

CONSTITUTIONS

Congregatio Fratres Immaculatae Conceptionis Beatae
Mariae Virginis

Congregation of the Brothers of the Immaculate Conception
of the Blessed Virgin Mary

" GOD IS LOVE "

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ESSENTIAL REFLECTIONS

We believe in our calling to form an apostolic and fraternal community of religious members.

In faithful communion with Jesus Christ, with one another and with all humankind, we commit ourselves to the continuous growth of the Kingdom of God, in ourselves, in our community, in the church and in the world in which we live.

As a Congregation we mainly direct ourselves to christian education and formation, remaining open to the signs of the times and to the Spirit which blows where it wills.

Individuals and groups of people that received the special attention of Jesus Christ are also especially the subject of our concern.

We call ourselves brothers and earnestly desire to be brothers to one another and to all humankind both in receiving and in giving love.

Mary is our inspiration and our Patroness.

PART ONE LIFE IN OUR

CONGREGATION

1. For the sake of the Kingdom of God

1. To be human

We live in this world as human beings, together with all other human beings. Just like everyone else we wish to make the best we can of our lives. Just like everyone else we ask for the deepest and most perfect happiness.

Being truly human, that is how we see the mission of our lives. We want to take this seriously.

2. In God

The above is borne out by our faith in him who is the foundation of all our being. We believe that our whole life unfolds within the infinite space of a personal God who embraces us and all men and all that is, and who is Love.

3. God: man with us

We have our limits. That is why God, unless he reveals himself, remains ineffable to us. We believe that he has revealed himself. In Jesus of Nazareth we see the living image of God. In Jesus of Nazareth God is man with us.

4. Growing towards Jesus

Jesus reveals to us the image of man who fulfils God's will completely. Consequently, to be a good person, to become a better person, means to us: to grow towards Jesus; to draw life from his life; to make the Good News of the coming of the Kingdom of God our own message.

We do this in a limited and impaired way, but also in the strength of God's grace which raises us above ourselves.

5. In the church

Christ calls us to consecrate ourselves for the coming of the Kingdom; the Kingdom of "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit".¹⁾

We do this as members of his Church, which Christ destined to be the leaven that permeates everything, to be the strong germ of unity, hope and salvation.¹⁾

6. As brothers

In this Church we try to give form to our consecration to the Kingdom of God in our own way, in the Congregation.

The Good News of Jesus constitutes our most fundamental Rule of Life, and through our vows we commit ourselves, for the sake of the Kingdom, to religious obedience, to religious poverty and to consecrated celibacy.

In Jesus' name we form a fraternal community, in his Spirit we strive to be brothers to one another and to all humankind.

Our Congregation is a pontifical, religious institute for male lay-religious who are dedicated to apostolic works.

7. Louis Rutten

Our Congregation was founded in 1840 by Father Louis Rutten. This young priest felt a call to place his whole life and all his means in the service of the christian education and formation of the young.

His first concern was for the poor and neglected youth in his native town of Maastricht, where, at the time, the social conditions were extremely bad.

8. BernardusHoecken

In 1840 BernardusHoecken became the first superior of the Congregation's first community. He himself was then still a novice ; his fellow-brothers were aspirants. In

1842 he was among the first brothers who took their vows. For many years he guided the growing community, together with Father Rutten.

Just as Father Rutten he felt an apostolic preference for christian education and formation. He strongly urged the brothers never to lose sight of the poor.

9. In the Spirit of our Founders

Our Founders were committed people, filled with the Spirit of Jesus. They were seized by his person and his message. They sensed a vocation and a mission to spread his Good News. Living according to the spirit of our Founders means that we try to follow their example, in our time and in our circumstances, and that we protect their heritage.

Our Founders were inspired by the life and charitable works of Saint Vincent de Paul. They urged the brothers to follow his example. Living in the spirit of Saint Vincent implies for us:

- that we are aware that the goal of our apostolate is the greater glory of God and the growth of His Kingdom (see “Projet” by Mgr. Rutten);
- that we have an open eye for both spiritual and material needs;
- that we listen carefully and humbly to the needs of others: ”the poor are our masters”;
- that we empower others in overcoming their needs by offering formation and helping in self-organization;
- that we try to live the Vincentian virtues as reformulated by our co-founder: humility, good example, love for your brothers, godliness, prudence, gentleness, steadfastness, wisdom and knowledge, zeal and trust.

10. Protecting their heritage

Protecting the heritage of our Founders implies for us:

- that we feel an intense concern for spiritual and religious needs; a great concern too for a contemporary and culturally integrated transfer of faith;
- that we see as our principal apostolic tradition: education, formation and teaching;
- that - in various circumstances - we, again and again, show a special concern for the poor and the needy;
- that we keep an open eye to sound developments;
- that we attach great value to fraternal community life: we call one another brothers and intend to live up to this word in our everyday life;
- that we have a special veneration towards Mary. ²⁾

11. Our deceased brothers

Not only do we want to keep alive the memory of our Founders, but we also feel an everlasting relationship with our deceased fellow-brothers; grateful for their inspiring example, we honour their heritage as well.

We commemorate them in our prayers and commend ourselves to their intercession.

12. Mary

Mary is the Patron of our Congregation. We are happy to place our lives under her special protection.

We call ourselves Brothers of the Immaculate Conception (FratresImmaculataeConceptionis; F.I.C.).

Mary's life was completely consecrated to the service of her Son. She saw herself as a lowly handmaid, for whom God wrought his wonders.

In her Magnificat we taste her preference for the poor and needy, and the longing for justice

and righteousness. She is the mother of all the faithful. Through all her doubts and uncertainties she remained faithful to her Son, even on to Calvary. That is why all generations call her blessed. She inspires us too: it is her example we wish to follow and we invoke her aid in our prayers.

13. Organisation of our life

In order to be able to realize our ideals together, following our founders, we should make arrangements together. This is the function of:

- our Constitutions,
- our Congregational Statute,
- the Provincial Statutes,
- the regulations applying to individual communities.

14. The intention of the regulations

Our own congregational regulations and also those of Canon Law are intended to be aids in the living out of our evangelical ideal. Guided by Jesus' words: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" ²⁾, we must always be aware that a law should never restrict the purpose for which that law was given.

2. Our apostolic mission

15. Called together and sent out

As brothers we know ourselves to be called together and thus sent out to continue the work of Jesus. He went around doing good, he was a witness to the truth, he came to serve, he came to redeem, and he brought the liberating message of the Kingdom of God as a message of love. He invites us to place ourselves completely in the service of this Kingdom.

16. In the spirit of our Founders

We desire to do this in the spirit of our Founders. We feel akin to them. Their love and their concern we embrace as our own. We consider their heritage as a precious asset, which can only be kept alive by paying respectful attention to our tradition and by keeping an open eye to the signs of our times.

In the spirit of our Founders we, as a Congregation, find our apostolic task in particular to be in the field of education, formation and teaching.

17. Our principal concern

It is emphasized here, that to live according to the spirit of the Founders particularly means: to have a special concern for the poor and destitute, for the underprivileged and disabled, for socially weak and forgotten groups, for those who experience little love.

18. Transfer of faith

Living according to the spirit of our Founders also implies, that in our apostolic activity a well-considered contemporary and culturally integrated transfer of faith should be the subject of great concern.

19. Outside one's own country

A valuable tradition in the Congregation is the willingness to help build a more human world outside one's own native country. Many brothers leave their own people and their own culture to spread the Good News in word and deed in other countries, and to give form to the Kingdom of God.

20. Imbued with an apostolic spirit

Apostolate is more than mere working; it is richer and deeper. Work can turn into apostolate by the devotion and love with which it is done and by the fundamentally religious attitude which underlies it. Our ideal is that our whole lives are imbued with an apostolic spirit.³⁾

21. Thorough and effective

If we intend to set up our apostolate in a thorough and effective way, this requires of us, among other things, that we should be well-informed about contemporary spiritual trends and needs, and about the conditions in the countries and places where we work.

22. Availability

Great availability and unselfishness is asked of our Congregation. We ought to be prepared to give our all in any desired place and in the most expedient way. This demands courage and self-denial, as well as sober prudence and appreciation of

potential. Our community will always remain restricted in its capacities: by tradition and external circumstances; by the number of its members; by the normal human limitations and frailties of its members. Too much and too diversified work leads to shallowness and dispersion of energy, in spite of all good intentions.

23. As requested by the Congregation

In our apostolic dedication we are expected to work in whatever way and place the Congregation, through our authorities, requests of us, also when the request is counter to our desires, preferences, or judgments. This may be extremely difficult, but as religious we make ourselves available, to the full.

24. Together with others

Total availability further entails, that we readily pursue co-operation with others; as when employed out-side our Congregation; and again in subordinate posts.

25. As useful as possible

Total availability demands of each of us that we should develop in as fitting and harmonious a way as possible. Not only during our formation years, but continuously throughout our lives. Whoever makes himself available in an apostolic Congregation should ensure that he makes himself as useful as possible.

The policy of the Congregation as a whole should also be marked by concern for continuous formation and development.

26. A corporate mission

All brothers are - in whatever way - involved in our corporate apostolic mission and, in the fulfilment of their task, can count on the support of the community.

Within our community deliberations about the choice of our apostolic activities, and about the way in which we perform them, are a continuing necessity.

In our deliberations we desire to have an eye to the signs of the times, and to be open in faith to what the Spirit asks of us.

27. Individual and community

The personal task of each of us should be seen in the light of our corporate apostolic mission in the Church. Our tasks may vary considerably. They depend on the needs to which the community is committed. They depend on one's own discernment and on the deliberations within the community. They depend on the discernment of those who are in charge. They also depend on the gifts each of us has received from the Spirit: "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord." ³⁾ Each of us can use his gifts to serve others, in the knowledge that we are all imperfect, and that we all need one another. "For the body does not consist of one member but of many."

⁴⁾

28. In joy and sorrow

Our ministry may give us great satisfaction, so we become absorbed by it and thrive on it. Then we experience the profound human joy of being creative. This requires effort, which will be rewarded, since we see results. Then it is a blessing to be allowed to work, to be able to achieve something. It is a blessing that through our work in whatever field, we can help our fellow-beings. It is a source of joy and enrichment, despite all the worries and difficulties.

Our ministry also brings disappointments, because of our shortcomings and those of others. It is a consolation to know that sacrifice and suffering may be of benefit to our work, which may become tedious and monotonous; it may lack external glamour. Then we are asked to persevere, in faithful loyalty. "For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." ⁵⁾

29. The organisation of our life

The organisation of our life should be in harmony with the demands of the apostolate. We are not expected to fill our lives with hard and efficient work alone. Our apostolic commitment will be richer and more deeply rooted, if there is also enough room for reflection and prayer, for truly human contacts, for participation in community life, and for rest and recreation.

30. More than work

A human being is more than the work he accomplishes. What we do is important. Yet of even greater worth is who we are. That is the very reason why the life of those who, because of old age, illness, or whatever other reason, are not able to participate in the Congregation's ministry, may continue to grow in value for themselves, for our apostolic community, and for many others.

31. Apostolate and living out the vows

On the day of our profession, by taking our vows, we give expression to our desire to make ourselves free for God, to consecrate ourselves to him. Consecrating oneself to God is impossible without devoting oneself to one's fellow-beings, without showing our loving care for them. Our vows and our apostolate are not isolated from each other. Living out the vows enriches our apostolic spirit, and at the same time we may hope, that our apostolic activity would deepen the vows in our lives.

32. Apostolate and community

We recognize the personal ideal in our fellow-brothers. We all feel borne along by the apostolic spirit that animated our Founders. This is a bond that unites us and strengthens our community. Conversely, this community supports and inspires the individual brothers in their ministry; not only by means of faithful communal discernment, but also by practical assistance and interest, by empathy and understanding, and by giving special attention to brothers who experience problems in their work.

"If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together."

⁶⁾

33. Apostolate and prayer

Our prayer life is marked by our apostolic motivation, and our apostolic motivation is enriched by our prayer. As people of faith we are open to our fellow-beings and together with them we stand before God.

34. Unity in love

Our apostolic spirit permeates our fraternal community life, our prayer, and our living out of the vows.

Our living out of the vows, our prayer, and our community life impregnate our apostolate. The more profound our lives, and the more intense our quest for the God of

Love, the more so everything in our life will come to harmony and unity, and again the more so everything in our life will come together in love. "God is Love" ⁷⁾ and in him everything will coalesce in love.

3. *A community of brothers*

35. Of one heart and soul

"This is my commandment, that you love one another." ⁸⁾

Together, as brothers, we try to fulfil this mission of Christ. His Good News of the coming of the Kingdom "of righteousness and peace and joy" ¹⁾ we make our own message. Therefore, motivated by his Spirit we, just as the first Christians, desire to be "of one heart and soul" ⁹⁾; we are community, and endeavour to build up community outside our own circle. Knowing we are called to unity and fraternal solidarity, we proclaim Christ to one another and to all people.

36. Brothers of one another

We are directed towards the happiness of our fellow-beings; firstly towards the happiness of those with whom we form a community. We call one another brother and try to live up to this word in our community life.

37. Forming a community

Forming a community means: to be near one another in joy and in sorrow; to be willing to understand one another; to appreciate, encourage, and inspire one another; to be ready to forgive one another again and again; "seek to do good to one another and to all" ¹⁰⁾

38. As imperfect beings

As imperfect beings we can only live up to what was said before in an incomplete and inadequate way. However, we keep striving after this ideal. Again and again we try to see and appreciate the good things in our fellow-brothers, despite their human frailties, despite the hurts and disappointments we inflict on each other. Thus the grief we impose on one another may also enable us to grow on a deeper level of humanity and bring us closer together, grateful for the valuable things we can experience together, despite everything.

39. Personal growth

As we continue to grow into truly mature and spiritually rich people, we shall be of greater worth to our community of brothers. We attain a joint responsibility; where desired, we offer our honest opinion; we are ready to listen to others and to accept help from others; we can appreciate others in their being different; we are able to give away ourselves to others and nevertheless remain ourselves.

40. Concern for the needy

In a close-knit community there is loving care for the sick, the elderly, and those in need, for all who go through hard times, for whatever reason. Good and professional help should be provided in as far as possible and desirable; however, good and professional help alone does not suffice. There is also a need for personal interest, compassion, and understanding. Small tokens of appreciation are of great value.

41. Dialogue, contact and deliberation

Dialogue, mutual contact and frank deliberations are essential for the unity, the upbuilding, and the functioning of our Congregation. If we are to form a true community of brothers, our conversation will be marked by respect for one another, despite differences of opinion; by mutual love and continuous care for one another; by the privilege of sharing in each other's apostolic motivation; and by concern for each other's joys and worries.

42. Means of deliberation

Chapters and community meetings are important to our communal faithful discernment of what God asks of us (see Part III). We attach great value to these meetings. Further, however, various means of more informal deliberations may be of great value to fraternal community life and to our apostolic functioning.

43. Unity in diversity

Our Congregation is divided into provinces and a province is formed by a number of communities (see Part III). Our congregational unity is a unity in diversity. We pursue unity, but we respect the diversity which is within this unity. There are differences in national character, language, and culture; differences in ecclesial, national, or local situations; differences in apostolic possibilities and desirabilities; as well as differences in characters, personal talents, and experiences.

We are one Congregation but we do not bind one another to rigid uniformity. Persons, communities, and provinces differ from each other. Provided this diversity is put into practice in the right way, it has a deepening and enriching effect. Diversity need not harm our unity. In all diversity we can continue to form a strong community and remain recognisable as brothers of one another, as members of one and the same Congregation.

44. Community life

All brothers live in a house of the Congregation. Only in special cases, with the consent of the Provincial Superior, it is allowed to deviate from this.

Fellow-brothers in the same house form a community.

As brothers of each other we should strive to transform our communities into real communities of love.

Forming a community together as fellow-brothers means: to grow in harmony and caring sympathy; to be truly near one another as brothers; to show interest in each other's work; to be sincerely concerned about the personal happiness of everyone in the house; to make life good and worthwhile for each other. Striving towards this we take for granted that everyone is entitled to be himself, and that each and everyone of us should be each other's supplement.

"Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." ¹¹⁾4)

45. Being together

As fellow-brothers we can express and promote our fraternal solidarity in many ways. Communal deliberation has already been mentioned. Eucharistic celebrations and communal prayer express our unity in faith and strengthen our solidarity. Further, our communal meals and our being together in hours of relaxation may become a sign of unity, and can promote unity. We call one another brothers and intend to be close to each other. Hence we value being present at community gatherings.

46. The wider community

Not only can the local community make an appeal to us, but also the wider community of province or Congregation may do so: in a transfer, an appointment, an assignment, a request for help; or in counting on our co-operation regarding measures to be taken.

Then willingness is necessary to make one's own preferences and desires subservient to the interest of the community. This may be hard; especially when our personal opinions deviate from the opinions of those who are in authority. But we have committed ourselves to this community and we need to live up to our word.

47. Organisation

Every human life requires a certain organisation. It is good to adhere to certain points, to secure oneself a hold. When people work and live together there is, moreover, a need for communal organisation. Thus, as a Congregation we feel the need of regulations coming forth from our community itself, directed to the well-being of that community, and which can be changed when the interest of the community requires this.

48. Constitutions and Statutes

For this reason our Constitutions are laid down; dependent on these Constitutions are our Congregational Statute and the Provincial Statutes.

Constitutions, Congregational Statute and Provincial Statutes together constitute the Congregation's own law. This law shows the spirit we intend to live by, the purpose we pursue, and the items we lay down in order to achieve these aims.

49. Fraternal leadership

In our community we also need brothers to give guidance. They should do this in the Spirit of Jesus, who said of himself that he had not come "to be served, but to serve." ¹²⁾

50. The task of those in authority

Brothers in authority are expected to inspire and stimulate, to further mutual unity and cooperation, to give direction to our community by means of effective organisation and regulation. They are expected to listen to what is alive among the brothers, to show understanding for difficulties and human distress, to point out mistakes, errors and weaknesses, to act firmly and with authority whenever this is required.

51. Everyone's duty

It is true, that those in authority have a specific duty. Yet it would be incorrect to shift our personal responsibility away to those in authority. Every brother should be concerned with the happiness of his fellow-brothers. The better we live up to this apostolate at home, the better we shall together be able to spread happiness to the outside world.

52. An open community

Supported by fraternal solidarity in our own community, we hope in our outside contacts to be the loving neighbours of our fellow-people.

We form a community that is open towards others. First of all towards those for whom we are working or with whom we are working, then towards relatives, acquaintances, and all kinds of people we meet in changing situations.

As an open community we also hope to receive much from others. As an open community we pay attention to the signs of the times, we fight for justice and righteousness, we are orientated towards peace.

As an open community we have an active interest in ecumenism for the utmost encompassing unity of all people in Christ.

53. Hospitality

As an open community we are called to great hospitality. Guests should feel at home with us.

Apart from this, each community is also entitled to privacy. In our houses a section remains always reserved for the brothers themselves.

4. *Borne by God*

54. Faith

Faith is the awesome wonder which surrounds the deepest mystery of our life. Faith is the daring to live with that mystery.

Faith is not the result of our own achievements and can never be imposed. Faith is borne by God's grace.

Believing in God means, in its deepest sense, that we dare to surrender unconditionally to him. This surrender is based on unlimited trust and is driven by love, because he loved us first.

"God is Love" ⁷⁾. His love sustains us and the whole of creation. His love is the deepest foundation, the deepest mystery of everything that exists.

55. God in our life

By our own powers we can never achieve a personal relationship with God. However, God reveals himself. We may come to know him in faith. In this way he makes himself attainable to us in our earthly existence. He invites us to share life with him.

Believing in God, we see our common daily life in a new light: we are given the opportunity to come to a loving relationship with the God of Love.

Believing in God, we experience his love and faithfulness in the whole of creation and in all circumstances of our common daily existence. Believing in God, we can discover him in loving our fellow-beings and in experiencing their love. Believing in God, we shall often know darkness, but even then his love is like a cloak around us.

56. Jesus Christ

The highest revelation of God's love is Jesus Christ. In him the infinite God has come among us in a finite, earthly manifestation. Jesus Christ: God with us; Jesus Christ: our brother, equal to us in everything, except sin.

57. His example, his principal concern

In the Gospel we come to know Jesus. He reveals to us the image of the man who fulfils God's mission to the fullest. He teaches us caring love for the whole of creation. He becomes all things for all people. He looks towards human needs and has a primary concern for the poor and the needy. He, the Son of God, leads us to those poor and needy; and conversely, when we seek the poor and the needy, they will lead us to Jesus Christ, to God.

58. God's nearness

"I and the Father are one" ¹³⁾. With these words Jesus expressed his complete union with the Father. We too can experience God's loving nearness in our daily lives. We seek the explicit experience of his loving presence

- when we pray,
- when we open ourselves up to the Word of the Scriptures,
- when we receive the sacraments.

59. Prayer

Continuous concern for communal and personal prayer is an essential part of our lives as religious. We intend to be people of prayer and to interlace our whole lives more and more with moments of prayer.

60. Directed towards God

In prayer we seek God's love and grace. In prayer we hope to open up ourselves more and more towards his will, and to achieve a sense of discernment of spirits. In prayer we attempt to direct ourselves towards his will for each of us and for our community.

61. Prayer and life

Praying is tentatively seeking God in love. This quest for God cannot be detached from our common life. We can only pray honestly to "our" Father, if we feel united with our fellowbeings in our prayer, if we are prepared to live up to our faith in the God of love in ordinary life by acting positively for the happiness of our fellow-beings. Love of our neighbours is the form of our love of God. Honest prayer asks for honest love of our neighbours, asks for love in action. This means that our prayer will be nourished by our mission and will lead us back again to our apostolate.

62. Time for prayer

However hard we work and in whatever situation we are, it is necessary that there should be moments in our lives for personal and communal reflection. Moments when we are "idly" together with God in Christ. If we fail to take these moments we will miss an essential aspect of our lives as religious. Our apostolate will consequently also suffer, for particularly in Christ we learn most deeply the meaning of being human for others.

63. Regularity and faithfulness

Prayer demands courage and faithfulness; prayer demands regularity. It calls for an effort to free ourselves from our daily chores, to make room for our prayer. Our prayer will be of little value, if we only pray spontaneously. For this reason arrangements within ourselves and within the community are necessary.

However, not only arrangements are of importance; it is also vital that the whole atmosphere in a community should support personal and communal prayer.

64. Communal prayer

Our communal prayer should be well prepared, expressed in a fitting manner and true to life. In our communities we gather for our communal prayers at least once a day. By means of our communal prayer we also wish to share in the prayers of the greater community of the Church. In this context too, it is appropriate to give psalms and other scriptural texts a prominent place in our prayers. Besides this it remains desirable to maintain a close relationship between communal prayer and our everyday life.

65. Personal prayer

We are to allow adequate time daily for personal prayer and meditation. Personal prayer does not mean that our prayers should always be said spontaneously and expressed in newly found words. Existing prayers can give support and inspiration, provided they are said in an attentive, meditative way and, if necessary, adapted to personal circumstances. Meditative prayer is of equally essential importance to people that lead active apostolic lives. The best form of prayer is that in which God discloses himself most: this may be mental or vocal prayer, reflective reading, or a deep sense of love and surrender.

66. Growth

Like everything that lives, prayer life is subject to growth and development. Maturing prayer life will need fewer and fewer words. More and more it will become just being in the presence of God through faith, hope and love.

Increasingly, we will experience God as being present in our common daily life, in everybody, in everything.

Prayer life and daily life gradually merge. Growing prayer life entails a painful purification just like any other growth. We have to detach ourselves in order to gain union with God and with our fellow-beings. Growth in prayer life is impossible without growing in love in ordinary life.

67. Longer periods

It is desirable to incorporate longer periods of prayer and reflection in our lives. These are of vital importance for a better understanding of ourselves and of our lives as religious; for a more intensive personal contact with God; for openness to God's Spirit; and for deepening our apostolic concern. In every province arrangements are made concerning annual retreats and other opportunities for reflection of longer duration. ⁵⁾

68. The word of the Scriptures

We wish to open up our minds to God's Word by frequently reading from and meditating on texts from the Scriptures. In the Scriptures we read how God makes himself known as being present in our world and in the history of humankind, that is, how he reveals himself. The Old Testament tells us the history of a people with their God, and of this God, Yahweh, with his people.

The first Christian communities in the New Testament reveal us Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, the Christ, as the Word made flesh, as the image of the living God, as the Son who prays to the Father and teaches us how to pray, as the man who becomes all things for all people, as the proclaimer of the Good News. ⁶⁾

69. The most fundamental Rule of Life

We see the Good News of Jesus as our most fundamental Rule of Life. We consider his word and example to be our guide-line. We desire to grow towards him, drawing increasingly from his life. Thus we hope we can say more and more: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." ¹⁴⁾

70. Eucharist

The supreme celebration of this unity with Jesus Christ, the supreme celebration of the mystery of love is the Eucharist. Further, the Eucharist is the celebration of our unity with one another and with all people in him. "The bread which we break, is it not a

participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." ¹⁵⁾⁷⁾

71. Self-sacrifice

Highest unity is achieved by the highest self-sacrifice. Whoever wishes to be one with other people, should venture to offer himself to others. Jesus Christ has done so, and in the Eucharist we thankfully commemorate this self-sacrifice, we gratefully commemorate his life, his death and his resurrection. During the eucharistic celebration we express our desire to follow Jesus' example, and so offer ourselves in loving self-giving to our fellow-men. In this way the Eucharist remains closely related to our everyday life. That is why we strive to participate in the Eucharist daily, in so far as possible.

72. Guilt and penance

Despite the best of intentions each one of us will fall short of the ideal. Personal and communal guilt are hard realities in our lives. Hence we give consideration to the examination of our consciences; to celebrations in which the confession of guilt and the willingness to do penance are central; to celebrate frequently the sacrament of Reconciliation in a truly beneficial way. Realizing all this, it is good to be aware that Jesus taught us how to pray: "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." ¹⁶⁾ Repeatedly, we should give to each other and to those who have harmed us the grace of forgiveness. ⁸⁾

73. Trust

We continue to be people who fall short of the ideal, yet we can always trust in God's unlimited love. He loved us first and continues to love us. Again and again we can place our hope in him, even when our conscience condemns us, "for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything." ¹⁷⁾

74. Sacrament of the Sick

It is a witness of our brotherly love when we ensure that our sick fellow-brothers too receive the spiritual support they need. For those seriously ill the Sacrament of the Sick may be of great significance.

75. Mary

The highest revelation of God's love is Jesus Christ. Mary, of all people, is joined with Jesus in the most intimate way. She is his mother and is called the mother of all the faithful. Our lives as brothers have been placed under her special protection. This will be evident in prayer and reflection. Her feasts, particularly the feast of her Immaculate Conception, are lovingly celebrated in our community. We contemplate her life and address her in our personal and communal prayer. Besides other prayers praying the Rosary is valuable. The ways in which brothers express their bond with Mary vary widely. It is, however, a characteristic of the Congregation, that every brother gives the Mother of the Lord an important place in his life.

As apostolic people we also desire to be inspired by her towards service and compassion with others, towards sensitive concern for human needs, towards a commitment to justice and righteousness. ⁹⁾

5. *Our consecration*

76. As brothers

As brothers in the Congregation we fully commit ourselves to the service of God and the coming of his Kingdom. In love we consecrate ourselves to him who is Love. And in him we consecrate ourselves to one another and to all people.

77. Our vows

We try to express this consecration in our whole lives. We do this in the spirit of the Gospel by, among other things, committing ourselves under vows to evangelical obedience, poverty, and celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

78. All aspects of our lives

Living out our consecration, and consequently living out our vows, will permeate all aspects of our lives, and relates directly to our apostolic spirit.

79. Evangelical obedience

We become brothers, since we wish to commit ourselves fully to the service of God and the coming of his Kingdom. Following the example of Jesus, who took "the form of a servant ... and became obedient unto death" ¹⁸⁾, our disposition in life will be a listening and obedient one. We try to discern the will of God, in what our community asks of us, in the circumstances in which we live, in the people who need us.

80. Completely available

It is our ideal to make ourselves completely available, after the example of Jesus: all our physical and mental faculties, our talents and expertise, our time and energy, our initiatives, creativity and experience of life, our preferences and desires as to the nature and place of our work. Hence, renouncing our lives in obedience, after Jesus' example, we hope to achieve a deep and fruitful human life.

"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." ¹⁹⁾

81. In accord with our vow

Through our vow of obedience we oblige ourselves to respond in the best possible way to what is requested of us by legitimate superiors and the legitimate congregational authority in accordance with the Constitutions.

In accord with this vow we wish to listen in faith to what the Constitutions, the Congregational Statute, the Provincial Statutes, and local regulations ask of us.

As members of this Congregation we are subject to the highest authority of the Church, as laid down in Canon Law. ¹⁰⁾

82. Obedience and apostolate

Obedience lived faithfully will create optimum possibilities for the apostolic commitment, of each individual brother, and of the community as a whole.

83. Obedience to persons

Placing ourselves voluntarily in obedience under the authority of fellow-brothers, may have far reaching consequences for our lives, sometimes demanding much of us.

This is only possible if we are orientated in faith towards God's will. Obedience thus lived, may provide joyful freedom and availability in one's personal life and in the life of the community as a whole.

84. Initiative and discernment

Our vow of obedience does not ask us to renounce our own conscience or responsibility. This is neither possible nor desirable. It is never the intention that we become passive people lacking in initiative and in discernment. Continuously obedient, we should also continue to feel co-responsible. Thus our obedience will become a way to help contribute, as truly free people, to the well-being of humankind and to the well-being within our own community.

85. Those in authority

Again those in authority should try, in obedience, and in a faithful willingness to listen, to discern what the Spirit asks of us.

86. Evangelical poverty

We become brothers, since we wish to commit ourselves fully to the service of God and the coming of his Kingdom. Jesus Christ proclaimed that Kingdom. In the Gospel he says: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God." ²⁰⁾

Again and again he manifested his principal concern for the poor. He warned against hoarding treasures "where moth and rust consume" ²¹⁾, and he himself lived in simplicity and moderation.

87. The early Christians

The early Christians who desired to live in the Spirit of the word and example of Jesus are said to be "of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own." ²²⁾

88. To follow Christ

Just as the early Christians we desire to live in a community sharing property in common. Just like them, we wish to live following the word and the example of the poverty of Christ. As individuals and as a community we put ourselves, regarding the use of money and property, and of everything earned or received, at the disposal of the community for the growth of the Kingdom of God, for the new world of "righteousness and peace and joy." ¹⁾

89. The intention of this vow

We take the vow of poverty. This means that we make ourselves dependent on the Congregation and the congregational authority in the use and disposition of money and property. ¹¹⁾

In the spirit of this vow the motif of our lives, as persons and as a Congregation, will be one of moderation. In the spirit of this vow we have a principal concern for the poor and the needy in matters of finance.

In the spirit of this vow we are orientated towards righteousness, relief to people in need, and we turn against exploitation and unjust economic structures.

90. Moderation

As persons and as a community we wish to avoid everything that could be seen as a pursuit of wealth, power and prestige, as a desire for profit and property.

The furnishing of our houses, our meals, and recreation, our whole daily life should express our living in temperance and moderation. Our clothes too should be evidence of this. In society we, as brothers, are known by our own congregational emblem.¹²⁾

91. Solidarity

It is not our intention to live in extreme material poverty and destitution. But as an apostolic community and also in the use and the administration of our goods, we do wish to be orientated towards a solidarity with the poor and needy. In the spirit of Jesus Christ we wish to have an open mind for our fellow-men, to share with them, to have an eye for their needs and not to enrich ourselves at their expense.

92. Becoming free people

Living in austerity and solidarity, as truly free people, we hope to grow and overcome the mere longing for earthly and transitory things. Through our willingness to detach ourselves from material wealth and using the things of this earth respectfully and joyfully, we help build a christian world and testify to more lasting values.

93. Personal responsibility

Making ourselves dependent on the Congregation in the use of money and property does not mean that our personal responsibilities are shifted onto those in authority. It is everyone's personal task to detach oneself from the desire for money and property.

If each of us personally strives not to hoard treasures for himself on earth, this will be in keeping with the spirit of our community.

94. Consecrated celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of God

We become brothers since we wish to commit ourselves fully to the service of God and the coming of his Kingdom. Christ advised any one who is able to receive this not to marry for the sake of the Kingdom of God. We believe, and also wish to commit ourselves to this belief, that a person can be truly inspired by God, and the coming of his Kingdom, in such a way that he lives in consecrated celibacy and binds himself by a vow.

95. United with Christ

Christ himself is our example. Living a celibate life, he was totally committed to the Father and wholly directed towards his fellow-beings. In love he completely emptied himself, becoming everything to all people.

Inspired by him and fully united with him, we too wish to let our celibate life be marked by love. In love we want to be directed towards God, towards our fellow-brothers, towards relatives and acquaintances, towards those to whom we dedicate ourselves, towards all we meet. Most particularly we want to be directed in love towards the poor and the needy, towards all those to whom Jesus too had a special concern.

96. Accepting the consequences

Our celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of God should be characterised by respectful prudence and wise restraint, as demanded by our own nature and by the state of life for which we have opted.

97. Supporting one another

As brothers we should help one another in living out our consecrated celibacy. We can do so by accepting one another and by empathizing with one another; by being warm-hearted to one another; by trying to create an atmosphere in which every one can feel at home; by giving advice and support with empathy, or - in as far as it concerns us - by giving guidance to fellow-brothers; by creating the atmosphere within our own community for one another to give love and to receive love. In this context prayer and sound asceticism are deemed to be necessary for each one of us.

98. Apostolic dimension

We will also help each other to live out our consecrated celibacy beneficially, in that we inspire and support each other in our apostolic commitment. Our celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of God cannot be separated from our commitment to that Kingdom. The freedom which can be given by consecrated celibacy, and again the solitude which can be entailed in consecrated celibacy, can be enriching and fruitful for our apostolate in union with Christ. They can lead us to loving and sensitive concern for many people, particularly those who experience little love.

99. A life coming into being

In taking our vows we express that, as free people, we undividedly make ourselves available. This does not mean, of course, that we are undivided straight away. Our assignment is to grow towards it, through all difficulties and disappointments. It is an ideal to which we aspire. Strenuously, step by step, by trial and error, we attempt to achieve this. Thus we try to grow in love, faithfully and hopefully.

In this way we shall experience the joy of our union with Christ, with our fellow-brothers and with many others.

**PART TWO GROWTH WITHIN OUR
CONGREGATION**

6. Preparatory period and noviciate

100. Introductory remarks

The Congregation must ensure that the formation of prospective brothers is adequate, efficacious, and culturally integrated.

To this end the influence of the brothers who are specifically entrusted with this formation, and the influence of the brothers with whom prospective brothers will live, is of great importance.

The spirit of our whole community and the example set by us all, have a great influence too.

Prospective members can be assured of our prayers. Their growth within the Congregation should be assisted by our fraternal love. It should be made clear, with care and patience, whether they truly share our aims and ideals and whether they fit into our life. This must also be clarified for the prospective member.

101. Preparatory period

Whoever feels a vocation to share our life must go through a preparatory period, before being admitted to the noviciate. During this preparatory period he has the opportunity to become better acquainted with the Congregation, and the Congregation has the opportunity to come to know him. After this preparatory period, provided the candidate is admitted, the noviciate begins.

The beginning of the noviciate marks the start of life in our Congregation.

102. Formation programme

A practical introduction to our life and our spirituality is necessary besides a thorough theoretical training. The formation programme should clarify how we, in faith, hope, and love, desire to make our lives of more worth as human beings, as christians, as brothers.

The formation of candidates to our Congregation is particularly aimed at the following:

- To help candidates deepen and enrich their basic attitudes.
- To help candidates reflect on essential questions concerning their future, and their vocation, if any, to religious life.

This reflection should also be put to the test in everyday life.

- To make the candidates sensitive to the Founders' ideal and the spirit of our Congregation.
- To give the opportunity to both the Congregation and the candidate to discern and assess, so that responsible decisions may follow.

103. The Novicemaster

With the consent of his Councillors the Provincial Superior appoints the Novicemaster. He must have been perpetually professed and is appointed for a period of three years. He may be re-appointed.¹³⁾

104. Duration

For validity the noviciate takes twelve months, spent - either continuously or with intervals - in the noviciate house. After this period the noviciate may be continued for some time, but ordinarily the total duration of the noviciate must be no longer than two

years. In view of doubt about suitability for profession of a certain novice the noviciate period may be prolonged up to six months by the Provincial Superior. ¹⁴⁾

105. Guidelines and regulations

The General Council may give general guidelines and regulations, valid to all provinces, as regards the setting up and organisation of the noviciate.

Further regulations are drawn up per province and need the approbation of the Provincial Council. In these regulations the ecclesial and social situation in the province should be taken into account.

106. Admission

Candidates are admitted to the noviciate by the Provincial Superior with the consent of his councillors and in accord with the instructions of Canon Law. ¹⁵⁾

107. Noviciate house

In the establishment, transfer or suppression of a noviciate house the procedures according to Canon Law are to be followed. ¹⁶⁾

7. Profession and continuing formation

108. Profession

At our profession we respond to what we experience as God's invitation, and we bind ourselves as brothers to the evangelical ideal of this community. We make that ideal our own.

In our profession we consecrate ourselves completely to God and the coming of his Kingdom. We accept the Gospel of Jesus Christ as our first and highest standard of life, promising to live an apostolic life together with our fellow-brothers, in the spirit of Jesus, and in accord with the Constitutions of the Congregation.

109. Profession formula

I, brother

desire to consecrate myself, as a member of the Congregation of the Brothers of the Immaculate Conception, to God, to the coming of his Kingdom, and the happiness of my fellow-human beings.

I pledge to God to live in religious obedience, poverty and celibacy, according to the Constitutions of our Congregation.

I make this promise for ...(three years/all my life).

I request my fellow-brothers to accept me with love in their community, and I ask God to give me the grace to be a good member of this community.

I request you, brother ...(as General Superior/as a delegate of the General Superior) to accept my profession.

Acceptance:

As General Superior (As a delegate of the General Superior) I accept your profession, and I declare that you have been accepted in our community (for three years/for the rest of your natural life).

May God grant you to be happy yourself and to make other people happy.

110. Temporary profession

After the noviciate, previous to perpetual profession, follows a period of temporary profession.

Anyone who binds himself by temporary vows does so with the intention of binding himself for life in the future; however, it is a good thing, to bind oneself only temporarily in the beginning. During the years of temporary commitment the vocation to life in our Congregation can be confirmed. It may also become clear, that it is, after all, better to make a different choice.

111. Duration of temporary profession

The period of temporary profession takes three years at least, to a maximum of six years. The duration is determined by the Provincial Chapter. If desirable, the established duration may be prolonged by the Provincial Superior with the consent of his councillors for a particular candidate; the total period of temporary profession, however, must not last longer than nine years.

When the time for which the profession was made has expired, a brother who freely asks for this, and is judged suitable, is to be admitted to the renewal of temporary profession or to perpetual profession. If not, he is to leave the Congregation. ¹⁷⁾

112. Permission

Both for the temporary profession and for the perpetual profession the Provincial Superior should grant his permission with the consent of his councillors.

For a perpetual profession this approbation should be authorized by the General Superior with the consent of his councillors.

113. The separation from the institute

The procedures to be followed in matters concerning transfer to another institute, exclaustation and the breaking of the commitment with the Congregation, are stipulated in Canon Law.¹⁸⁾

114. Support of the community

By accepting a brother's profession we, as a Congregation, commit ourselves to support him in all respects in living out his vocation.

115. Continuing formation

It is taken for granted that young brothers should need guidance and supervision. Systematic and purposeful formation should be continued for a number of years after the brother's admission to the Congregation. Particular attention should be paid to this continuing formation.

In day to day community life as well as in his apostolic activities a young brother can count on the special help of those in office, on the support of the fellow-brothers with whom he is living, and on the driving-force that emanates from all of our lives. The strength of our apostolic and fraternal community is also evaluated by the way in which we are near to our young brothers.

Not only during our formative years, but throughout our lives we should be open to development, formation, and deepening the meaning of our lives. As persons and as community we should seek this in various ways. This too is an expression of faithfulness to our vocation. Our vocation requires us to go on training ourselves for our task, to keep abreast of developments in the church and society, to have a ready eye to the signs of the times; and to continue developing our spiritual growth.

116. In continuous faithfulness

On the day of our profession we promise to be faithful, faithful for better, and for worse. There will be good days, then we feel happy in our community of brothers, in the pursuit of our ideals.

There will also be hard days, when we will have only a very vague notion of our ideal. Life brings its disappointments to each of us. Human limitations and imperfections may make themselves strongly felt; the limitations of others, our own limitations. Ordinary day to day life may become tedious and colourless; ostensibly without a view of further growth. God and our fellow-beings appear to be at a distance.

In a word: the cross, suffering, will come into our lives. Then we should be aware, however strange it may seem, that this pain may indeed contribute to our deepest happiness; that pain may indeed open us up to love.

Suffering borne well brings us closer to God, closer to fellow-beings.

Jesus himself is our example. In evil days he remained faithful to his task, to his vocation: "Obedient unto death, even death on a cross."²³⁾

We also see faithfulness in Mary's life, who, in faithful joy, sang her Magnificat, and who, in the darkness of suffering, dared to stand near the cross.

117. Gratitude

Being a religious is a gift to us. In faith, hope, and love we can live out the idea that as a Congregation we are Church. God called us to this life, he enabled us to respond to his call. "In him who strengthens us" ²⁴⁾ we direct our existence towards the counsels of the Gospel. The way of life Christ chose, we make our own.

Human actions will always be inadequate and imperfect, but we always feel that we are borne in God's fatherly hand; we always know that we are on our way to final fulfilment. Gratitude, therefore, may add lustre to our lives; gratitude for our being human, for our being christians, for our being religious.

PART THREE

GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION IN OUR CONGREGATION

8. The General Chapter

118. The General Chapter

The General Chapter has supreme authority in the Congregation. It represents the Congregation in its totality and exercises, for the duration of its meeting, the extraordinary direction of the Congregation, without detracting anything from the ordinary government of the General Council. The General Superior is the president of the chapter. ¹⁹⁾

119. Task of the General Chapter

It is the General Chapter's task to keep the heritage of the Congregation alive, and also to promote appropriate renewal.

The General Chapter serves the spiritual and material needs of the Congregation, and makes regulations which are binding upon the whole Congregation.

The General Chapter elects the General Council.

The better the preparation for chapter meetings, and the more intensely the people concerned are involved, the more fruitful will be the chapter meeting.

120. The convocation of the six-yearly General Chapter is made by the General Superior up to six months before the expiration of his term of office.

121. All the members of the General Chapter are convoked in writing. Absentees lose their right to vote.

The General Chapter can only be opened and legally sit, if, and as long as, at least two thirds of the number of members are present.

122. With due regard to Canon Law the Congregational Statute determines what matters should be considered at the ordinary six-yearly chapter.

123. Members

The General Chapter determines how the following chapter is to be composed. The number of elected members must exceed the number of those who are members by virtue of their office.

Ex-officio members of the chapter are: the members of the General Council and the Provincial Superiors. Elected members of the General Chapter must have been professed for at least three years.

124. The General Chapter is legally in session, as soon as the president has declared the chapter open. The chapter is dissolved when - after the agenda has been completed - the president with the permission of the absolute majority of the members of the chapter, declares the chapter closed.

125. Extra-ordinary Chapters

Extra-ordinary General Chapters must be held:

- when the General Chapter itself decides to hold one;
- when over half of the brothers request this;
- when the General Council resolve to hold one for crucial reasons.

In all cases mentioned the General Superior will ensure that the convocation is sent out in good time.

The chapter members are to be elected according to regulations adapted to the situation, but unnecessary deviations from the normal regulations must not occur.

126. Deviation from decisions

The General Council is committed to the decisions of the General Chapter, unless in its judgment there are grave reasons against it which the chapter could not foresee. Deviations of chapter decisions taken are to be accounted for by the General Council in the following General Chapter.

9. The General Council

127. Composition

The General Council is composed of the General Superior and his Councillors. The number of Councillors is determined by the General Chapter, but should be at least three. The General Superior or his Vicar represents the Congregation in legal matters.

128. General Superior

A General Superior is elected by the General Chapter for a period of six years and can be re-elected only once for a consecutive six year term of office.

129. To be eligible as General Superior a candidate must have been perpetually professed for at least ten years.

130. In order to be elected General Superior a candidate must have obtained two thirds of the votes cast by the voting members present without prejudice to what is stipulated in art. 128. Concerning the voting procedure the following is to be observed:

If at the first ballot for the election of the General Superior no brother receives two thirds of the votes, a second ballot must be taken and if necessary a third.

Again, if at the third ballot no candidate obtains two thirds of the votes, a fourth must be taken. The brother who at this ballot obtains the absolute majority is elected.

If the fourth ballot does not produce an absolute majority, a fifth ballot must be taken. This fifth ballot, however, is exclusively between the two candidates who at the fourth ballot obtained the most votes. If necessary an interim ballot will determine which candidates obtain the most votes. At this interim ballot and at the fifth ballot the candidates concerned do not vote themselves.

If at the fifth ballot the two candidates obtain an equal number of votes, then the younger one by age is regarded as elected.

The results of the individual ballots must be made known immediately after each voting.

131. If a brother is elected General Superior, but is not present at the Chapter, he must be summoned immediately.

The sessions are postponed until his arrival.

If the election has taken place according to the regulations, the president - or if the president is elected himself, the secretary, - must declare the election legitimate and promulgate it as such.

132. General Councillors

A General Councillor is elected by the General Chapter for a six year period. He may be re-elected.

133. The General Councillors must be elected by separate ballot.

To be elected General Councillor a candidate must have obtained two thirds of the votes cast by the voting members present. If this is not the case on the first or second ballot the following procedure is to be followed:

If at the first and second ballots no brother receives two thirds of the votes, an absolute majority will be decisive for the third ballot. If the third ballot does not produce an

absolute majority, a fourth ballot must be taken. However, this fourth ballot is exclusively between the two candidates who obtained the most votes at the third ballot. If necessary an interim ballot will determine which candidates obtain the most votes.

At this interim ballot and at the fourth ballot the candidates concerned do not vote themselves. If at the fourth ballot the two candidates obtain an equal number of votes, then the younger one by age is regarded as elected.

The results of the individual ballots must be made known immediately after each voting.

134. If a brother is elected General Councillor but is not present at the Chapter, he must be summoned immediately. The normal proceedings of the Chapter, however, need not be interrupted.

135. After the election of the General Superior and the Councillors, the ballot papers are immediately destroyed.

136. The retiring General Council relinquishes office at a time determined by the General Chapter, but no longer than six months after the election has been declared legitimate and promulgated. The new General Council assumes office at the same time.

137. Vicar

After the election of the Councillors the General Chapter elects - from them - the deputy of the General Superior for the period of the latter's term of office. This deputy is elected by an absolute majority of the votes and is given the title of Vicar.

The Vicar takes the place of the General Superior when the latter is absent or incapacitated and in a period when the office of the General Superior has fallen vacant.

138. In accordance with the regulations of Canon Law and our own Constitutions the Councillors to the General Superior are involved in the government of the Congregation:

- by giving advice and support to the General Superior;
- by co-operating in the preparation of policy;
- by taking part in decision making;
- by rendering assistance in the implementation of decisions.

139. In the cases mentioned in the Congregational Statute (art. 28) the General Superior decides with the consent of his Council convoked to this effect.

140. Decisions taken by the General Superior or by the General Superior with the consent of his councillors, in accordance with our Constitutions and our Congregational Statute, are binding upon all brothers to whom these decisions apply.

141. Visitation

The General Superior or one of his Councillors is to visit all the provinces at least once every six years.

During this visitation each brother must have the opportunity to speak with the Visitor.

142. Treasurer and secretary

The General Superior appoints with the consent of his Councillors:

- the General Treasurer;
- the Secretary to the General Council.

These brothers must have been perpetually professed. They are appointed for a period during which the Council itself holds office, and may be re-appointed.

143. Secretary

The Secretary to the General Council is in charge of and is responsible for the secretariat.

The minutes of every meeting must be recorded. It is the responsibility of the Secretary to draw up a report, which is authorized by the General Council.

144. Treasurer

Concerning the General Treasurer's duty reference is made to the articles 167 and 168 of these Constitutions.

145. Transfer to another province

The transfer of a brother from one province to another is effected by the General Superior after having consulted with the Provincial Superiors of the two provinces.

146. Deviations from the Constitutions

The General Superior, with the consent of his Councillors, may dispense a province, for grave reasons, from disciplinary norms of the Constitutions.

10. Provinces and communities

147. Diversity in unity

Provinces, as well as communities, will function better where they are more firmly rooted in the national or local situation of society and church.

This will involve diversity; this diversity is fruitful, if it is borne in faith by unity in apostolic concern and by sincere brotherhood.

148. Provinces

A province is made up of a number of local communities which, within the totality of the Congregation, form a unity in special commitment to each other, with its own Provincial Chapter, its own Provincial Council, and its own Provincial Statute.

A province can be established and suppressed either by the General Chapter, or by the General Superior with the consent of his Councillors.

With the exception of the members of the General Council, the General Treasurer, and the Secretary to the General Council, all brothers belong to a province.

149. Provincial Council and Provincial Chapter

The Provincial Council is made up of the Provincial Superior and his Councillors. The number of Councillors is determined by the Provincial Chapter, but should be a minimum of three.

150. To be eligible as a Provincial Superior the candidate must have been perpetually professed for at least five years.

151. A Provincial Superior exercises his office for a period of six years and may be considered only once for a consecutive six year term of office, subject to what is stipulated in the articles 48 and 49 of our Congregational Statute.

152. A Provincial Councillor exercises his office for a period of six years and may be considered for following six year terms of office, subject to what is stipulated in the articles 48 and 49 of our Congregational Statute.

153. Our Congregational Statute provides regulations for the manner in which the Provincial Council is constituted, and for its functioning. This applies with equal force to the composition and the functioning of the Provincial Chapter.

154. The General Chapter or the General Superior with the consent of his Councillors can annul, for very sound reasons, a decision of a Provincial Chapter, or a decision of a Provincial Council. The reasons for doing so must be communicated.

155. Provincial Statute

A province has its own Provincial Statute. This will be drawn up by the Provincial Chapter, or by the Provincial Council, and needs the approbation of the General Superior with the consent of his Councillors.

156. Houses

The establishment and suppression of a house belongs to the authority of the General

Council, following the appropriate contact with the diocesan bishop. ²⁰⁾

157. Local Council

A Community has a local Superior. Together with his Councillors he constitutes the Local Council. In a small community all professed brothers, together with the Local Superior, may form the Local Council.

The Local Superior is the president of the Local Council and of the community meeting.

Local Superiors and Local Councillors are appointed by the Provincial Superior with the consent of his Councillors, after consultation with the community concerned.

To be eligible as a Local Superior a brother must have been perpetually professed for at least three years.

The Superior and the other members of the Local Council have within the community:

- a stimulating and inspiring duty;
- a coordinating and organizing duty;
- a representative duty;
- and in certain cases a disciplinary duty.

158. Right of appeal

An individual brother or a community of brothers who cannot reach agreement with the Local Council or the Local Superior has the right, in the first place, to appeal to the Provincial Council or the Provincial Superior.

If no agreement can be reached, the brother or the community is entitled to appeal to the General Council or the General Superior. The General Superior will come to a decision in case of no agreement.

Higher authorities do not decide in serious matters, before having consulted with all the parties concerned.

11. Temporal goods and their administration

159. Personal belongings

Before making our temporary profession we transfer the administration of our property to whom we please. Similarly we freely make arrangements concerning its use and usufruct. A will must be made, at the very latest before perpetual profession. This will must be valid in Civil Law.

Changing these arrangements or taking any legal action concerning temporal goods requires the permission of the Provincial Superior.²¹⁾

160. We retain the ownership of our goods and the right to acquire other goods, but only through inheritance and legacies.

With the permission of the General Superior, a brother in perpetual vows may renounce any inheritance he has acquired or is due to acquire.

The General Superior may delegate this right to the Provincial Superiors.

161. Sharing our goods in common

The consequence of sharing our goods in common includes the following:

- Whatever we earn by our activities belongs to the property of the Congregation. The Congregation is bound to provide for our maintenance, as long as we are members of this community.
- Also income from a secondary job passes to the Congregation.
- Personal presents - once accepted - belong to the Congregation. Their use is stipulated in each province.
- We neither have a private bank account nor a private giro account which is at our private disposal.
- All services or institutes that are in some way dependent on the Congregation give financial account to the Congregation.

162. The Capital of the Congregation

The Congregation, by virtue of the law a juridical person, has the capacity to acquire, possess, administer and alienate temporal goods.²²⁾

The capital belongs to the Congregation as a whole, as understood in our Constitutions. In so far as - historically speaking - parts of the capital have been acquired by or have been registered in the name of individual provinces, communities, or entities allied to them, all entities mentioned act only as holders or administrators on behalf of the Congregation as a whole.

163. The Provincial Superiors and their Councillors who in our Constitutions have been entrusted with the administration of some part of the capital of the Congregation, must ensure that this capital be transferred to a corporate body - established in accordance with the laws of the country where the capital is located - and appoint the governing board of this corporate body.

164. In the definition of the objective of the corporate body referred to in article 163, reference must be made to the regulations of our Constitutions, while at the same time a prohibition to change the statutes without the written permission of the General Council must be included.

165. The corporate body thus established in agreement with the preceding articles is bound, at all times, and at the request of the General Council, to the immediate surrender of its capital, or part of it, to the Congregation as a whole, or to a corporate body designated by the General Council.
166. The General Council is entrusted with the policy concerning the capital of the Congregation as a whole, and the administration of this capital. The General Council is accountable for these to the General Chapter. The General Chapter clears the General Council from the policy pursued and the administration of the capital.
167. The General Council is assisted by the General Treasurer in the administration of the capital, who performs his duty under the direction of the General Superior. The General Treasurer is in virtue of his office not a member of the Council. However, a member of the General Council – but not the General Superior – can be appointed as General Treasurer and thus remains a member of the General Council.
168. Every year the General Treasurer will give an account to the General Council about his administration of the capital, as instructed by the General Superior, and about the supervision on the lower councils, as commissioned to him.
Every year the General Treasurer is cleared by the General Council on the basis of an audit report.
169. The Provincial Council is entrusted with the policy concerning the capital of the province and its administration, and is responsible for this to both the General Council and to the Provincial Chapter. The Provincial Chapter and the General Council clear the Provincial Council concerned from the policy pursued.
170. The administration of our goods and our capital should be in accordance with Canon Law and Civil Law.
171. Congregational Statute
In our Congregational Statute further regulations are made concerning temporal goods and their administration.

PART IV FINAL

REGULATIONS

172. These Constitutions have a binding force upon all members of our Congregation, except for legitimate dispensations.
173. If a majority of two thirds of the votes so decides, a General Chapter with the consent of the Holy See can introduce alterations in these Constitutions.
174. The right of practical interpretation of these Constitutions belongs to the General Chapter, or to the General Superior with the consent of his Councillors. The authentic interpretation has been reserved to the Holy See.

List of Quotations^{*)}

- 1) Rom 14:17
- 2) Mk 2:27
- 3) 1Cor 12:4-5
- 4) 1Cor 12:14
- 5) 2Cor 4:5
- 6) 1Cor 12:26
- 7) 1Jn 4:8
- 8) Jn 15:12
- 9) Acts 4:32
- 10) 1Thess 5:15
- 11) Rom 15:7
- 12) Mt 20:28
- 13) Jn 10:30 14) Gal 2:20
- 15) 1Cor 10:16-17
- 16) Mt 6:12
- 17) 1Jn 3:20
- 18) cf Phil 2:7-8
- 19) Jn 12:24
- 20) Lk 6:20
- 21) Mt 6:19
- 22) Acts 4:32
- 23) Phil 2:8
- 24) cf Phil 4:13

^{*)} All quotations have been taken from:

The Revised Standard Version -
Catholic Edition - 1966
London - Cath. Truth Society

References

1. CIC Can. 675
2. CIC Can. 578
3. CIC Can. 675
4. CIC Can. 608, 665, 667.1
5. CIC Can. 663.5
6. CIC Can. 663.3
7. CIC Can. 663.2

8. CIC Can. 664
9. CIC Can. 663.4
10. CIC Can. 590.2
11. Const. Ch. 11, art. 159-171
12. CIC Can. 669
13. CIC Can. 651
14. CIC Can. 648, 649, 653
15. CIC Can. 641, 643, 645
16. CIC Can. 647
17. CIC Can. 655-658
18. CIC Can. 684-704
19. CIC Can. 631
20. CIC Can. 609.1, 616
21. CIC Can. 668
22. CIC Can. 634