

# Holy Spirit Province of Canada Provincial Assembly – Final Document Spring 2024



In preparation for the **OFM General Chapter of Mats in 2025**, the Holy Spirit Province of Canada held a three-day gathering of Friars and Young-Adults (18+ years of age) from across Canada. The Synodal gathering took place from **February 16-19, 2024**.

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The theme for the gathering was: ***Rebuild My Church: Charism, Communion, Mission.***



Participants, 49 in total, included:

17 OFM Friars.

The Provincial Minister and his Definitory

The Provincial Secretariat for Mission and Evangelization

The Provincial Secretariat for Formation and Studies

Spiritual Assistants to the OFS and YOUFRA

Friars who are active in a variety of ministries within Canada.

29 Lay People (16 women)

2 Franciscan Religious Women

1 Postulant

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Total = 49

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The Process used was the process for the Synod on Synodality  
(For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission) taken  
from the Synod 2023 *Instrumentum Laboris*.

## The conversation in the Spirit

A dynamic of discernment in the synodal Church







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This document is a Synthesis Report of the conclusions from group discussions that focused the three themes for our General Chapter of Mats of 2025– ***Charism, Communion, Mission.***

The following questions were discussed by participants:

**Charism** -a) What are we hearing on the road with Jesus? Where are we with the Church? b) Have I heard God's voice? How does God and the Church speak to me?

**Communion** – What does it mean to be a Synodal Church?

**Mission** – Where is the Spirit leading the church today? What is the Spirit saying to us?



## **Charism – What are we hearing on the road with Jesus? Where are we with the Church?**

A reflection on the road to Emmaus reminded participants that we are all together on the road with Jesus. Although we know not where Jesus is leading, we are privileged to be on the road with him, and appreciative of this grace. For participants, this implies appreciation for belonging to the church. The value of having a community, to whom to belong, surfaced as something of great importance. Belonging leads to sense of ownership, that is understood to be shared rather than possessed. In other words, the church is “our” church in the sense that God is “Our Father”. We belong, even though we are called to be *sine proprio* – we cannot be possessive of our church. We desire to listen and to discern together the voice of the Spirit.















## Appendix

Below are our Province's responses to questions given in preparation for the General Chapter of Mats of 2025. These responses are based on learnings expressed in the Synthesis Report, above.





## Charism (1.) Renewing our Vision: Which aspects of our charism should we be open to today?

As Franciscans, we have such a wonderful resource in our founder. St. Francis' fidelity to his church was strong, but such did not stop him from calling the church to reform and renewal. He did so by his example of accompaniment, choosing solidarity (or we could say synodality) with the poor as means to discover Jesus.



St. Francis' spirituality around the primacy of Christ Jesus is an example for us today. Our charism calls us to live and to thrive within the church, but also very much in relationship to Jesus. Our charism points to a spirit of prayer and devotion, a liturgical life, and intentional reflection on the Gospel. We are also taught



by Francis' orientation, like that of Jesus, towards the marginal members of the church. Our founder's solidarity with lepers, with women, with the poor, etc., invites us to embrace the spirit of Emmaus. Always ought we desire to remain on the road; Always may we desire also that others remain on the road with us.



## Communion (2.) Walking in a particular style: what is the prophetic style of fraternity in minority?

In a word, the prophetic style of a fraternity in minority is a synodal style. As a fraternity, we are a microcosm of the church. Our founding was inspired by the acts of the apostles and the example of the early church. And so, we are called to a humble and respectful attitude towards everyone in search of solidarity. If friars minor, we desire friendship with marginal believers. This means creating spaces for marginal believers, for the poor, to gather and express their communion with Jesus. It also implies empowering the laity to share, co-responsibly, in our mission, by fostering a shared sense of ownership in our charism. It was particularly noted, during our discussions, that much can be learned from St. Francis' encounter with the Wolf of Gubbio. A prophetic style, or Christian witness, is to face what we would otherwise find threatening and to establish friendship.





### **Mission (3.) Embracing the future: witness-mission: who and how do we serve?**

It is clear that Franciscans are sent to be among, and to serve, the poor. And poverty has many forms. It is clear that we are being sent to anyone who seeks and struggles to find his or her place within the communion of the church. A spirit of service pulls us out of ourselves and into friendship with those we would otherwise avoid. We serve peripheral believers, the poor, through witness to the gospel, which includes our Franciscan identity, by building up spaces for all to experience welcome and belonging in the name of Jesus.





## **Rebuild My Church Charism, Commission, Mission**

From February 16 – 19, Friars from across Canada along with two Franciscan Sisters and several lay men and women gathered for a weekend of Synodal listening and sharing at Mount St. Francis Retreat Centre. Varying in ages and backgrounds this diverse group leaned into what it means to be church today and to dream for the church. We considered the charism of the church, how we are called into communion and sent forth in mission. The following is the summary shared at the close of the weekend.

We the church,  
we a reflection of the church; the church we love, know and desire,  
we have gathered these past four days,  
to listen, to respond, to dialogue, to be present to the Way.

We the church  
have prayed together and sung together,  
we have broken bread together at The Table (of the Eucharist) and at table,  
told stories and shared ourselves trusting the support is stable.

We the church  
who are diverse and unique reflections of the gospel,  
for some of us have been longer on the journey,  
while others are short on the journey.

We the church  
hearing the heartbeat of God,  
hearing the voice of Jesus,  
hearing the invitations of the Holy Spirit.

We the church  
have questioned where we are within the church  
and what we are hearing on the road,  
to notice how we bear each other's load.

We the church  
paid attention with compassionate hearts  
to the truths of our brothers and sisters  
how the Spirit can be heard through tears and whispers.

We the church  
have pondered what it means to be synodal,  
and how we are being promoted by the Spirit to be  
allowing us to be open, honest and to keep Christ as key.

We the church  
have cried in joy and cried in sorrow,  
we have shared photos and treats  
all while being at Mount St. Francis Retreat.

We the church  
have played new games and snacked,  
and have enjoyed the diversity of language  
each of us called to be on pilgrimage.

We the church  
have walked the land and breathed in the fresh mountain air  
the richness of creation speaking gospel truths too  
holding on to what is beautiful, honest and true.

We the church  
female, male, laity, religious, straight, gay, prophets and mystics,  
old friends or new friends found,  
we build up together on fertile holy ground.

We the church  
sisters and brothers have spoken of age and life,  
have heard the church and her cries  
for life, dignity, hope and to rise.

We the church,

challenged and celebrating,  
seeking and serving,  
know the Spirit is always surging.

We the church  
vulnerable, the story of humanity  
community, the story of belonging  
one body, one heart seeking and longing.

We the church  
humble, tangible, welcoming, walking together  
discerning, open, grace-filled, creative and willing,  
bold, courageous with Christ in the journey thrilling.

We the church  
with St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi  
and countless women, men and children are  
rebuilding the church  
filled with grateful hearts,  
renewed in faith, hope and love,  
we will not be afraid  
because we are  
loved by God,  
centered in Christ,  
inspired by the Holy Spirit,  
sent out in mission.

We the church say Amen!  
We the church say Amen!  
We the church say Amen!

Amen!

*Ubi Caritas Et Amor, Deus Ibi Est.*

Read also:

[Vulnerable With Gratitude \(franciscanfriars.ca\)](http://franciscanfriars.ca)