



2025 SYNOD REPORT

Franciscan Friars of the Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe



Preamble

Moved by the desire to renew Franciscan life and witness in the United States and beyond, the Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe of the Franciscan Friars (OFM) was established in October 2023 through the unification of five U.S. provinces that included missions in Puerto Rico, Alaska, Cuba and Jamaica. Responding to Pope Francis' call for synodal listening and discernment, and as part of a global discernment movement led by the Order of Friars Minor, the province initiated a year-long Franciscan synod process in 2024.

Given the vast geographical area and the challenge to gather as many voices as possible, the Franciscan synod's approach included three different gathering stages (local, regional and national) throughout the United States. Central to the synod was the priority of renewal, which was encapsulated in three categories: the charism of Friars Minor, their lifestyle, and their mission and witness in the world. The provincial Franciscan synod, held in Kansas City, MO, in January 2025 involved friars and the extended Franciscan family of Secular Franciscans, Franciscan Sisters and lay partners.

The fruits of discernment and prayerful gathering are contained in this report, which will be shared with the international Order in Rome. The report charts a collective path into the future for the 637 Franciscan friars of the Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and will help establish the culture and define the identity of the recently-formed province.

Our Priorities

As Franciscan friars we are fundamentally relational.

Priority 1: We will work to be more fraternal with each other as brothers.

- Increased communication skills within fraternities, including interpersonal, intercultural, intergenerational skills
- Care for elderly and troubled friars
- Offer enhanced training and support for guardians
- All fraternities have Fraternal Life Covenants with local monitoring, accountability and updating as needed
- Leadership formation for Solemnly Professed Under Ten Years (SPUTY) friars

As Franciscan friars we are brothers to everyone, and to all creation.

Priority 2: The Gospel compels us to respond to the needs of the poor, marginalized (including women), and vulnerable persons, and our common home.

Priority 3: We commit ourselves to listening to and accompanying young adults.

- Welcome, protect and accompany migrants
- Actively support young adults in our ministries and fraternities, including those to engage “nones”
- Each fraternity must respond in some way to local poor and demonstrate how they are serving them
- Foster racial and cultural inclusion
- Support Franciscan vocations and volunteer ministries across the province

As Franciscan friars, we inherit an 800-year-old Franciscan tradition that we wish to renew and transmit.

Priority 4: Each local fraternity will make lifestyle decisions (prayer, simplicity, finance) consistent with our vows and within general provincial guidelines.

Priority 5: We will deepen our ongoing formation in the Franciscan charism both for ourselves and with the larger Franciscan family.

Priority 6: We will deepen the contemplative dimension of our vocation.

- Collaboration with the larger Franciscan family
- Deepen contemplative practices in local fraternities
- Make faith sharing and scripture sharing a province-wide practice
- Develop lay leadership in Franciscan-style mission
- All fraternities have Fraternal Life Covenants with local monitoring, accountability and updating as needed

As Franciscan friars, we are sent into the world as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Priority 7: In light of the Gospel, we will read the signs of the times and respond with creativity and hope to the reality we encounter.

Priority 8: We will advocate to change structures that adversely affect the poor.

- Discern, recognize and rediscover where the Lord needs us most
- We must reinvent ourselves according to the needs of the people we are called to serve, wherever we are present
- Each fraternity must respond in some way to the local poor communities and demonstrate how they are serving them
- Short term mission opportunities
- We learn the art of becoming brothers and minors precisely by going to troubled places and not by remaining in protected environments

Synod Numbers

The priorities and actions presented in this report emerged from a transformative year-long journey to discern how to shape the province and friars' future—how we live and witness the Gospel, revitalize Franciscan life, and discern our ministry direction along with collaborators from the larger Franciscan family. This journey encompassed:

- 103** local synodal gatherings in spring 2024 hosted by **50** fraternities with approximately **400** friars and **300** Franciscan family members
- 7** regional assemblies in fall 2024 with **21** regional synodal discernment sessions with about **255** friars
- 1** online young-adult digital synod in November 2024 including **20** lay participants and **13** young friars
- 1** three-day provincial synod event in January 2025 with **123** friars and **83** Franciscan family members

Three key questions guided our synodal discernment:

1. Which facets of our charism are we called to express in fraternity, Church and world today?
2. How are we called to live out *fraternitas* and *minoritas* concretely in our daily lives?
3. What priorities should guide our mission and evangelization over the next 3-6-9 years?

We addressed these using the *Conversation in the Spirit* methodology as used by the universal synod of the Catholic Church.



A worldwide consultation.

The 2021 General Chapter of the Order of Friars Minor called for every province to discern how best to live our Franciscan charism, lifestyle and mission in the world today. The Franciscan family – Poor Clares, Franciscan Sisters, Secular Franciscans, and Franciscan-hearted Laity – collaborated to read the signs of the times. All of this will culminate in June 2025 at an international gathering in Assisi. The results of this collective discernment will help provide strategic direction for the international Order.

Strategic opportunity for our new province.

The new provincial leadership recognized the call to synodality by Pope Francis and the global discernment led by the Order of Friars Minor as a providential opportunity, urging us to discern how best to renew Franciscan life in the United States. The three-stage synodal process called us into deeper dialogue across our former legacy provinces, prompting reflection on how to embody our vocation today. We also initiated a parallel process with 13 ministry groups, fostering collaboration among friars in similar ministries and discerning ways our new province could support and sustain these diverse missions.

Synodal discernment in the face of difficult choices.

Our province began with a significant number of friars, but we are confronting a steady decline in both human and financial resources. At the close of 2024, we numbered 642 friars, yet projections estimate a reduction to 342 by 2034. Given these realities, sustaining our current ministries is not feasible, and we turn to the synodal process for guidance in navigating this projection.

Synodal discernment for renewal.

The fundamental guiding principle for forming our new unified province out of five regional legacy provinces was renewal. Saint Francis and Pope Francis agree listening can change us. Pope Francis speaks of synodal conversion, a change that takes place in us when we listen to the religious experiences of others. Through this listening process we can hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, the true Minister General of the Franciscan Order. Our synodal discernment creates conditions that can change us.

