Master General of the Friars Conventuals and have elected him in the same manner. When we were informed of the elections of the Minister and the Master of the same Friars, according to the ordinations that we had given them, and through the working of the Holy Spirit, we declared that the union was established with the highest degree of charity and peace. We therefore bless the aforementioned Antonio who was elected in our presence to the office of Master General of the Friars Conventuals, and with our benediction we also accept the confirmation that he is obliged to ask of the aforementioned Minister General, and we will that this will be given to suffice what we ordered. We also will that through Cristoforo the Minister and Antonio the Master who have thus been elected, and through their successors, the Friars who are subject to their prosperous and happy government, can live in community in peace and tranquillity, and we have thought about the importance of providing for such a situation, in which the good fame of the same Friars will be upheld among all the Christian faithful and in front of the Kings and Princes of the Christian religion...

With our personal knowledge and mature deliberation with the Cardinals, we have been led to take this decision: namely, that the successors of the aforementioned Antonio, Master General of the Friars Conventuals, who are elected *pro tempore* by the same Friars Conventuals, need to be confirmed by the same Minister General and his successors the Ministers General of the entire Order, in the same way as the Vicars General of the Family used to be obliged to request confirmation (from the Conventual Minister General). The Master who is elected *pro tempore* to govern the Friars Conventuals of Saint Francis, according to what we have decreed, has to be called in perpetuity Master General of the Friars Conventuals...

Regarding those friaries, as well as the Monasteries of the Nuns who are subject to the Master General of the Friars Conventuals, we understand and will that according to the Apostolic or other authority that made them subject the authority of the Minister General before the celebration of the said *Capitulum Generalissimum* that has recently been held in the aforementioned

friary of Aracoeli, and over whom the Minister General of the Conventuals had jurisdiction, and especially the friary or (Sacro) Convento of Assisi, and that of *Sancti Salvatoris de Urbe*, as well as many other places and Monasteries of the Nuns, who were immediately subject to the same Minister General: they are to remain in perpetuity immediately subject to the Master General of the Conventuals, except in the case of those friaries and places, as well as Monasteries of Nuns, which we have united with the reformed Friars by our decrees, and which we will that they remain in all subject to the General and Provincial Ministers of their respective Provinces...

In order that no disputes or contentions arise between the Reformed and Conventual Friars aforementioned regarding precedence, we will and also decree that the following order should be observed among them: namely, that during processions and funerals, as well as in all the other public acts, the Friars Conventuals are obliged to relinquish their more privileged position in favour of the Friars of the Regular Observance..."

The Bull *Omnipotens Deus* is known as the *Bulla concordiae*, because it was meant to give the Conventuals enough autonomy and dignity that they could develop independently of the Reformed family of the Observants which now had the supreme government of the entire Order of friars Minor. The effect, however, was not that desired by Pope Leo X. The Conventuals were not prepared to relinquish their ancient traditions and privileges. For one thing, they never accepted that their superior general be called *Magister* and not *Minister Generalis*, and never used this title in their official documents. It seems that the Roman Curia did not insist on this matter and so the Conventuals continued calling their General by the name of Minister and considering him as the legitimate successor of Saint Francis.

The Conventuals, however, did acquire the right to defend their privileges and possessions, in a particular way their custody of the Sacro Convento of Saint Francis in Assisi, as well as many of the other large friaries which had given them their specific name of *Conventuales*, that is, friars of the Convents, who administered Conventual Churches.⁸

An interesting note regards the precedence that the Conventuals lost in favour of the Observants. On 6 December 1517 Leo X had to intervene once again in a more forceful manner, through an

apostolic letter entitled *Licet alias*, to insist that the Friars Minor of the Order of Saint Francis of the Regular Observance had to take precedence over the Conventuals during processions and other public acts.⁹ The document repeats the provisions of *Omnipotens Deus*, but adds an interesting note:

"These same friars of the Observance and the reformed are truly and without any doubt friars of the Order of Saint Francis who have always observed his Rule, and with the aid of divine grace, will in the future also observe the same Rule of Saint Francis without interruption or division as they have done so up to this very day. They have lived and fought in favour of this Rule, and so they do to the present; in such a way that in everything we order that everyone is obliged to observe what we are commanding."

It seems that the Conventuals were very reticent in accepting these provisions. On 11 June 1517, on the occasion of a procession in the Basilica of Saint Peter, the Conventuals did not want to cede their precedence to the Observants and refused to recognise Cristoforo Numai as the Minister General of the Order.

The aftermath of "Ite vos"

The *Bulla unionis* had given the Friars Minor of the Regular Observance a significant victory over the Friars Minor Conventuals, and helped them to become the strongest and most numerous Franciscan family for the coming centuries. The *Bulla concordiae* had given the Conventuals an assurance of autonomy and the possibility to coexist as an important religious order side by side with the Observants, although it had lost its privilege of being the family from which the Minister General was chosen. Having said this, however, one cannot help to notice that the Conventuals never truly accepted the provisions of *Ite vos*, and they continued to develop as if they were the one and only Franciscan family that found its origins in Saint Francis. Subsequent historiography coming from the pen of the Conventuals always insisted that the Order of Minors that Francis founded in 1209 corresponded to the mainstream Community (*Communitas Ordinis*) that chose to live the Franciscan rule and the vow of poverty according to the Papal interpretations and privileges in a "conventual" setting, very akin to a monastic structure, but also open to pastoral ministry and

learning in the large cities, as opposed to the Franciscan reform movements that preferred the *loca non conventualia*, or hermitages, and which were prone to extremist elements, that had been condemned by the Church, as in the case of the Fraticelli in 1317.

Although they were numerically reduced, the Conventuals could rely upon a strong tradition of stability, which continued to flourish along many centuries, up to this very day. It is fair to state that the Conventual family of the Order, although being regarded as unreformed, was also a school of sanctity and produced many eminent theologians. It held particularly dear to its tradition the defence of the privilege of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, which was also held dear by the Observants, and can boast the merit of having been the custodian of such eminent sanctuaries as the Tomb of Saint Francis in Assisi and that of Saint Anthony in Padua. Yet it had lost the Holy Land Custody to the Observants already in 1439, and was persecuted particularly in Spain, where it faced the danger of extinction by the forced reformation of the Franciscan family under the umbrella of the Regular Observance. It had been excluded from the evangelisation of the New World by both Spain and Portugal, in favour of the Observant family which ended up being the most numerous and strongest religious family in places like Mexico and California. At the end of the day, however, although losing its precedence and former hegemony of government, the Franciscan Conventual family succeeded in surviving all attempts to eradicate conventualism in religious life, as happened in the case of the Order of Preachers during the pontificate of Pius V (1566-1572).

On their part the Observants could very well be content that *Ite vos* had succeeded in uniting under one great family all the reform branches of the Order. But was this true? Indeed, it was not. To begin with, the Observants had their day in 1517, but it was short-lived. Their battle to retain unity in the Order was sincere, but it could only be achieved by relinquishing their ideal of reforming the entire Franciscan family. They were also fortunate in that Church politics during parts of the 15th and early 16th century were in their favour. Eugene IV had been a staunch supporter of reformed religious Orders and had given glory and prestige to the Observants, particularly with the help of great men like the so-called “four pillars” of the

Italian Observance. The Cismontane Observants, in particular, were enthusiastic about the project of the building of Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome, under Julius II, starting in 1506. Everybody knows what this project implied for the history of the Church, and it is precisely within the context of this historical moment of division in the Church that one must understand the division within the Franciscan Order, and the subsequent divisions that resulted within the same family of the Regular Observance.

The Observants were of great service to Leo X to raise funds for the building of Saint Peter’s. “Although not all the financial details are known, it is clear that the Observants had considerable success. In four years (1514-1518), during the pontificate of Leo X, they raised sixty per cent of the total income for the project: 55,159 ducats in gold and other money out of a total of 92,282 ducats. These figures assume additional importance when one considers them within the context of the crusade that Conventuals and Observants were waging each to have their branch declared the one most faithful to Saint Francis, the genuine Franciscan Order. From July 1516 until June 1517, the year of decision, the Observants raised 26,041 ducats compared with the Conventuals’ 1,200 ducats. It is hard to imagine that these figures did not have some bearing on who won the papal blessing.”¹⁰

Besides this “political” manoeuvring within the ecclesiastical sphere, one should keep in mind the “political” manoeuvring also within the same ranks of the reformed family of the Franciscan Order. Indeed, the term Friars Minor of the Regular Observance referred to a mixture of reform families that were, in practice, quite different one from another. For one thing, the great Observance was born on both divides of the Alps into what became the Cismontane and Ultramontane families. Such a distinction never disappeared, and continued to be instrumental in the structure of the Regular Observance even after the Bull of union *Felicitate quadam* of Leo XIII (4th October 1897), which again forcefully unified all reform movements born within the Observance after 1517 into the family of the Friars Minor *simpliciter dicti* (*Ordo Fratrum Minorum*). The Italian Observance was very different from the Spanish or French or even German groups. Although the Cismontane Observance was very influential, covering the Italian peninsula and other regions like Poland and especially the Holy Land, the Ultramontane

Observance remained very much aware of its autonomy. The difference between the Italian and Spanish style of Regular Observance was a key factor in the choice of Ministers General of the Order for many centuries, and was also evident in the Holy Land Custody.

Indeed, the Observance can only be understood as an agglomeration of “Observances”, a good number of which were born outside the Cismontane or Ultramontane Regular Observance, and found their protection and assurance of survival in the Conventual non-reformed family, by choosing to stay *sub ministris*, under the Conventual Ministers, and not *sub vicariis*, under the Observant Cismontane or Ultramontane Vicars. In 1517 the situation was brought to a clear-cut distinction: either join the non-reformed Conventual family as non-reformed, or else be reformed under the umbrella family of the Regular Observance. There was great resistance on the part of some of the reformed groups, and only under Pius V was the problem finally solved.

One last important factor in considering the after-effects of *Ite vos*, is that of noting how, on the morrow of the *Bulla unionis*, the same great family of the Friars Minor of the Regular Observance had to face dissension within its own ranks. Indeed, the irony of history shows that the initial reform fervour of the Observants in the late 14th up to the mid-15th centuries had waned by the beginning of the 16th centuries. The mainstream Regular Observance had become, in so many ways, another form of mitigated Conventual family in the Order. This factor is of utmost importance if one is to understand why the need for new reform families began to be felt immediately. The general government responded only half-heartedly, first by the institution of the Houses of Recollection in various Provinces, with the aim of providing those friars who wanted to observe the Rule in a literal way an occasion to do so while remaining in the great family of the Observance.

By 1525 we know that the solid structure of the unified religious family of the Regular Observance was shaky. The Capuchin reform, initiated by Matteo da Bascio, and already fully operational as a great reform branch by 1528, with the support of influential persons in the Roman Curia, as well as the Reformed Family within the same Regular Observance, were signs that many friars were uneasy about the achievements of *Ite vos* in 1517.

The idea that a “mitigated” style of Franciscan

observance could be lived in order to avoid the extremes of the “relaxed” life the Conventuals and the “radical” life of the Capuchins and other similar reform movements, has for many centuries been the thesis supported by Observant historiography. Indeed, it could only function because of imposition from above and forced unification. In practice, it did not succeed. For one thing, the family of the Regular Observance was unified under the government of the Minister General of the entire Order, but for the rest it retained the freedom of giving a large degree of autonomy to the various unified branches, and of respecting the diversity between the Cismontane and Ultramontane families. Maybe because of the numerous quantity of friars within its ranks, and also because of its geographical spreading in all parts of the known world, the family of the Regular Observance had to struggle to maintain its unity all along its history. Even when the various reform movements born before or after 1517, namely the Reformed, Discalced and Recollect families within the Regular Observance, were finally united into the Order of Friars Minor in 1897, things did not function as Leo XIII and Luigi da Parma, the Minister General, had hoped. The Order continued to struggle between its greatness as the principal Franciscan family of the First Order and its structure of being a “confederation” or “conglomeration” first of reform movements, and more recently, of Provinces, thus giving the Ministers Provincial wide autonomy of action and limiting the powers of the Minister General.

Maybe one could look at these factors as a weakness in the Order’s history. There were also positive factors, however. The great initiatives of evangelisation of the Friars Minor during these last 500 years, their unique experience of internationality in the Holy Land Custody, were all the result of this ability to create a balance between over-centralisation (evident in the case of the Capuchin reform) and a relative degree of autonomy of the constituent elements and entities of the Order.

The 500 years of *Ite vos* could be considered as an anniversary in which we, as Franciscans, look back and denounce our sad divisions as having been a scandal which we can no longer afford to perpetuate. Indeed, this could be the idea one gets when one hears comments regarding the need to re-unify the entire Franciscan family into one homogenous mould. History shows that such a

solution has never worked out and it is destined to be short-lived. The Franciscan spring was born intrinsically as a movement of reform, and reform is never possible without division. It is all a matter of looking at division as a sincere attempt to arrive at unity in diversity, and concord in fraternal relations. These are the guarantee for a future in which our history, as Franciscans, will not be betrayed by the pseudo-values of those who want to forget history and re-invent, or re-found, one of the greatest religious families in the Church.

NOTES

- 1 A. BARTOCCI, *La Bolla "Ite vos" di Leone X: Lettura ed esegesi di un atto di separazione tra Francescani Conventuali e Osservanti*, in *Studi Francescani* 112 (2015), n. 3-4, 359-397; G. BUFFON, *Storia dell'Ordine Franciscano. Problemi e prospettive di metodo*, (Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura), Roma, 2013, 147-148; M. CARMODY, *The Franciscan Story. St. Francis and his influence since the thirteenth century*, (Athena Press), London, 2008, 361-364; D. DE GUBERNATIS, *Orbis Seraphicus. Historia de tribus Ordinibus a Seraphico Patriarcha Sancto Francisco institutis*, Lugduni, 1685, 228-229; L. DI FONZO, *La famosa bolla di Leone X 'Ite vos', non "Ite et vos" (29 maggio 1517)*, in *Miscellanea Franciscana* 45 (1945) 164-171; H. HOLZAPFEL, *Manuale Historiae Ordinis Fratrum Minorum*, Friburgi-Brisingoviae, 1909, 135-139; G.G. MERLO, *Nel Nome di San Francesco. Storia dei Frati Minori e del francescanesimo sino agli inizi del XVI secolo*, (Editrici Francescane), Milano, 2003, 232-259, 366-381; J. MESEGUER FERNANDEZ, *La bula "Ite vos" (29 de mayo de 1517) y la reforma cisneriana*, in *Archivo Ibero-Americano*, II época, 18 (1958), 257-361; J.R.H. MOORMAN, *A History of the Franciscan Order. From Its Origins to the Year 1517*, (Franciscan Herald Press), Chicago, 1968, 569-585; D. NIMMO, *Reform and Division in the Franciscan Order*, (Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini), Roma, 1995, 640-642; P. SELLA, *Leone X e la definitiva divisione dell'Ordine dei Minori: La Bolla "Ite vos" (29 maggio 1517)*, Frati Editori di Quaracchi, Grottaferrata, 2001.
- 2 MOORMAN, 447-448.
- 3 MOORMAN, 448: "An Agustinian canon, Eugene showed at once that he was interested in reform ... He had himself been involved in the reform movement of his own Order, and was naturally sympathetic to those who wished to restore something of the primitive simplicity enjoyed by the early Franciscans. He was, moreover, an old friend of Capistrano who called upon him shortly after his election and pleaded with him to take up the cause of reform as supported by the Observants."
- 4 St. John Capistrano was sent as Visitor to the Holy Land Custody. G. GOLUBOVICH, *Biblioteca Bio-Bibliografica della Terra Santa e dell'Oriente Franciscano*. Nuova Serie – Documenti, Tomo VI: Cronache o Annali di Terra Santa del P. Pietro Verniero di Montepeloso, Quaracchi, 1939, 4: [1438] "Trovassi che nel medesimo anno vi fusse stato Commissario il Beato fra Giovanni da Capestrano mandato dal medesimo Pontefice, per visitare e riformare i Santi Luoghi e prenderne il possesso in nome de' frati dell'Osservanza." Cfr. L. WADDING, *Annales Minorum*, an. 1437, n. 24; an. 1439, n. 13. Capistrano did, in fact, go as Visitor to the Holy Land, but only in 1439.
- 5 MOORMAN, 569-570: "When the Conventual friars met for their General Chapter at Terni in October 1500 they had been for nearly a year without a Minister General. Samson, after twenty-four years in office, had died at the age of eighty-five, and the friars now decided to elect in his place Giles Delfini, a man of ability and determination who had held office as Provincial Minister of Umbria ... Living himself the life of a true Friar Minor, he set himself to restore to the Order some of those qualities which had brought the friars the love and loyalty of the people in past generations ... But he failed. 'Had he lived earlier,' says Holzapfel (*Manuale*, 128), 'he would doubtless have been remembered as the saviour of the Order. But he was too late.' His policy, admirable though it was, found few supporters. The Conventuals distrusted him because they felt that he was far too lenient with the Observants in the matter of their obedience to the Minister, and the Observants disliked him because it seemed to them that he was trying to rob them of their independence. In spite, therefore, of the energy and courage of Giles Delfini, his generalate of six years, from 1500 to 1506, achieved very little, and the Order slowly drifted towards division."
- 6 LEO X, *Ite vos in vineam meam*, in L. WADDING, *Annales Minorum*, Vol. XVI (1736), ad an. 1517, 42-48; *Bullarium Diplomatum et Privilegiorum Sanctorum Romanorum Pontificum*, Tomus V, Torino, 1860, 692-698.
- 7 LEO X, *Omnipotens Deus* in L. WADDING, *Annales Minorum*, Vol. XVI (1736), ad an. 1517, 51-54.
- 8 G. ODOARDI, *Conventuali*, in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, Vol. 3, Rome 1976, 4-94. The Bull of Innocent IV regarding conventual churches in the Franciscan Order is entitled *Cum tamquam veri* (April 5, 1250 and August 21, 1252), in *Bullarium Franciscanum* I, 538 and 622.
- 9 LEO X, *Licet alias*, in *Bullarium Diplomatum et Privilegiorum Sanctorum Romanorum Pontificum*, Tomus V, Torino, 1860, 711-712.
- 10 M. CARMODY, *The Franciscan Story*, 363.

THE BULL "ITE VOS": A READING AND EXEGESIS OF THE SEPARATION OF THE FRANCISCAN CONVENTUALS AND OBSERVANTS

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Partial translation from: A. BARTOCCI, *La Bolla "Ite vos" di Leone X: Lettura ed Egesi di un atto di separazione tra Francescani Conventuali e Osservanti*, in *Studi Francescani* 112 (2005), n. 3-4, 359-397.

The disputes in the Order of Minors and the preparatory minutes of Ite vos

The controversies between the Observants and Conventuals, which preceded the publication of the Bull *Ite vos* of Leo X in Rome on 29 May 1517,¹ are documented by numerous normative and doctrinal texts, which have often attracted the attention of historiography.² During the course of the disputations there emerged problems which were traditionally connected to the self-awareness of the Order (such as its reform and the union of the friars under one superior general) and to the modalities of its presence in the ecclesiastical organisation in a social, political and religious context agitated by various events which, like the protestant reforms, modified in a profound and irreversible manner the institutional structure of the Church of Rome. In their journey towards evangelical perfection the Minors were again solicited to make a confrontation with the "difficult heredity" of Saint Francis,³ of which the *Regola bullata* (1223) continued to generate controversies

in the Order provoking the normative interventions of the Apostolic See.

As a result of the clamorous disputes aroused by the divulgation of the *Defensorium elucidativum Observantiae regularis fratrum Minorum* by Bonifacio da Ceva,⁴ minister of the Province of France, who succeeded in involving in his conflict with the Observants the Parliament of Paris and the Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517), on 11 July 1516 Leo X appointed a commission of cardinals to examine the positions of the parties involved.⁵ Four cardinals were appointed to form the commission:⁶ Lorenzo Pucci, Bernardino de Carvajal, Domenico Grimani (who since 1503 had been protector of the Order) and Pietro Accolti; to them were added four Franciscans (Bonifacio da Ceva, Alfonso Lozano, Jean Glapion, *Johannes de Costa*), among whom there was no one to represent the Conventuals "in a strict sense", and who were encouraging the reform of the Observants and their supporters through the presentation of supplications to the Roman Curia.⁷ During the discussions, that presumably occurred in front of the four cardinals, Bonifacio da Ceva was relegated to a marginal position, after he clashed with Alfonso Lozano, who systematically opposed his proposals.

In view of the *Capitulum generalissimum* of the Order, that Leo X had convoked at Rome in the friary of Aracoeli for the following Pentecost (31 May 1517), and to which he obliged also the reformed congregations *sub ministris* (among whom the Amadeiti, Colettani, Clareni and Friars

of the Holy Gospel or Guadalupensi),⁸ the four cardinals and four religious who assisted them, approved an important document (the preparatory minutes of *Ite vos*),⁹ in which they had newly elaborated some proposals of reform that had been agreed upon at the beginning of the 16th century by the superiors of the Ultramontane Observants in opposition to the projects for union of the minister general Egidio Delfini.¹⁰ The discussion and writing of the minutes occurred with all probability in Rome between August and December 1516, having preceded the transfer of Bonifacio da Ceva in France, who on 9 February 1517 presented to the High Court of the Parliament of Paris his *Defensorium elucidativum* together with the *Tractatus dictus Deffensorium fratrum Minorum de Observantia et Familia* by Bonaventura Neveu, vicar of the Province of France.¹¹

The dispositions of the preparatory minutes

The preparatory minutes extend to the Order the Gospel parable of the *paterfamilias* (Mt 20:1-16), who possessed a vineyard, and went out of his house during the diverse hours of the day in order to look for hired workers who would cultivate it.¹² Among the sources of the document one can identify dispositions already given in the Bulls *Exiit qui seminat* (14 August 1279) of Nicholas III and *Exivi de paradiso* (6 May 1312) of Clement V,¹³ which contain, as is known, authentic interpretations of the *Regula bullata*;¹⁴ the relations between the minutes and other well-known texts in the Order are frequent, but they are relative to the biography of Saint Francis.¹⁵

Since in the minutes the vineyard evoked by the Gospel parable is identified with the Order,¹⁶ the different moments of the day which are quoted are linked with figures or emblematic moments of the history of the friars Minor; there emerge the names of Saint Francis, Saint Bonaventure, Saint Bernardine of Siena, but the minutes also record the *disceptatio de observantia Regulae*, which Clement V tried to resolve during the Council of Vienne (1311-1312) in the *Exivi de paradiso*, and the controversy between the Observants and Conventuals at the time of the Council of Constance (1414-1418). The identification of the cultivators of the last hour with the Observants stands out very clearly. These are presented as faithful disciples of Saint Francis; they are the protagonists of the last

leg of the historical journey of the Order of Minors, which began with the extraordinary experience of the founder of the Order, who carried in his body the signs of his faithfulness to the divine design. Such an identification is underlined by *Ite vos*,¹⁷ and is the foundation upon which is based the attribution of the supreme government of the Order in the hands of the Observants, and is confirmed by the *motu proprio Licet alias* (6 December 1517), in which Leo X proclaimed the hierarchical superiority of the reformed friars over the Conventuals, defending their exercise of the *plenitudo potestatis* on their faithfulness to the example of Saint Francis and to his Rule.¹⁸

In the minutes are recorded the causes for the intervention of Leo X. Among these the minutes recall the controversies among the Minors, in the face of which the Pope declared that he had nurtured devotion towards the Order because of the spiritual benefits that the same Order had assured to the Church. The minutes also recall the supplications that the Holy See received from the secular authorities, among whom the emperor Maximilian I, the king of France, Francis I, and that of England, Henry VIII; in this way the minutes underline the *iter* that the Roman Curia followed in order to define the cause for this controversy.¹⁹

Many dispositions of the minutes bear the imprint of the project that, at the beginning of the 16th century, the superiors of the Ultramontane Observants had presented in order to oppose the elaborate plans of the minister general Egidio Delfini in view of the union.²⁰ The textual parallelisms of the minutes with the *articuli* presented by the vicar general of the Ultramontane Observants, Martial Boulrier,²¹ are evident, as well as with those of the assembly of vicars provincial and discreets that met at Rabastens on 1 August 1503.²² Frequent also are Boulrier's correspondence documents with the *consilium* of the provincial Congregation of Aquitaine, which met at Montauban on 9 August 1504 under the direction of the vicar provincial Gilbert Nicolas.²³

The design witnessed in the minutes is coherent, since it aimed at the union of the reformed friars and the consequent suppression of the component of those friars who did not want to adhere to the reform. In conformity to the Rule there should only have been one minister general, to whom all the religious of the Order were bound to promise obedience, and who remained in office for six years; in any given moment, however, if all the assembly of the ministers provincial and custodians considered the minister general to be

unsuitable for the service and common usefulness of the friars, they could elect a successor.²⁴ The supreme government of the Order was to be taken away from the Conventuals and given to the reformed, to who the minutes reserve active and passive voice in the election of the minister general, of the commissary general and of the ministers provincial. This radical change in the institutional relations between Observants and Conventuals is evident, in that the vicars and discreets became, *ipso facto*, the new ministers and custodians. The conferral of the direction of the Order to the Observants, who were to be finally united to the reformed *sub ministris*, had been proposed by the vicar of the Province of Strasbourg, Kaspar Schatzgeyer, in the *Apologia status fratrum Ordinis Minorum de Observantia nuncupatorium declaratoria*, composed in an atmosphere of controversy against the *Defensorium elucidativum* of Bonifacio da Ceva and completed at Basle on 11 August 1516.²⁵ In the *Apologia* Schatzgeyer advocated the attribution of the title of *magistri* (masters) to the major superiors of the Conventuals who would become separated from the reformed, and in this way he anticipated the solution given by Leo X.²⁶

In the minutes one sees the need to coordinate the government of the two great vicariates of the Observants, since they foresee the alternation of the election to the office of minister general between the Cismontane and Ultramontane Observants. The minutes also institute a commissary general, who had to remain in office for a period of three years and exercise vicarial powers given to him by the minister general; his election was the competence of the Ultramontane friars united in the general Chapter, whenever the minister general was Cismontane, or else to the Cismontane friars, if the minister general was Ultramontane.

The juridical requisites, on the basis of which a friary could consider itself to be reformed, were condensed in the alienation of its possessions, lands and revenues, with the Holy See as the sole guarantee of their title to whatever they could hold on to. As a consequence the minutes present the dispositions of the union between the Observants and all the other reformed branches (including the Amadeiti, Colettani, Clarení and Friars of the Holy Gospel or *Caputiati*), who were subordinate to the new ministers and custodians, since they could take part in their election.

The lot of the non-reformed friars would have been harsh, except for the fact that the preliminary minutes were modified before 29 May 1517.

The original minutes stated that the ministers had the power to visit the non-reformed friars, to correct them, to put a stop to abuses, whereas the provincial commissaries elected by the reformed friars would have obliged them to a form of life in conformity to the Rule. In the case of those friars who would resist the reform the minutes stated that they could not accept novices or promote candidates to religious profession, and in this way they would have been doomed to extinction. As a consequence, the reformed friars were prohibited from going to live in non-reformed friaries; other eventual dispensations would have been issued by the provincial Chapters.²⁷

The minutes also contained dispositions which did not reveal any corresponding elements with the projects elaborated by the Ultramontane Observants during the first years of the 16th century in opposition to the plans of Egidio Delfini.²⁸ In order to avoid further divisions in the Order, the minutes prohibited the friars to address one another with diverse names having a malicious intention to offend, ridicule or slander, and even went as far as invoking excommunication to those who broke the law and obliging one and all to denounce such friars to the ecclesiastical authorities. It was finally declared that all the friars were to be known without any distinction by the name of friars Minor or friars of Saint Francis.²⁹ The *Capitulum generalissimum* was convoked for Pentecost 1517, and was entrusted to elect some friars with the duty of writing worthy statutes in order to see to the execution of the reform and the observance of the Rule; their approval would have been competence of the Chapter and then they had to receive pontifical confirmation.³⁰

Preparation and publication of "Ite vos"

The contents of the preparatory minutes could have found their way in the Roman Curia, since they were probably made known by the friars and cardinals who had signed the document;³¹ in fact, the prior general of the Augustinians, Egidio da Viterbo, knew about them, because on 13 January 1517 he addressed from Rome a letter to his confreres,³² in which he encouraged them to renew their lives according to the design of the reform of the mendicant Observants promoted by the Fifth Lateran Council. He also informed them of the convocation of the *Capitulum generalissimum* of

the Minors, in occasion of which the Order was to be reformed according to the projects of the Observants.³³ In order to contrast these Observant plans, the minister general Bernardino da Chieri retreated to the Sacro Convento in Assisi, where he also tried to remove abuses, by keeping an intense correspondence with friars who supported him.³⁴

In the following weeks, in the imminent approach of the *Capitulum generalissimum*, the Curia produced a version of the Bulla by which Leo X intended to resolve the controversies of the Minors, and which on his mandate the Portuguese ambassador, Miguel de Silva, had secretly sent on 15 April 1517 to king Emmanuel I with a personal letter.³⁵ The ambassador was witness of the divisions among the cardinals regarding the questions touching upon the Order of Minors.³⁶ He lamented that his effort in favour of the reform of the Order was meeting with obstacles in the pontifical curia with the habitual recourse to money offers.³⁷ He could, however, count upon the support of Alberto Pio, lord of Carpi and nuncio of emperor Maximilian I, who was known for his hostility towards the Conventuals.³⁸

In an unknown date Emmanuel I asked Miguel da Silva to obtain modifications to the received text of the Bulla,³⁹ which in some points agreed with the preliminary minutes. The king pretended that the office of minister general would be fixed for three years, that the revenues of the Conventuals should be turned over to the feminine monasteries so that they would not end up in the hands of the Holy See. He also wanted the suppression of friaries that did not adhere to the reform, indicating that the Conventuals should be prohibited from accepting novices. Other norms disciplined the friars who refused to adhere to the reform by obliging them to join the secular clergy. In order to obtain the modifications that he proposed, Emmanuel I requested his ambassador to exert pressure in the Roman Curia, and offered enormous sums of money in favour of the reform of the Order.

From 25 to 30 May 1517 the preparatory sessions of the *Capitulum generalissimum* were held in the friary of Aracoeli;⁴⁰ on 25 May 1517 the ambassador of Venice Marco Minio referred in a letter addressed to the Serenissima, that on the same day a concistory was held in which Leo X had dealt with the question of the Order of Minors and requested a commission of seven cardinals to treat such a question.⁴¹ During the following days the minister general Bernardino da Chieri, and the vicars general, Cristoforo da Forlì and Gilbert Nicolas, were received in audience by the Pope,

assisted by the cardinals, but their positions could not be reconciled. The Conventuals, who had succeeded in winning over the favour of Leo X and of many cardinals, did not intend to relinquish their privileges and were aiming at maintaining the *status quo* or having the right to elect their own minister general. This aroused the reaction of the Observants, who did not want a union of the Order without a reform of the same Order.

At the conclusion of the discussions, on 28 and 29 May 1517, the Pope proclaimed the solution to the controversy, which is a witness of the compromise between the positions of the parties involved, with the modifications and additions to the preliminary minutes. This solution decreed the union, and declared the change of the institutional relations that had existed up to that moment. It recognised the vicars and discreets of the Observants as the new ministers and custodians; to the major superiors of the Conventuals it conferred the title of masters and made them subject to the authority of the ministers. The members of the chapter on the part of the Observants had requested the Pope to intervene during the course of an audience held on 27 May 1517 in the friary of Aracoeli, in which they formalised their own proposals for the reform of the Order, and during which the imperial nuncio Alberto Pio, lord of Carpi, and the ambassador of the king of Portugal also participated. Leo X did not accept those dispositions of the minutes that regulated the progressive extinction of the friars who resisted the reform, and confirmed their privileges.

As an effect of the attribution of the supreme government of the Order to the reformed friars, on 29 May 1517 the Pope elevated the minister general Bernardino da Chieri to the archiepiscopal see of Athens *in partibus infidelium*, promoting the election of his successor. The following day, the vicar general of the Cismontane Observants, Cristoforo da Forlì, read solemnly in front of Pope Leo X the definite text of *Ite vos*, which defended the union of the reformed families and received the name of *bulla unionis*.⁴² Subsequent historiography also divulged the other name, namely *bulla separationis*,⁴³ since it was also the occasion of the definitive division of the Regular Observance from the Conventuals.

NOTES

- 1 P. SELLA, *Leone X e la definitiva divisione dell'Ordine dei Minori (OMin.): la bolla "Ite vos" (29 maggio 1517)* (Analecta Franciscana 14, Nova Series. Documenta et Studia 2), Grottaferrata 2001; J. MESEGUER FERNÁNDEZ, *La bula "Ite vos" (29 de mayo de 1517) y la reforma*

- cisneriana, in *Archivo Ibero-Americano* 18 (1958) 257-361; G.G. MERLO, *Nel nome di san Francesco. Storia dei frati Minori e del francescanesimo sino agli inizi del XVI secolo*, Padova 2003, 305-378, 467-473; P. ETZI, *Iuridica franciscana. Percorsi monografici di storia della legislazione dei tre ordini francescani* (Studi Francescani 5), Padova 2003, 152-156.
- 2 G. BUFFON, *Sulle tracce di una storia omessa. Storiografia moderna e contemporanea dell'Ordine francescano* (Analecta Franciscana 18. Nova series. Documenta et Studia 6), Grottaferrata 2011; IDEM, *Storia dell'Ordine francescano. Problemi e prospettive di metodo* (Temi e Testi 120), Roma 2013.
 - 3 R. LAMBERTINI – A. TABARRONI, *Dopo Francesco: l'eredità difficile* (Altri Saggi 12), Torino 1989.
 - 4 SELLA, *Leone X*, 188-190; MERLO, *Nel nome*, 366-374.
 - 5 LEO X, *Breve Romanum Pontificem*, 11 iulii 1516, in L. WADDING, *Annales Minorum* 16, Ad Claras Aquas 1933, 27.
 - 6 JOHANNES DE KOMOROWO, *Memoriale Ordinis fratrum Minorum*, a cura di X. LISKE – A. LORKIEWICZ, in *Monumenta Poloniae Historica* 5, Lwów 1888, 316, who had participated at the *Capitulum generalissimum* of 1517 as representative of the Polish Observants, quotes four cardinals, to whom Leo X had entrusted the definition of the cause, without referring their names, which were then identified by MESEGUER FERNÁNDEZ, *La bula*, 291.
 - 7 The attempts in favour of the reform and unification of the Order in 1517 have been described by MESEGUER FERNÁNDEZ, *La bula*, 258-289; SELLA, *Leone X*, 161-190; Merlo, *Nel nome*, 366-381, 472-473; ETZI, *Iuridica*, 152-153.
 - 8 LEO X, *Breve Romanum Pontificem*, 27.
 - 9 The minutes and the definitive text of the *Ite vos* had been edited, annotated and confronted by MESEGUER FERNÁNDEZ, *La bula*, 332-353.
 - 10 MESEGUER FERNÁNDEZ, *La bula*, 291-293; SELLA, *Leone X*, 288-289.
 - 11 SELLA, *Leone X*, 289-290; MERLO, *Nel nome*, 372-374.
 - 12 LEO X, *Minuta bullae Ite vos*, a. 1, c. 1, in MESEGUER FERNÁNDEZ, *La bula*, 332, 334.
 - 13 LEO X, *Minuta bullae Ite vos*, a. 1, c. 1-2, in MESEGUER FERNÁNDEZ, *La bula*, 332, 334, 336.
 - 14 Merlo, *Nel nome*, 232-259, 459-463; ETZI, *Iuridica*, 59-139.
 - 15 LEO X, *Minuta bullae Ite vos*, a. 1, c. 1, in MESEGUER FERNÁNDEZ, *La bula*, 334 (with references to the texts of Thomas of Celano and Saint Bonaventure).
 - 16 LEO X, *Minuta bullae Ite vos*, a. 1, c. 1-2, in MESEGUER FERNÁNDEZ, *La bula*, 332, 334.
 - 17 LEO X, *Bull Ite vos*, 29 maii 1517, a. 1, c. 1, in MESEGUER FERNÁNDEZ, *La bula*, 335.
 - 18 LEO X, *Motu proprio Licet alias*, 6 decembris 1517, in WADDING, *Annales* 16, 567.
 - 19 LEO X, *Minuta bullae Ite vos*, a. 1, c. 1-2, in MESEGUER FERNÁNDEZ, *La bula*, 336.
 - 20 MESEGUER FERNÁNDEZ, *La bula*, 292-293, 338, 340, 342, 344, 346, 348, 350, 352; SELLA, *Leone X*, 288.
 - 21 *Articuli a vicario generali cismontano oblatis vicariis sibi subditis ac aliis patribus discretis in dicta congregatione provinciali Raptisagni congregatis pro modis huiusmodi unionis fiende discutiendis et ventilandis*, in F. DELORME, *Documents pour l'histoire du bienheureux Gabriel-Maria*, in *La France Franciscaine* 11 (1928) 113-136: 123-126.
 - 22 [Articuli post maturum examen a dictis vicariis et discretis Raptisagni finaliter conclusi], in DELORME, *Documents*, 127-130.
 - 23 *Opinio et consilium datum ab omnibus patribus diffinitoribus, guardianis et discretis capitularis Congregationis provincialis provinciae Aquitanie super unione vel admittenda vel respuenda*, in DELORME, *Documents*, 242-245.
 - 24 LEO X, *Minuta bullae Ite vos*, a. 2, c. 4, in MESEGUER FERNÁNDEZ, *La bula*, 338.
 - 25 M. BIHL, *Fra Bonifazio da Ceva († 1517) e i suoi giudizi su Bernardino da Siena*, in *Studi Francescani* 42 (1945) 132-172: 155.
 - 26 H. HOLZAPFEL, *Manuale historiae Ordinis fratrum Minorum*, a cura di G. HASELBECK, Friburgi Brisgoviae 1909, 134.
 - 27 LEO X, *Minuta bullae Ite vos*, a. 5, c. 3, in MESEGUER FERNÁNDEZ, *La bula*, 346-348.
 - 28 MESEGUER FERNÁNDEZ, *La bula*, 293-294; SELLA, *Leone X*, 289.
 - 29 LEO X, *Minuta bullae Ite vos*, a. 7, c. 1-2, in MESEGUER FERNÁNDEZ, *La bula*, 350.
 - 30 LEO X, *Minuta bullae Ite vos*, a. 8, c. 1, in MESEGUER FERNÁNDEZ, *La bula*, 352.
 - 31 SELLA, *Leone X*, 290.
 - 32 AEGIDIUS VITERBENSIS, *Epistola universo Ordini sancti Augustini*, 13 ianuarii 1517, in *Egidio da Viterbo OSA. Lettere familiari* 2 (1507-1517), a cura di A.M. VOCI ROTH (Fontes Historiae Ordinis Sancti Augustini. Series altera. Epistolaria alique Fontes 3), Romae 1992, 379-380.
 - 33 AEGIDIUS VITERBIENSIS, *Epistola*, 219.
 - 34 SELLA, *Leone X*, 291.
 - 35 MIGUEL DA SILVA, *Carta al re Emanuele I*, 15 aprile 1517, in *Corpo Diplomatico Portuguez* 1, a cura di L.A. REBELLO DA SILVA, Lisboa 1862, 420-426.
 - 36 The positions of the cardinals regarding the problem of the Minors are described by SELLA, *Leone X*, 292.
 - 37 MIGUEL DA SILVA, *Carta*, 424.
 - 38 SELLA, *Leone X*, 292 note 26.
 - 39 The proposals of modifications are included in a series of minutes without any chronological indication, and edited with the title *Cartas de crença e despachos para D. Miguel de Silva (1517 – Maio 11?)*, in *Crpo* 1, 432-446.
 - 40 MESEGUER FERNÁNDEZ, *La bula*, 296-301; SELLA, *Leone X*, 298-308.
 - 41 The list of seven cardinals is given by MESEGUER FERNÁNDEZ, *La bula*, 296 note 141, and is then corrected by SELLA, *Leone X*, 294, where in the place of Antonio Maria Ciocchi del Monte is identified Thomas Bakócz, who was pontifical legate in the case of the Hungarian Observants. G. ERDÉLYI, *The Register of a Convent Controversy (1517-1517). Pope Leo X, Cardinal Bakócz, the Augustinians and the Observant Franciscans in Context*, (Bibliotheca Historiae Ecclesiasticae Universitatis Catholicae de Petro Pazmany Nuncupatae. Ser. 1. Collectanea Vaticana Hungariae Classis 2,1), Budapest-Rome 2006.
 - 42 It was WADDING, *Annales* 16, 49, who “canonised” the name of *bulla unionis*.
 - 43 L. DI FONZO, *La famosa bolla di Leone X 'Ite vos', non 'Ite et vos' (29 maggio 1517)*, in *Miscellanea Franciscana* 45 (1945) 164-171: 165.

Franciscan Ministers General visit Pope Francis

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The meeting lasted roughly 35 minutes. We have also spoken about his visit in Egypt and of the fact that, in a few years' time, we will be celebrating 800 years of the visit of Saint Francis in Damietta, Egypt, where he met Sultan Malik al-Kamil, in a concrete gesture of dialogue with Muslims. We also spoke about Aleppo: I have visited Syria and returned two days ago. I have been to Aleppo, Damasco and Latakia, where I have met the Friars Minor who remained there with the local Christians. They all wanted to thank Pope Francis for his attention to their condition of crisis, for the financial aid that he has recently sent, and which has already been used in favour of Christians and also of Muslims. We have spoken mainly about our efforts to create communion among us, among the various Orders of the Franciscan family. Pope Francis has been very attentive. First of all, there is the process of reunification of the Franciscan Universities of Rome, between us Friars Minor, Capuchins, Conventuals and Third Order. Then there are other projects for the fraternity of the Holy Land and in other places. We Ministers General are meeting during various moments of the year in order to strengthen and underline the dimension of communion among us. We have also spoken about the possibility to permit to lay brothers to serve, with the role of ordinaries, in our respective Orders. Pope Francis is trying with us to search for possibilities to move this project forward. We have given him a letter, with a formal request for a dispensation, a grace for us Franciscan friars. When we met him some years ago, on 4 October 2013 at the tomb of Saint Francis, and presented ourselves as confreres to him, we told the Pope: We are the Ministers General, and he laughed and answered: So there is also a Franciscan ecumenism! And he invited us to remain united. We are making such a journey and the Pope has encouraged us to move on along this road. We asked him to meet a great number of friars on the coming 29 November, the day in which we recall the approval of the Rule, and also because this year we are remembering the famous Bull *Ite vos*, which sealed our unification but also our divisions. We want to recall this event by making a journey in the opposite direction, namely towards unification. This agrees with the direction that the same Pope asks us to follow, namely to journey together towards unification, dialogue and communion.

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Michael Perry OFM, Minister General
Marco Tasca OFMConv, Minister General
Mauro Johri OFMCap, Minister General
Nicholas Polichnowski TOR, Minister General
Vatican City, 10 April 2017

Abbreviations

Writings of St. Francis

Adm	Admonitiones.
CantAudPov	Cantico Audite Poverelle.
CantSol	Canticum fratris Solis.
LaudDei	Laudes Dei Altissimi.
BenLeo	Benedictio fratri Leoni data.
EpAnt	Epistola ad sanctum Antonium.
EpCler I	Epistola ad Clericos (Redactio prior).
EpCler II	Epistola ad Clericos (Red. posterior).
EpCust I	Epistola ad Custodes I.
EpCust II	Epistola ad Custodes II.
EpFid I	Epistola ad Fideles I.
EpFid II	Epistola ad Fideles II.
EpLeo	Epistola ad fratrem Leonem.
EpMin	Epistola ad Ministrum.
EpOrd	Epistola toti Ordini missa.
EpRect	Epistola ad populorum rectores.
ExhLD	Exhortatio ad Laudem Dei.
ExpPat	Expositio in Pater noster.
FormViv	Forma vivendi sanctae Clarae data.
Fragm	Fragmenta alterius RegulaeNB.
LaudHor	Laudes ad omnes horas dicendae.
OffPass	Officium Passionis Domini.
OrCruc	Oratio ante crucifixum.
RegB	Regula bullata.
RegNB	Regula non bullata.
RegEr	Regula pro eremitoriis data.
SalBMV	Salutatio beatae Mariae Virginis.
SalVirt	Salutatio virtutum.
Test	Testamentum.
UltVol	Ultima voluntas S. Clarae scripta.

Sources for the Life of St. Francis

1C	Tommaso da Celano, Vita Sancti Francisci.
LCh	Celano, Legenda ad usum chori.
2C	Celano, Memoriale in Desiderio Animae.
3C	Celano, Tractatus de Miraculis S. Francisci.
LJS	Julian of Speyer, Vita Sancti Francisci.
OR	Officium Rhythmicum S. Francisci.
AP	Anonimo Perugino.
L3C	Leggenda dei Tre Compagni.
CA	Compilatio Assisiensis.
LMj	S. Bonaventura, Legenda Maior S. Francisci.
LMn	S. Bonaventura, Legenda minor S. Francisci.
SP	Speculum Perfectionis.
SC	Sacrum commercium S. Francisci.
ABF	Actus Beati Francisci et Sociorum Eius.
Fior	Fioretti di San Francesco.

Sources for the Life of St. Clare

BICl	Blessing of St. Clare.
1-4LAg	Letters to St. Agnes of Prague..
LCl	Legend of St. Clare.
PC	Acts of the Process of Canonization.
PrPov	Privilege of Poverty.
RegCl	Rule of St. Clare.
TestCl	Testament of St. Clare.

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Cover picture:

Saint Francis gives the Rule as the unifying document of his Order.