

Our Way of Life

Rule of Saint Augustine

Statutes and Directives

Regulations of Canon Law and By-Laws



*Congregation of the
Brothers of Mercy
of Mary Help of Christians*

Fratres Misericordiae Mariae Auxiliatricis

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The Rule of Saint Augustine

Preface

Before all else, beloved, love God and then your neighbor, for these are the chief commandments given to us. (cf. Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-34)

Chapter One

1. The following are the precepts we order you living in the monastery to observe.
2. The main purpose for your having come together is to live harmoniously in your house, intent upon God, with one heart and one soul (Acts 4:32).
3. Therefore call nothing your own, but let everything be yours in common. Food and clothing shall be distributed to each of you by your superior, not equally to all, for all do not enjoy equal health, but rather according to each one's need. For so you read in the Acts of the Apostles that "they had all things in common, and each was given what he needed" (Acts 4:32, 35).
4. Those who owned something in the world should be cheerful in wanting to share it in common once they have entered the monastery.
5. But they who owned nothing should not look for those things in the monastery that they were unable to have in the world. Nevertheless, they are to be given all that their health requires even if, during their time in the world, poverty made it impossible for them to find the very necessities of life. And these should not consider themselves fortunate because they have found the kind of food and clothing which they were unable to find in the world.
6. And let them [those who possessed nothing while in the world] not hold their heads high because they associate with people whom they did not dare to approach in the world, but let them rather lift up their hearts and not seek after what is vain and earthly. Otherwise, monasteries will come to serve a useful purpose for the rich and not for the poor, if the rich are made humble there and the poor are puffed up with pride.
7. The rich, for their part, who seemed important in the world must not look down upon their brothers or sisters who have come into this holy brotherhood or sisterhood from a condition of poverty. They should seek to glory in the fellowship of poor brothers or sisters rather than in the high rank of rich parents and relatives. They should neither be elated if they have contributed a part of their wealth to the common life, not take more pride in sharing their riches with the monastery than if they were to enjoy them in the world. Indeed, every other kind of sin has to do with the commission of evil deeds, whereas pride lurks even in good works in order to destroy them. And what good is it to scatter one's wealth abroad by giving to the poor, even

to become poor oneself, when the unhappy soul is thereby more given to pride in despising riches than it had been in possessing them?

8. Let all of you then live together in oneness of mind and heart, mutually honoring in yourselves the God whose temples you have become.

Chapter Two

1. Be assiduous in prayer at the hours and times appointed.

2. In the oratory no one should do anything other than that for which it was intended and from which it also takes its name. Consequently, if there are some who might wish to pray there during their free time, even outside the hours appointed, they are not to be hindered by those who think something else should be done there.

3. When you pray to God in psalms and hymns, think over in your hearts the words that come from your lips.

4. Chant only what is prescribed for chant; moreover, let nothing be chanted unless it is prescribed.

Chapter Three

1. Subdue the flesh, so far as your health permits, by fasting and abstinence from food and drink. However, when some are unable to fast they should still take no food outside mealtime unless they are ill.

2. When you come to table, listen until you leave to what it is the custom to read, without disturbance or strife. Let not your mouths alone take nourishment but let your hearts too hunger for the word of God.

3. If those in more delicate health from their former way of life are treated differently in the matter of food, this should not be a source of annoyance to others or appear unjust in the eyes of those who owe their stronger health to different habits of life. Nor should the healthier brothers or sisters deem them more fortunate for having food which they do not have, but rather consider themselves fortunate for having the good health which the others do not enjoy.

4. And if something in the way of food, clothing, and bedding is given to those coming to the monastery from a more genteel way of life, which is not given to those who are stronger, and therefore happier, then these latter ought to consider how far these others have come in passing from their life in the world down to this life of ours, though they have been unable to reach the level of frugality common to the stronger brothers and sisters.

5. And just as the sick must take less food to avoid discomfort, so too, after their illness, they are to receive the kind of treatment that will quickly restore their strength, even though they came from a life of extreme poverty. Their more recent illness has, as it were, afforded them what accrued to the rich as part of their former way of life.

But when they have recovered their former strength, they should go back to their happier way of life which, because their needs are fewer, is more in keeping with God's servants. Once in good health, they must not become slaves to the enjoyment of food which was necessary to sustain them in their illness. Those who are better able to endure want should think of themselves as richer on that account; for it is better to need little than to have much.

Chapter Four

1. There should be nothing about your behavior to attract attention. Besides, you should not seek to please by your apparel, but by a good life.

2. Whenever you go out, walk together, and when you reach your destination, stay together.

3. In your walking, standing, and every movement, let nothing occur to give offense to anyone who sees you, but only what becomes your holy state of life.

4. Although your eyes may chance to rest upon persons of the other sex, you must not fix your gaze on them. Seeing them when you go out is not forbidden, but it is sinful to desire them or to wish them to desire you, for it is not by touch or passionate feeling alone but by one's gaze as well that lustful desires mutually arise. And do not say that your hearts are pure if there is immodesty of the eye, because the unchaste eye carries the message of an impure heart. And when such hearts disclose their unchaste desires in a mutual gaze, even without saying a word, then it is that chastity itself suddenly goes out of their life, even though their bodies remain unsullied by unchaste acts.

5. And whoever fix their gaze upon a person of the other sex and like to have that person's gaze fixed upon them, must not suppose that others do not see what they are doing. They are very much seen, even by those they think do not see them. But suppose that all this escapes the notice of human beings -- what will they do about God who sees from on high and from whom nothing is hidden? Or are you to imagine that he does not see because he sees with a patience as great as his wisdom? Let religious, then, have such fear of God that they will not want to be an occasion of sinful pleasure to those of the other sex. Ever mindful that God sees all things, let them not desire to look at such persons lustfully. For it is on this point that fear of the Lord is recommended, where it is written: An abomination to the Lord is he who fixes his gaze (Proverbs 27:20).

6. So when you are together in church and anywhere else where persons of the other sex are present, exercise a mutual care over purity of life. Thus, by mutual vigilance over one another will God, who dwells in you, grant you his protection.

7. If you notice in any of your brothers or sisters this wantonness of the eye, of which I am speaking, admonish them at once so that the beginning of evil will not grow more serious, but will be promptly corrected.

8. But if you see them doing the same thing again on some other day, even after admonition, then whoever had occasion to discover this must report them as they would a wounded person in need of treatment. But let the offense first be pointed out to two or three so that the persons can be proven guilty on the testimony of these two or three and be punished with due severity. And do not charge yourselves with ill-will when you bring this offense to light. Indeed, yours is the greater blame if you allow your brothers or sisters to be lost through your silence when you are able to bring about their correction by your disclosure. If your brothers or sisters, for example, were suffering a bodily wound that they wanted to hide for fear of undergoing treatment, would it not be cruel of you to remain silent and a mercy on your part to make this known? How much greater then is your obligation to make their condition known lest they continue to suffer a more deadly wound of the soul.

9. But if they fail to correct the fault despite this admonition, they should first be brought to the attention of the superior before the offense is made known to the others who will have to prove their guilt, in the event that they deny the charge. Thus, corrected in private, their fault can perhaps be kept from the others. But should they feign ignorance, the others are to be summoned so that in the presence of all they can be proven guilty, rather than stand accused on the word of one alone. Once proven guilty, they must undergo salutary punishment according to the judgment of the superior or priest having the proper authority. If they refuse to submit to punishment, they shall be expelled from your brotherhood or sisterhood even if they do not withdraw of their own accord. For this too is not done out of cruelty, but from a sense of compassion, so that many others may not be lost through their bad example.

10. And let everything I have said about not fixing one's gaze be also observed carefully and faithfully with regard to other offenses: to find them out, to ward them off, to make them known, to prove and punish them -- all out of love for our fellows and a hatred of sin.

11. But if any should go so far in wrongdoing as to receive letters in secret from a person of the other sex, or small gifts of any kind, you ought to show mercy and pray for them if they confess this of their own accord. But if the offense is detected and they are found guilty, they must be more severely chastised according to the judgment of the priest or superior.

Chapter Five

1. Keep your clothing in one place in charge of one or two, or of as many as are needed to care for them and to prevent damage from moths. And just as you have your food from one pantry, so, too, you are to receive your clothing from a single wardrobe. If possible, do not be concerned about what you are to wear at the change of the seasons, whether all get back what they had put away or something different, provided none are denied what they need. If, however, disputes and murmuring arise on this account because some complain that they received poorer clothing than they

had before, and think it is beneath them to wear the kind of clothing worn by others, you may judge from this how lacking you are in that holy and inner garment of the heart when you quarrel over garments for the body. But if allowance is made for your weakness and you do receive the same clothing you had put away, you must still keep it in one place under the common charge.

2. In this way, none shall perform any task for their own benefit but all your work shall be done for the community with greater zeal and more dispatch than if each one of you were to work for yourself alone. For love, as it is written, "is not self-seeking" (1 Corinthians 13:5), meaning that it places the common good before its own, not its own before the common good. Know, then, that the more you devote yourselves to the community rather than to your private interests, the more you have advanced. Thus, let love, which remains forever, prevail in all things that minister to the fleeting necessities of life.

3. It follows, therefore, that if persons bring something for a son or daughter or other relative living in the monastery, whether a garment or anything else they think is needed, this must not be accepted secretly as one's own but must be placed at the disposal of the superior so that, as common property, it can be given to whomever needs it. But if any secretly kept something given to them, they shall be judged guilty of theft.

4. Your clothing should be cleaned either by yourselves or by those who perform this service, as the superior shall determine, so that too great a desire for clean clothing may not be the source of interior stains on the soul.

5. As for bodily cleanliness too, none must ever deny themselves use of the bath when their health requires it. But this should be done on medical advice, without complaining, so that even though unwilling, they shall do what has to be done for their health when the superior orders it. However, if they wish it when it might not be good for them, you must not comply with their desire, for sometimes we think something is beneficial because it is pleasurable, even though it may prove harmful.

6. Finally, in the case of internal bodily pain, you must unhesitatingly take the word of God's servants when they indicate what is giving them pain. But if it remains uncertain whether the remedy they find pleasing is also good for them, a doctor should be consulted.

7. When there is need to frequent the public baths or any other place, no fewer than two or three should go together, and those who have to go somewhere must not go with those of their own choice but with those designated by the superior.

8. The care of the sick, whether those in convalescence or others suffering from some indisposition, even though free of fever, shall be assigned to brothers or sisters who can personally obtain from the pantry what they see is necessary for each one.

9. Those in charge of the pantry, or of clothing and books, should serve their brothers and sisters without grumbling.

10. Books are to be requested at a fixed hour each day, and anyone coming outside that hour is not to receive them.

11. Those in charge of clothing and shoes shall not delay in giving them whenever they are required by those in need of them.

Chapter Six

1. You should avoid quarrels altogether or else put an end to them as quickly as possible; otherwise, anger may grow into hatred, making a plank out of a splinter, and turn the soul into a murderer. For so you read: "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15).

2. Any who have injured others by open insult, or by abusive or even incriminating language, must be mindful to repair the injury as quickly as possible by an apology, and those who have suffered the injury must also forgive, without further wrangling. But if they have offended one another, they must forgive one another's trespasses for the sake of your prayers which should be recited with greater sincerity each time you repeat them. Those who are often tempted to anger but are prompt to ask pardon from those they admit to having offended are better than others who, though less given to anger, find it quite difficult to ask forgiveness. Those who are never willing to ask pardon or do not do so from the heart have no reason to be in the monastery, even if they are not expelled. Therefore, avoid overly harsh words, and if they escape your lips let those same lips not be ashamed to heal the wounds they have caused.

3. But whenever the need of maintaining discipline forces you to use harsh words in imposing order on younger members, then, even if you think you have been unduly harsh in your language, you are not required to ask forgiveness; for too great a humility on your part may undermine the authority of your office in the eyes of those who must be subject to you. But you should still ask forgiveness from the Lord of all who knows the warm love you have even for those whom you might happen to correct with undue severity. However, you are to love one another with a spiritual rather than a fleshly love.

Chapter Seven

1. You should obey superiors as fathers or mothers with the respect due them so as not to offend God in their persons. Much more should you obey the priest who bears responsibility for all of you.

2. It shall pertain chiefly to superiors to see that these precepts are all observed and, if any point has been neglected, to take care that the transgression is not carelessly overlooked but is punished and corrected. In doing so, they must refer whatever exceeds the limit and power of their office to the priest who enjoys greater authority among you.

3. Your superiors, for their part, must think themselves fortunate not because they rule in virtue of their office, but because they serve in love. In your eyes they shall

hold the first place among you by the dignity of their office, but in God's sight let them lie beneath your feet in fear. They must be a model of good works for all. Let them admonish the unruly, cheer the faint-hearted, support the weak, and be patient toward all (1 Thessalonians 5:14). Let them love discipline and instill respect for it. And though both are necessary, they should strive to be loved by you rather than feared, ever mindful that they must give an account of you to God.

4. It is by willing obedience, therefore, that you show mercy not only toward yourselves, but also toward superiors, whose higher rank among you exposes them all the more to greater peril.

Chapter Eight

1. The Lord grant that you may observe all these precepts in a spirit of charity, as lovers of spiritual beauty, and may spread abroad the sweet odor of Christ by a good life, not as slaves living under the law but as men and women living in freedom under grace.

2. And that you may see yourselves in this little book, as in a mirror, have it read to you once a week so as to neglect no point through forgetfulness. When you find that you are doing all that has been written, give thanks to the Lord, the Giver of every good. But when one of you finds that he has failed on any point, let him be sorry for the past, be on his guard for the future, praying that he will be forgiven his fault and not be led into temptation.

Way of Life, Statutes and Directives

Appeal of our Venerable Founder

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Appeal of our Venerable Founder

“Dear Brothers!

I beseech you, strive wholeheartedly to become fervent religious people. Grow and increase in your inner, spiritual life and become spiritual men. For this reason pray tirelessly, pray wherever you are and protect your hearts from sinful thoughts since the time of these our lives is precious. Pray to God that he may open your eyes and you will be able to recognize the great good which was bestowed on you so that you became religious people. You are able to devote yourselves undivided to God, suffering humanity and your salvation and that is a lot.

Brothers, you are called to a high perfection. Make an effort to do everything you do perfectly since you are constantly in the divine service; in this way you will glorify God with all your works.

We want to sacrifice our mind, our will and our desires to the holy will of God. I like to see, dear Brothers, when you lay a quite good, lasting foundation so that you will be admitted into the group of Jesus' confidants. That happens to the souls who strive for a pure way of life, in which God himself directly enlightens, speaks, revives and warms them.

Whoever has a vocation will also be given grace, and where there is grace there also is light and where there is light you cannot go astray because our Saviour says: 'Whoever walks in daylight does not stumble'. Therefore, dear Brothers, get to work courageously.

In addition, we consider that no one ever reached a perfect life (full of love) without being truly devoted to Mary.

Dear Brothers! You are consecrated to God; remain, therefore, faithfully to your vocation! Thank the Lord every day for the abundant grace which you were given. I urge you to keep the holy Rule faithfully and to consider it the path on which you are to walk to heaven and joyfully live in God. Amen.“

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Louis de Montfort". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with large loops and flourishes.

Chapter one

Origin and Mission of the Congregation

Origin

- 101** Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Servant of God, Blessed Peter Friedhofen founded the Congregation of the Brothers of Mercy of Mary, Help of Christians in the year 1850 at Weitersburg in the Diocese of Trier.
- 101.1 Our Founder Peter Friedhofen, always considered 21st June 1850, to be the date of the Foundation of his work (A136.28).
- 101.2 On 11th December 1850, the Church gave the Brothers the Rule of St. Augustine as the basis for their way of life. In addition, through Bishop Arnoldi, the Church confirmed the Foundation on 28th February 1852. On 21st January 1857, Bishop Arnoldi also approved the first Statutes of our Founder.
- 101.3 On 27th May 1905, Pope Pius X, raised the Congregation of the Brothers of Mercy to a Congregation of pontifical right.

Mission

- 102** We are called “Brothers” because Christ has called us to a community of Brothers; we are called “Brothers of Mercy” on account of the works of mercy we perform for those who are in need (Sa I.1). We are called “Brothers of Mercy, Help of Christians” since this was the original desire and intention of our Founder (Bf 19 and 36a).
- 103** To follow Christ who is our “Way, Truth and Life“ – remains our vocation received at our Baptism.
- 104** “To glorify God by a life according to the evangelical counsels of Chastity, Poverty and Obedience” (Sa I.1) – is our duty on account of our vocation to the Religious Life.
- 105** To dedicate ourselves with complete fervour to the service of Christian love for our neighbour – is our mission to the world.

- 105.1 This religious vocation of a Brother of Mercy is for us also a continual demand to upgrade our professional competence in order to be able to fulfil our professional tasks.
- 105.2 Our religious commitment is to be realised through our professional activity and this is always directed towards the well-being of our fellow human beings. It requires the help of grace which we receive from the sources of Divine Life. Our commitment when vitalised through our self-surrender to God "brings much fruit" (Jn 15:5). "Everything is possible to him who has faith". (Bf 4.11; 5, 6).
- 105.3 Our faith helps us to see our professional service as Brothers of Mercy as fundamental service to the suffering Christ himself. In view of this, our responsibility and strength grow in the service of our neighbour.
- 106 In this way, we are able to transmit to the future "the new flame and the new spirit", with which Peter Friedhofen was filled and inflamed (Bf 6.18).**

Spirit

- 107 In order to be faithful to our origin and our Founder we try to continually reflect on the spirit of our Founder by meditating on his life. His purpose is ours: "To unite myself as closely as possible to Jesus and to grow always more in the love of God; ... to lead people to Christ; ... to implant the love of Mary in human hearts and to care for the sick out of Christian charity (Bf 6.19-22).**
- 107.1 "This is my desire, to pursue and perform every work of love for God and for humankind. We can indeed be Brothers of Mercy and bring about many other good things" (Bf 7.9).

Chapter Two

Our Apostolic and Charitable Ministries

Our Ministries

- 201** In his life on earth, Christ showed a preferential love for the poor, the weak and the sick. In His name and by His command, we Brothers continue His ministry here and now.
- 202** Our ministry, therefore, embraces physical, mental and pastoral care everywhere in the world.
- 202.1 We fulfil our apostolic and charitable ministry mainly in health care institutions. It is carried out in institutions which we own but also in those owned by others and in families.
- 203** We serve the sick and aid the needy without distinction of class, person or their creed. We do not refuse help even when our devoted commitment or dealing with infectious diseases endanger our lives.
- 203.1 The care, assistance and accompanying of the sick embraces the whole person including their spiritual concerns. Personal dialogue, prayer, reception of the sacraments or attendance at the Liturgy, are means for our ministry to people. We accompany the dying to the end of their journey and support them with our prayers.
- 203.2 Everyone is a creature and an image of God. We, therefore, give our service wherever the need of our neighbour demands it.
- 203.3 The Brothers look upon themselves as co-workers in a process and fulfil their ministry as it is required by actual needs. They present legitimate requests to the appropriate authority. For the good of the whole process, differences in opinion are to be explained in dialogue and are to be decided upon in view of the future.
- 203.4 In their services, within the different fields the Brothers are subordinate to the respective persons in charge under full reserve to the principles of the Christian doctrine and moral teaching.

203.5 The professional service of the Brothers does not always allow them to follow a regular daily routine. However, the Brothers try as good as they can to participate in community life.

203.6 In many cases we do our work in collaboration with other people. The credibility of our apostolic and charitable ministries to the people entrusted to us, therefore, depends mainly on the working atmosphere and on the way of our relating with our colleagues. In our religious attitude, our professional and technical competence, our readiness to be of service and our dealing with other human beings, we should be a model to them.

203.7 We seek to be fair to all our colleagues and partners, not demand too much from them and sharing responsibility with them as circumstances permit.

We have an apostolic responsibility towards our co-workers and we assist them by word and deed without trespassing on their freedom.

204 While the service of the sick is the main ministry of our Congregation, we are also at the disposal for other works in the Church insofar as it is within our means to oblige. (Bf 26a.7).

204.1 The foundation of our Congregation was Peter Friedhofen's answer to the physical and spiritual need of the people in his time. Consequently we, too, take up anew the needs of the people together with the fore coming consequences, in the context of the respective times.

205 Without changing our character as a Congregation of Brothers, (cf. can 588 §3), some members may be ordained to the diaconate and to the priesthood so that they can serve the pastoral needs of the Congregation.

206 Regarding their position in the Congregation, Brothers, who are Priests and Deacons, have the same rights and obligations as the other Brothers. Their ministry includes pastoral care in our institutes and houses.

207 The Congregation of the Brothers of Mercy of Mary Help of Christians may also incorporate "Oblates in the world". They receive a share in all the good works of the Congregation. They are admitted to membership by the Provincial Superior - with the consent of his council - who attends to the conditions of their membership according to their current basic statutes on a person to person basis.

Witness for Christ

- 208** As Brothers of Mercy, we live in the midst of the world. We seek to witness to the people - and especially to the sick - in a vibrant way the merciful love of God. In this way Christ's presence is made visible through us.
- 209** To achieve this we need in addition to a mature social conscience, above all a deep and vital union with Christ who identifies himself with suffering mankind (Mt 25:35).
- 210** Thus, especially in every suffering person we encounter the Lord himself. This reality defines our attitude towards others and is expressed by an open, friendly and co-operative behaviour.

Working together for the Coming of the Kingdom of God

- 211** With Christ, we live in a spirit of sympathetic understanding towards the world, in order to contribute to the fulfilment of creation since "all things have been created through Him and for Him. He himself is before all things, and in Him all things hold together" (Col 1:16-17). The fact that we are working with Christ for the creation of a truly fraternal spirit among people, which must be renewed in all ages, fills us with joy.
- 212** Since we have given ourselves entirely to God through our religious profession, we devote all our talents, strength and interests so that His kingdom of love on earth may spread out (Jn 17:21-24).
- "Your life no longer belongs to you personally, but to all the Brothers, just as their life belongs to you" (St Augustine).

In the Service of the Church

- 213 Charitable apostolic activity is the essence of our religious life entrusted to us by the Church as a holy service and a work of love (PC 8).
- 214 Like our Founder, we also wish to be at the disposal of the bishops within the framework of our Constitutions (Bf 26a.7). „My only desire is to obey the will of our holy Church“ (Bf 5.44).
- 215 As it is the nature of the Church to serve all people, we endeavour to be open to every need. We adopt up-to-date approaches, mindful of the pastoral concerns of the local church and constantly reviewing our commitments, to ensure that we are responding to needs which are truly urgent.
- 216 We also seek a good cooperation with other religious congregations, with ecclesiastical and civil organisations and in an ecumenical spirit maintain contact with members of other faiths – in line with the mind of the Church.

Mary, Model of our Apostolic Life

- 217 Since Mary “embraced the Holy Will of God with her whole heart“ (LG 56), we place our apostolic work under her protection; we venerate her and look upon her as Mother of the Church and our Mother; we are inspired by her docile attention to the Lord, her attitude to serve God and her compassion towards people in need.
- 218 Thus, Mary will never turn our attention away from Christ but will rather bring us ever closer to her Son. We treasure the place Mary holds in our life and apostolate as an inheritance of our Founder, fulfilling his words: “The highest form of devotion, my dear Brothers, consists in our developing love of her divine Son and in doing our best as He did” (V 3.6).

Chapter 3

Following Christ and Living the Evangelical Counsels

The Following of Christ

- 301 It is through His free choice and not on account of our own merits that Christ has called us to follow Him in the way of the Evangelical Counsels.
- 302 We respond to the Lord by our religious profession lived out afresh each day. In this way, our entire personality and all our activity are at His disposal by a life of Chastity, Poverty and Obedience.
- 303 With joy and gratitude as our basic attitudes, we respond to God's daily new invitation to dedicate ourselves to Christ completely and to His work of salvation. In this way, God continues to perfect what He began in us in Baptism; "to transform us from glory to glory in the image of Christ" (2 Cor 3:18).
- 304 His mother followed Him most faithfully right to the foot of the cross, to serve and share His suffering so that Christ might be formed within each of us. He gave her to us as our Mother and continues to say to us: "Behold your Mother" ... "Yes, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and do it" (Lk 8:21; 11, 28).

In the mystery of the Church

- 305 Through our vows we enter more deeply into the mystery of the Church and her relationship to Christ as His bride. The teaching and example of Christ provide the foundation of the evangelical counsels. ... Thus they constitute a divine gift which it has received from its Lord. (LG 43).
- 306 As a community entirely focused on God, ready to serve the others, we are active members of the Body of Christ, one family with the People of God. Unity in mutual love witnesses to the

reality of the Kingdom of God on earth and of our promised fulfilment together in God.

Consecrated Chastity

- 307** Christ, the mediator between God and humankind, lived celibate. He devoted his love undivided both to the Father and to all people. All “to whom it is given“ and “who can bear it“ (Mt 19:11-12), he has invited to follow him in celibacy “for the sake of the Kingdom of God”.
- 308** Realising that we will find our personal growth and fulfilment in Christ through our call in faith, we have committed ourselves through the vow to a celibate and chaste life for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Fidelity to this commitment as a gift of God is possible only if we continually renew it in a free surrender of our entire being to Christ.
- 309** Thus, for all Christ’s faithful, we recall that wonderful marriage made by God which will be made fully manifest in the world to come, and in which the Church has Christ alone for her spouse. (Lk 20:35-36; PC 12).
- 310** This total dedication to God frees us to devote ourselves to people with a selfless heart; for a celibate and chaste life cannot be an end itself but is intended for greater availability in the service of the Lord and His brethren.
- 311** Even though we decide to choose consecrated chastity as a state of life, we remain human beings with hearts and senses. Our daily encounter with the Lord - in the Eucharist, in prayer and meditation and fraternal community – however, makes possible the transformation of our natural love into the higher charity of God and of our neighbour. Self-control, prudent self-examination and candour are valuable aids to remaining faithful to our vow.
- 311.1** We are conscious of our human weaknesses and sensuality to which we are exposed alone and in the world. For this reason, we are always vigilant, moderate in food and drink, seek to avoid idleness and such reading, conversation and entertainment as may be of doubtful character. With this in mind, we use the new media which are available to us consciously and responsibly.

- 311.2 Let our attitude towards everyone be natural and open, without favouritism or exclusiveness. The customs in each country are to be respected.
- 311.3 Without the grace of life, we cannot lead a celibate and chaste life.
- 312 When fraternal community is characterised by trust, sincere good will and genuine friendship, it becomes a home where we can easily cope with crises and encumbrances. Though loneliness may be part of our lives, yet it must never justify to isolate ourselves in a spirit of self-sufficiency, for this endangers our chastity.**
- 313 As Brothers of Mary Help of Christians, we look with confidence to Mary. Virginity is perfectly fulfilled in her, the Mother of the Lord. Her “care for the things of the Lord“ (1 Cor 7:32-35) determined her entire life up to her Son’s death on the cross and beyond to his return. Virginal fruitfulness made her the Mother of the Lord and of His Church and the Mother of all who are called.**

Poverty for the sake of the Kingdom of God

- 314 The invitation to follow Christ is a call to poverty and self-renunciation. For “He, being rich, became poor for our sake“ (2 Cor 8:9). “He emptied Himself, taking on the form of a slave, fashioned in the likeness of man” (Phil 2:7).**
- 315 By the vow of poverty, we promise the Lord to strive for this mindset of His and to live according to it. Out of love for Him, we commit ourselves to a simple, modest way of life and renounce as well the right of free disposal over earthly goods.**
- 315.1 Everything which is necessary for daily life is placed at the disposal of the Brothers by the community.
- 315.2 If the Brothers receive a sum of money for their disposal every month, they are to give a monthly account of their expenses to their superior. The monthly pocket money is to the free disposal of the Brothers.
- 315.3 It is not the intention of such a ruling to permit money to be accumulated nor to indulge in unnecessary expenses; rather it has an educative value, helping us to have the right attitude when dealing with money.

- 315.4 Special expenses have to be agreed upon with the superior beforehand.
- 316 Poverty, rightly understood and lived, is not merely a material factor but is primarily a spiritual attitude, and instead of leading to scorn what is created, it promotes a true appreciation of all things in a spirit of inner freedom – setting us free for HIM alone.**
- 317 Our living in community gives us the common ownership of spiritual and material goods, following the example of the first Christians. “The faithful all lived together and owned everything in common“ (Acts 2:44). – “Therefore, do not call anything your own, as everything belongs to the community” (R 1.3).**
- 318 Through fraternal exchange of experiences in the spiritual life, we give our confreres a share in the gifts God gives to each. This encourages a greater spirit of self-giving and preserves us from going astray.**
- 319 The common ownership of material goods requires a shared sense of responsibility from and for the entire community. Even when administration of the common property lies in the hands of individual persons, the Brothers should know how their administration is carried out – observing due discretion like in a family. Our lifestyle should be characterised by simplicity in the spirit of our vow.**
- 319.1 Every Brother is to consider himself responsible for the property of the Congregation and the property of others. He has an obligation in conscience and to his superiors to avoid incurring any damage. Property of the community can be given away or disposed of only with the approval of the major superior.
- 319.2 It is proper to furnish churches, hospitals, residences and guestrooms with everything they require according to their purposes in a suitable way, but luxury is to be avoided.
- 319.3 The health and retirement insurances of the Brothers are to be arranged according to the regulations in the respective countries and have to be accounted for at the government of the Congregation.
- 320 As poor men, we submit ourselves readily to the law of work. Whatever an individual Brother has produced by his work or has received as a gift in the community service belongs to the community and therefore, he places it at its disposal.**

320.1 We serve everyone without personal recompense, without thought of reward or expectation of any service being given in return.

321 What is not required for the support of the Brothers is given to the needy, with special consideration for our communities which are in need and the needs of the Church at home and in the Missions.

322 Brothers who are at least ten years finally professed may, through a desire for a more authentic poverty or from any other just reason, renounce part or full ownership of the property they actually possess or which may fall to them in the future.

The renunciation is to be made in a form valid, as far as possible, even in civil law (can 668 §4; see 718.3 o).

323 We live evangelical poverty when we strive after interior freedom in regard to all created goods. "I have learned how to be content in any situation. I know how to bear myself in poverty and also in plenty ... with full or empty stomach" (Phil 4:12). Thus we can count on the benevolent providence of God "who fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty" (Lk 1:53).

A sign of genuinely lived poverty is our contentment and joyfulness in the Lord.

323.1 We regard poverty in spirit and in practice as the expression of our solidarity with the poor and as a cornerstone of our religious life. At times, when poverty is really felt, we accept it readily with patience, thus sharing the lot of those who lack the comforts of life.

Obedience for the sake of the Kingdom of God

324 The invitation of Jesus "Follow me" (Mt 4:19; 9:9) is still issued today to many people. It is a call to live according to the mind of Jesus: "In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesu" (Phil 2:5). He came into the world to do the will of the Father in all things (Jn 4:34; 5:30; 6:38), and to liberate us through His obedience. (Phil 2:8; Rom 3:19).

We follow the obedient Christ as members of a community recognised by the Church.

325 Through the vow of obedience, the Brothers pledge themselves to obey the orders of the superior according to the Constitutions. The obedience includes everything what is required for the observance of the Rule, the Way of Life and the Directives, as well as in matters arising from the requirements of the community and the events of life. In all this, they seek to fulfil the will of God who speaks to them here and now.

326 To the extent that each one is zealous to know and to live according to the will of God, Christ will be present in the community and reveal the paths which he has destined for our community today. "I do nothing of myself but say what the Father has taught me. He who has sent me is with me. He does not leave me alone, for I always do what pleases him" (Jn 8:28-29).

327 Just as Christ was in the midst of the Apostles as one who serves (Lk 22:27), so the superiors have a duty of service to the Brothers. Conscious that each Brother is guided by the Holy Spirit, the superior meets the Brothers with reverence and trust.

"A love which serves and is not dictatorial should characterise superiors. Love guides them even when they are obliged to admonish or reprimand. They find their true happiness in selfless service" (Augustinus).

328 On their part, the Brothers see in their superiors God's representative when they command according to the Way of Life (can 601) and place themselves at their disposition with sincerity and as mature adults. The final decision rests with the superiors. Each Brother be fully committed to him.

The major superiors, superior generals and provincial superiors can for a serious reason command by virtue of the vow of obedience.

328.1 When such a command is given, it must be issued in writing or spoken before two witnesses.

328.2 The Brother concerned has the right of appeal to the next higher authority.

- 329** Love, trust and mutual dialogue are vital helps in relations between the Brothers and the superiors. Out of this grows the right understanding for each other.
- 330** Personal initiatives and joyful and responsible cooperation are not against the ideal of obedience. On the contrary, we see them as preconditions for a fruitful activity in our community.
- 331** In order to grasp the true nature and value of obedience, we continually look at Christ and His Mother Mary. Both lived entirely in the attitude: “Your will be done”. Their own free will, the most precious personal possession - the highest dignity of humankind – they have completely united with the will of God. And yet, there never was anyone freer than they and no one has ever enriched the world as much as they have through their obedience: Mary brought God into the world and Jesus brought the world back to God.

Chapter 4

Life with Christ through the Word and Sacraments to the glory of the Father

Encounter with the Lord

- 401** Our life is one of undivided dedication to Christ, founded in faith in Him. We receive through baptism and confirmation our strength and our mission; for the “foundation can lay any other than the one which has already been laid that, is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 3:11).
- 402** Through vital communion with Christ, we are likewise in vital communion with our Brothers. “I am the vine, you are the branches” (Jn 15:5).
- 403** This communion is realised symbolically in the celebration of the holy Eucharist. It is the summit and centre of our entire life, the source and final goal of all (LG 11). Conscious and active participation in the sacrifice of the New Covenant unites us with Christ and with His people. To glorify the Father with them in thanksgiving and praise and to herald the death and resurrection of the Lord, "until He comes" (1 Cor 11:26), is our legacy and task.
- Daily, each Brother participates actively in the celebration of the Eucharist und contributes to its dignified celebration. Through the Eucharist, we are helped to bring to others the love of God and the joy of the redeemed and to carry the cross with them in paschal faith.
- 403.1** When there is no opportunity for the celebration of the Eucharist in the convent each day, the community seeks to find a possibility to actively participate in the celebration of the Eucharist even during the week.
- 403.2** At the Eucharist, the centre of our community life, in addition to the major intentions of humankind, we are mindful especially of our Brothers, both living and dead.

404 **The giving of thanks and praise to God in the Eucharist, the Church continues during the day through the Divine Office. The Church invites us to pray together. This prayer is an expression of love which the Church, as the Bride of Christ, puts in our mouths so that we may offer praise to God in union with her.**

We consider Lauds or Morning Prayer and Vespers or Evening Prayer as our chief prayer times. We pray them in common. (SC 88,89).

404.1 A pausing before God during the day (minor hour) and at the end of the day (Compline) are important for us. If possible we, therefore, pray these hours in common.

405 **Reading and meditation on Holy Scripture is for us the "Table of the Lord" (SC 51) and an outstanding way of encountering Christ.**

406 **In meditative prayer, we come to know God's will and His love. Through the personal conversation with God, we encounter his loving work of His saving will in us. – Peter Friedhofen says: "The love of God is the final goal of all meditation." (V 17.4). Therefore, every Brother is required to spend half an hour daily on meditation.**

406.1 According to the wish of the Church, Holy Scripture and the Liturgy are to be the basis of the meditation. Each Brother fixes a time and place for his meditation with sincerity toward his conscience and toward his superior.

406.2 Personal prayer is to be close to the heart of each Brother and needs to be cultivated. The following practices are highly recommended: the visit as a friend to the Blessed Sacrament, the meditation of the mysteries of the rosary and the way of the cross. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus should have its appropriate place.

406.3 In order to nourish our religious life and deepen our faith, we need to take time for spiritual reading. For this we use in addition to Holy Scripture contemporary spiritual literature. It can be very useful for mutual enrichment and strengthening of community to make spiritual reading and meditation in voluntary groups from time to time.

406.4 Patrons of our entire Congregation are: Mary, Help of Christians, St. Joseph, St. Augustine, our Blessed Father Peter Friedhofen, St. John of God and St. Aloysius. In addition each Province or Region has their own special patron.

As our personal model, we consider our Founder Blessed Peter Friedhofen.

406.5 We pray
from 1st – 9th February for vocations to religious life and the priesthood,
from 11th – 19th March for joy and zeal in following Christ,
from the Ascension of Christ to Pentecost for renewal in the Holy Spirit,
from 1st – 9th August and
from 13th - 21st November for vocations to religious life and the priesthood.

These Novenas are included in the celebration of the Eucharist as intercessions and again during the day are brought before God in hymns or prayer.

407 The Eucharist, prayer and meditation are essential but not the only forms to encounter the Lord; for we encounter HIM when we meet our Brothers, in our service to our neighbour, in the events of everyday life and in this way always find an opportunity to show God that we love Him.

Renewal in the Lord

408 Like all the people of God, we are sinners and stand in need of ongoing renewal and depend on God and on others for forgiveness. The Father “has adopted us as sons through Christ and through Christ has reconciled us to Himself.” (2 Cor 5:18; 1 Jn 1:7).

409 The Sacrament of Penance is Christ’s paschal gift to reunite us more closely with HIM and with all our brothers and sisters. We receive pardon and joy in this encounter with Christ. Every Brother, therefore, values the Sacrament of Penance and approaches it at regular intervals.

In the framework of a communitarian penitential liturgy, we seek to draw also on this source of strength.

409.1 Superiors are to see to it that there are sufficient opportunities for confession (can 630 §2).

409.2 Daily examination of conscience leads us to self-knowledge and keeps awake within us the spirit of repentance and the will to conversion.

410 Conversion of heart and reform of life are the demands of our Lord (Mt 4:17), which still hold good for us today. They are important preconditions for our apostolic ministries; for it is by frequently examining ourselves before God and seek to walk in His way that our life will be an authentic witness for God to the others. Means which help us answer these demands of our Lord include, spiritual renewal, spiritual direction, fraternal dialogue, convent chapters, days of recollection and retreats.

410.1 In regular intervals, about every month, we need times of silence and solitude (spiritual renewal, renewal of life), in order to direct our eyes anew to Christ our goal.

For this purpose there are various possibilities: organised days of recollection as well as individual recollection at home or elsewhere.

410.2 We make time in community for regular fraternal dialogue about the events and problems of daily life.

The regular Convent Chapter is a valuable part of our community living and our common searching and asking for God. At this meeting, we want to examine and renew our life as followers of Christ in the spirit of the Gospel. Thus we stay alive as a community and remain constantly in touch with the realities of life around us.

The major superior, after consultation with the House Superior, can take part in the Convent Chapter or conduct one himself.

410.3 Our community gives each Brother the opportunity of taking part in an annual retreat. According to our Way of Life, each Brother will participate in such retreat.

411 Since Christ did penance for us, we also desire to do penance with Him. It is in this spirit that we patiently shoulder the burden of each day. We fulfil our service in community even when weighed down by a sense of rejection, loneliness and failure. "So often as we contemplate the bitter suffering of Jesus, we are spiritually strengthened and vivified anew" (Bf 33.6).

411.1 The spirit of penance finds its expression also in the moderate use of material goods especially in semi-luxury items.

- 412** The penitential seasons of the Church invite us to take part in the passion of Christ and support those who are in need and go hungry in this world.

Fulfilment in the Lord

- 413** Our human limitations such as sickness, the afflictions of old age, sadness over personal failure or obvious lack of success in attaining our goals; all these can be a severe trial for us. Our love for the suffering Lord should make it possible for us to say our “yes” to such purifications. In this way, we grow into a greater likeness with our saviour. United with Him in suffering, we can obtain God’s blessing through Him for our Congregation and for the entire people of God.
- 414** Out of fraternal love, we make every effort to ensure that our Brothers who are sick or in danger of death are given the support of the sacraments and the consolation of the intercessory prayer. Especially for our dying Brothers, let our presence be a human support to help them offer themselves totally to the merciful love of the Father.

Chapter 5

Living in fraternal Community

- 501 **“You have only one master, you are all brothers” (Mt 23:9). The same vocation, a common way and a single objective have brought us together in one community as Brothers. The following of Christ for us can only be carried out in and as a community. (R 1:2; Acts 4:32).**
- 502 **When Christ says: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them“ (Mt 18:20), this applies in a special way to our communities, when we are united with each other in love. Love inspires us to mutual respect and trust and to affirm the values and the personality of our confreres and to bear together each other’s limitations and weaknesses.**
- 502.1 "Love is the fulfilment of the Law" (Rom 13:10). Thus, to strengthen harmony and promote fraternal love, the Brothers hold on Holy Thursday a celebration of peace and reconciliation. The form of the celebration and the form of Agape is left to the initiative of each convent.
- 503 **As a fraternal community – with the Lord in our midst – we represent the Church in which Christ continues His work of salvation and brings it to fulfilment.**
- 503.1 We strive for harmony in our fraternal community according to the words of our Blessed Founder: “Peace is King in a religious house.” (V 8.5).
- 504 **We wear the religious habit as a sign of our fraternal unity, also as an outward sign of public witness to Christ and as a sign of our consecration of life.**
- 504.1 The religious habit of our Congregation consists of a black or white habit, white collar, scapular, belt and cross. Wearing of the rosary is optional.
- 504.2 Exceptions may be allowed in individual cases and for serious reasons and as long as these reasons last and it is done in agreement with the major superiors. The dress is to be simple and neat and in keeping with our state.

505 In order to be truly aware of God and of our confreres, we need interior silence. This we owe to one another and to ourselves. Discreet silence about human shortcomings, a word of pardon and a conciliatory gesture bring us interior and exterior peace.

505.1 Each community needs to have a secluded living area in the house that is declared as enclosure. It should be furnished in a way that the Brothers can feel at home.

Entry into this area, which the major superior decides on after consulting the local community, people from outside can be allowed in only in agreement with the superior.

506 Living together fraternally, we appreciate community at meal times as a prototype of human encounter. It is a source of recreation, the necessary mental and physical relaxation as well as an excellent means of expressing our fraternal unity and joy. Each Brother takes responsibility to actively contribute to ensure that the family of the community can grow smoothly and warmly in an atmosphere of security. We consider friendship as a gift from God that can lead to a more dynamic zeal and greater candour towards all Brothers.

506.1 In our Congregation, it is not possible, at times not even for Brothers in the same house that the timetable is the same. However, besides regulating religious exercises and work, it is always to provide for personal time and appropriate recreation for religious people (ES II.26).

If professional service or further studies at night prevent a Brother from observing the timetable the following day, he is to make arrangement with his superior who if necessary will also keep the community informed.

506.2 The mass media available are for our information, education and recreation. We always use them with due consideration for community life and in harmony with our state of life and our professional duties.

506.3 Each Brother is given a full free day every week, or at least half a day, and every year 28 days holiday. It is left to make further rulings, for example regarding the amount of holiday money, to the superior upon consultation with the major superior.

When staying as a guest in a community, a Brother should have consideration for his Brothers there and keep the superior informed about his intentions.

507 The Brothers attach special value to the celebration of feasts whether they are feast days of the Church or of our Congregation. – The nameday of the Brothers offer a community opportunity for friendly and joyous gathering. Active participation in these community events awakens creative energy and enrichens and unites us.

508 Our attitude toward sick and elderly Brothers be the expression of our gratitude and love for their devoted service to the Congregation in the course of their lives.

508.1 According to the legal possibilities in the respective countries each Brother arranges in written form the legal representation as well as the respective power of attorney in case that he will not be able to arrange these things himself (living will, health care proxy, etc.).

509 True friendship is not exclusive; it opens itself to others.

Therefore, we share gladly the joys and sorrows of life with our parents, relatives, benefactors and former confreres and include them in our prayers.

509.1 We have a very close bond of communion with our parents, relatives and friends and we offer them cordial hospitality. We stand by them as far as possible when they need our help.

In agreement with the superior, it is permitted to take part in family celebrations.

510 Our community is not only limited to the living, we are also united with the Brothers who have proceeded us to our eternal home. We are joined with them in prayer and still trust in their friendship. In a special way, our deceased relatives and benefactors are included in our community prayer.

510.1 When a Brother dies, each house of the Congregation arranges for three masses to be celebrated for him. In addition, we pray once the Office of the Dead (Lauds and Vespers) instead of the Office of the day if the liturgy of the day permits.

The first anniversary of a deceased Brother is to be commemorated in the community where he formerly belonged.

The annual anniversaries of our deceased members, relatives and benefactors are commemorated according to the diary.

The provincial chapter decides on additional intercessions for example for our deceased confessors, spiritual Fathers, parents of Brothers etc.

510.2 In accordance with the command: "Pray the Lord of the harvest that He sends workers into His vineyard" (Mt 9:38), we will pray individually and in community together with the Church for vocations to religious life and to the priesthood.

We are aware that we can contribute a great deal towards promoting and receiving vocations through an exemplary life and our relationships with others.

The awakening of vocations should be carried out in a prudent, contemporary fashion, in cooperation with the respective bodies of the dioceses and religious communities.

Chapter 6

Development and Formation under the Guidance of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit leads us to our Objective

- 601** God is the source of our vocation; God is also the origin of our response to His call and He promotes its development. Our inner growth comes from Christ and is fulfilled through the vital power of the Holy Spirit who is poured out into our hearts: "He will take from what is mine and give it to you" (Jn 16:15).
- 602** As Mary consented to the action of the Holy Spirit so that the Son of God might become man in her womb, so also should every Brother offer himself entirely to God so that the Holy Spirit might lead him to the perfect maturity of Christ.

Integral Development - Human and Christian Formation

603 Our religious ideal demands a continual effort to become more and more human and more and more Christ like.

To become human means to follow one's conscience and to live one's life with a courage and a sense of self-responsibility so as to freely develop one's personality. Let us be men of harmony, balancing the tension of "being alone" with "being with others" through inner depth, open dialogue and good cooperation.

To become a Christian means to attain, in the new life of those redeemed by Christ, fulfilment in God and to help others who are on this way.

604 Every Brother, therefore, needs a solid human formation, biblical and theological training, guidance to a piety appropriate for men, training in cooperation in pastoral work and a missionary – ecumenical open-mindedness in order to be able to fulfil his tasks in the community and in the Church.

Admission – Education – Formation

605 When a young man entrusts himself to us in the belief he has a vocation to religious life, we are to observe whether his vocation bears the signs of being genuine. A vocation is genuine if it is founded on a great love of God and when it meets the conditions required by the Church:

- The necessary physical and mental health
- Sufficient intelligence and will power
- Sound judgment
- truthfulness
- capability of development and will for development
- readiness for action and dedication
- social adjustment
- aptness for community life
- genuine piety (RB 810).

606 Admission, the required age, duration, place and other regulations regarding postulancy are regulated by the provincial superior in agreement with those responsible and in accordance with canon law and our proper law. (726.3f).

607 Formation begins with the postulancy and continues in the novitiate and Juniorate and ends with the profession of final vows.

The purpose and task of the postulancy is: clarifying the aptitude and vocation of the candidate, discovering and deepening of knowledge in our faith as well as the gradual transition from their previous way of life to the way of life of the Brothers.

608 The provincial superior in consultation with those responsible for the postulancy and with the agreement of his council decides on the admission into the novitiate.

608.1 Before the beginning of the novitiate, the postulant makes a retreat of at least full five days.

608.2 As he begins the novitiate, the novice may choose a religious name or retain his Baptismal name.

609 In the novitiate, the novice learns the fundamental and most important requirements of religious life, to strive for perfection in charity, to practice a life with the Evangelical Counsels of consecrated chastity, poverty and obedience and to devote himself to the charitable and apostolic work of the Congregation. Thus he can test his aptitude for our way of life and experience and learn the harmonious connection between his work and his life in Christ.

Usually the novitiate lasts for two years. For serious reasons, it may be lengthened up to six months by the provincial superior or at his suggestion, the superior general can shorten it, but not to shorter than one year.

610 Besides formative activity, the novitiate includes: a solid training in Biblical theology and liturgy, a thorough introduction in the spirit of our Founder, instruction in meditation, to a life according to the vows, to asceticism and the development of a right conscience, as well as training in a missionary spirit and the mind of the Church, to community life, cooperation and dialogue.

- 610.1 The general council has full power to make special regulations for the novitiate, i.e. it may permit or regulate special studies, which are useful for the formation of the novice.
- 611 The guidance of the novices, under the authority of the major superiors, is solely in the hands of the novice master. (can 650 § 2).**
- 612 At the end of the novitiate, the novice binds himself to God and the Congregation, in accordance with the current canon law, by means of temporary vows. He decides freely after consultation with his spiritual director and with his superiors.**
- 612.1 Before the profession of temporary vows, the novice makes a retreat of at least full five days.
- 612.2 Permission for professing first vows is granted by the major superior with the consent of his council. But first they need to hear the statement by the novice master.
- 612.3 Temporary profession of vows can be for the period of one year, two or three years. The duration is arranged by each novice with his major superior after consultation with his spiritual director.
- 612.4 Permission to renew temporary vows is also given by the major superior with consent of his council.
- 613 Except for individual cases where a reconsideration of one's vocation outside the religious house seems to be advisable, the Brother enters the Juniorate immediately after the novitiate until his final commitment to the Congregation. During this time he continues his religious formation in order to prepare him for the final surrender of himself to God and to the service of the people and to train him in community life and in his profession.**
- 613.1 Usually, the temporary commitment (Juniorate) by vows lasts five years. In exceptional cases it can last between three and nine years.
- The text for the profession of vows can be found under 734.
- 613.2 During the Juniorate, the Brothers are either working or on professional training or further professional training. For their mental and spiritual further training and to prepare for their final vows, the Brothers are to be given sufficient time and opportunity.

A suitable time period to prepare for final vows, (if possible three months) like a second novitiate (Tertiary) are to precede final vows.

During the time of temporary vows, the Brothers are accompanied by a leader of the Juniorate.

- 613.3 The leader of the Juniorate will be appointed by the major superior with his council. He has to be finally professed and has to have completed his 30th year. He accompanies the Brothers during Juniorate in consultation with the major superiors.
- 613.4 Those communities where young Brothers are being assigned to should be a support for them in the sharing of ideas and experiences, so that the further education process takes place without overburdening them.

Further Education

- 614 **Our apostolic and charitable activity and our service in a technical world of rapid and profound changes (GS 4), require a solid general and professional training and further education, solid skills, strength to responsible action and constant keeping pace with modern development.**
- 615 **Every Brother is always to strive for further religious formation. Above all the study of Holy Scripture, getting to know the spirit and the special charism of our Founder as well as a deeper understanding of the nature of the Church contribute to understand better the spirituality of our times and to live accordingly.**
- 615.1 It is the special responsibility of the superiors to provide the Brothers with opportunities, means and time for such further formation. (PC 18).

Chapter 7

The Government of the Congregation

- 701** We are called, as a Community of Brothers, to serve Christ and the Church in our apostolate and our charitable work. Our life in the service of salvation is regulated and promoted by canon law and the Constitutions of the Congregation.
- 702** Our fraternal community life and our work are supported by an exercise of authority which respects the dignity, freedom and individuality of each Brother.
- 703** Authority is based upon Christ and His Church. It is exercised as a sign of service, whether through the Chapter or the superiors with their councillors but always with full cooperation of the Brothers in accordance with the Constitutions. Thus, an active and responsible obedience in the spirit of faith and love is required from all.
- 703.1** As a member of the universal Church the Congregation is subordinate to the Holy Father, the highest authority in the Church. The Brothers, too, because of their vows are obliged to obey him.
- The Congregation is also associated with the local bishops in accordance with canon law with reserve to its own constitutional autonomy (LG 27.45; ES I).
- 704** Exercising of authority comprises a fourfold task: pointing the way ahead, making decisions, execution of decisions made and evaluation.
- 705** It is of such a nature that it can give our religious life and service the necessary flexibility to adapt to the needs of our times in the Church and in the world and is able to manage all matters of importance without delay.

- 706** Those in responsibility know that – like Christ – they are servants to their Brothers (Lk 22:27; PC 6.14), so as to promote union in Christ. In their administration of office, they respect the principle of subsidiarity, in order to safeguard the dignity, rights and duties of each Brother as well as of the communities and bodies which have a responsibility to exercise. Subsidiarity means: help is given to self-help and leave to the subordinate superiors and Brothers what they can decide themselves and implement.
- 706.1 “Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. ... Whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies“ (1 Pt 4:10-11; PC 14).
- 707** Superiors are responsible in a special way for the charism of the Congregation. Therefore, they are solicitous about a threefold service. In respect for the God’s plan of salvation, they strive after the missionary orientation of the Brothers in all their various activities. Moreover, they promote the zeal of the Brothers for the religious and apostolic life in fraternal union and cooperation. Finally, they seek to respond attentively to the movements of the Holy Spirit whereby they keep in mind the talents and needs of the Brothers as well as the challenges of the Church and the world.
- 708** Superiors, therefore, should distinguish themselves by a genuine social and missionary spirit, an aptitude for building up a vital apostolic community and – despite respectfulness of diversity – by a sense for union and cooperation.
- 709** Every Brother has the right of membership in the community and of livelihood, of development of their personality and their spiritual life, of taking part in the organisation of the Congregation, especially through the right to vote and the right to be heard.
- 710** The entire community takes responsibility for the mission and the religious and apostolic life of each member in their various functions and offices. Thus too, every Brother has a responsibility towards the entire community.
- 711** Mutual help unites the members of a community, as well as the houses of a Province and the Provinces to one another, as also in respect of the entire Congregation and its highest leadership.

Accordingly, every community has the task to do what it can carry out and be responsible for and also has the right to expect help from the community at a higher level.

712 Every Brother is duty bound to be loyal to our Congregation, to unreserved commitment to our mission, to the observance of the Rule, the Way of Life, the directives and the decisions of the superiors.

713 May we remain true to our Founder. He demanded of superiors “to keep the spirit of the Congregation from weakening, to keep the holy Rule and the Statutes in view, and to have as much care as possible for the growth of the entire Congregation and also for the good of each Brother” (Sa 23.1).

Superior Government of Congregation

714 The highest authority of the entire Congregation, according to canon law and the Constitutions of the institute, is due to the general chapter in session in an extraordinary way, in an ordinary way it is due to the superior general and his council.

715 The government of the Congregation consists on each level of Chapters, superiors and councillors whose fields, rights and duties are defined in greater detail at the appropriate place.

715.1 The government on all levels is done collegially.

715.2 It takes place in a fraternal way, in communal, active and personal responsibility of all the Brothers.

General Chapter

716 It is the highest discerning, decision - making and evaluating body in the Congregation.

716.1 The ordinary general chapter is in regular intervals both electoral chapter and chapter of affairs. It is convoked every six years by the superior general. In addition it is convoked as often as the office of the superior general is vacant and a new person is to be elected.

- Nine months prior to the general chapter, the announcement is to be made. -

716.2 In exceptional cases, as necessity requires, the superior general with the consent of his councils, calls for a chapter of affairs. For such chapter, too, new elections of delegates are to be conducted.

716.3 Besides the directives in the appendix, it will be noted that for the Chapter to be legal the presence of two thirds of the convoked capitulars is required.

716.4 The General Chapter consists of:

a) Members by right of office [ex officio].

These are: the superior general, former superiors general, the current assistants general, the procurator general to the Holy See, the treasurer general, the secretary general, the provincial and regional superiors.

b) elected members (delegates), whose number is at least half of the number of all capitulars.

716.5 Procedure of voting:

a) Every province elects besides the provincial superior at least one delegate and for each delegate one substitute. If the provincial superior is unable to attend the general chapter, the provincial council elects a deputy to take his place (RB 850 9 and 10). Similarly, the general council elects representatives for the other members who according to 716.4a have to attend the general chapter by right of office.

- b) For the election of delegates: each delegate has to be elected in a separate ballot; it will reflect the age range as well as the number of the Brothers.

At this election of the delegates and their substitutes in the first ballot the absolute majority is decisive and in the second ballot the relative majority. (RB 850).

- c) The general council, therefore, decides with due regard to these two principles on the ratio of numbers of delegates for the following general chapter (716.4b). In this ratio Brothers in temporary vows are also included. They have active voting right.
- d) According to the principles, the delegates of the houses under the generalate will be elected.

716.6 Preparation, procedure and duties of the general chapter: RB 850-860.

Superior General

717 The superior general serves the entire Congregation. He gives the incentive for the realisation of its mission in the Church. For this purpose he will widen and deepen his knowledge on religious life, theology, the place of religious orders in the Church and the needs of our times. In close cooperation with his council and with the provincial superiors he promotes and coordinates the apostolic thrust of the entire Congregation and endeavours to maintain unity and love in diversity.

To be elected superior general, a Brother must have completed 35 years of age and have been finally professed for at least five years (can 623).

He is elected at the general chapter by an absolute majority for a period of six years and may be re-elected for a second term by a two-thirds majority.

For exceptional reasons he can be postulated for a third term.

For the postulation of the superior general, or of one of the other office bearers, where the required legal conditions for his election are missing, the following special rule precedes:

The proposal has to be in writing and signed by at least three capitulars and the election has to be held in two separate ballots, in which the candidate does not have an active vote. For the postulation to be successful, at least two-thirds of the valid votes are necessary. Approval from the Holy See will be sought within eight days. If the required votes are not obtained in the two separate ballots, all further postulation scrutinies do not apply anymore and one starts again with the first ballot for a different candidate.

717.1 The duties of the superior general are mainly as follows:

- a) He watches over the faithful observance of the Rule, the Way of Life and the directives in the entire Congregation and ensures that unity and love are preserved, while respecting legitimate diversity.
- b) He takes on responsibility and care for all the Brothers in close understanding with the subordinate superiors.
- c) He excises authority in accordance with canon law and the Constitutions of the Congregation in force.
- d) As the case may be, he decides together with his council or with others who are responsible, in accordance with the respective articles in the Way of Life and the directives.
- e) In order to ensure up-to-date government and leadership for the Congregation, he should pay special attention to a good formation of superiors.
- f) He represents the Congregation directly or through provincial superiors in relations with ecclesiastical and civil authorities.
- g) With the help of the treasurer general, he is the highest authority in the administration of the temporal goods of the Congregation paying attention to the rights and needs of the provinces.
- h) During his time in office, he should visit all the houses of the Congregation at least twice. If he should be hindered for legitimate reasons from doing so, he can with the consent of his council, choose another Brother to take his place, either from his assistants or outside the circle.
- i) Where consideration of persons, circumstances of time or place make it appear necessary, he can dispense in the matter of the

discipline of religious life from individual obligations to the Way of Life and the directives, with the exceptions of the vows, for a definite time.

- j) He can transfer Brothers from the houses under the generalate and from one province to another or give a Brother a special mission, after consultation with the relevant major superiors and after talking to the local superiors and the brother concerned.

717.2 Should the superior general resign from office shortly before or during an (extraordinary) general chapter, the general chapter can accept his resignation and without recourse to the Holy See proceed to a new election. However, if the superior general wishes to resign from office outside the time of the general chapter, he should give his reasons to the Apostolic See and wait for a decision.

717.3 If for urgent reasons within the Congregation it becomes necessary to remove a superior general from office, the assistants must refer the matter to the Congregation for Religious for a decision.

Superior General with his Council

718 The general council supports the superior general in the government of the Congregation.

The superior general has four assistants. Together with him they form the general administration.

- 718.1 a) The powers of each member of the general council is set out in its appropriate place.

The members of the general council are elected by the general chapter in separate ballots with an absolute majority for the period of six years.

- b) The four assistants may not hold any other office which hinders them from performing their main function. They are to keep silence regarding matters they come to know while in office.
- c) The secretary general can be chosen from among the assistants, excluding the deputy of the superior general. The procurator general is appointed by the general council for an indefinite period of time. They all belong to the extended body of the general administration.
- d) The treasurer general, too, is elected by the general chapter. The superior general may propose a Brother for election whom he deems to be suitable.
- e) All must have made at least final vows and be known for their maturity and life experience. In the choice of assistants, consideration will be given to regional distribution as well as to the most important fields of work in the Congregation.

- 718.2 a) The government of the Congregation is only possible if there is close cooperation within the general administration.

- b) At least once in three months, the superior general calls a session of the general council with an appropriate agenda. If requested by at least three assistants, the superior general has to call a session of the general council, too.
- c) If business regarding property, the administration of goods, economic affairs in general are being treated, the treasurer general is to be present at such meeting, whereby he also has the right to vote.
- d) In such matters as mentioned in c), the secretary general and the procurator general as such have no voting right.
- e) In the plenary sessions of the general council, the presence of at least three members who have voting rights is required in order that the decisions arrived at may be valid.

- f) In accordance with the matter dealt with during the meetings of the council, the superior general needs for decision-making the consent of the assistants (deliberative vote) or merely their advice (consultative vote). In the first case, he would act invalidly against the vote of the council; in the second case he can act validly against their vote, but he is to listen prudently to their opinion. At a parity of votes, the superior general has the deciding vote.

718.3 For the following decisions, among other things, the consent of the general council is required:

- a) Establishment, division, merger, new conveyance and dissolution of provinces, are made according to the survey of the general chapter. The general council decides on the residence of the provincial superior (can 581 and 585).
- b) Establishment of houses (in provinces according to the proposal of the provincial chapters) and with the consent of the local bishop; in missions areas with the permission of the local ecclesiastical authority. The dissolution of houses (in provinces according to the proposal of the provincial chapters) the consent of the local bishop is not required but he should be consulted before hand. Regarding the property of the dissolved house the general leadership decides "without prejudice to the intentions of the founders or donors or to legitimately acquired rights" (can 616 § 1).
- c) Establishment, transfer or dissolution of the novitiate house, as well as carrying out the novitiate formation outside the novitiate house in agreement with the relevant major superiors and those responsible for formation (can 647 § 1 and § 2).
- d) A change of the location of the generalate is made according to the survey of the general chapter and after informing the Apostolic See.
- e) Fixing the time and place of the general chapter.
- f) The appointment of a general visitor for the entire Congregation, for one province or for a convent under the superior general.
- g) The appointment of a deputy, of the treasurer general, of the secretary general or of the procurator general to the Apostolic See, in the event of a vacancy either through death or the resignation from office that was accepted by the general council.

- h) The appointment of the provincial superior with his council and the provincial treasurer after consultation with the provincial superior concerned, his council and of all professed Brothers of the province. The method of consultation is left open to discretion.
- i) The appointment of the local superiors and the novice masters for the houses under the generalate or approval of the local superiors and novice masters appointed by the respective provincial government.
With regard to the Region, the local superiors and novice masters proposed by the regional council after a previous consultation of all professed Brothers of the Region, are appointed by the superior general and his council.
- j) Acceptance of the resignations from office of all those enumerated in 718.3h and 718.3i.
- k) Removal from office, if for serious reasons this deems necessary, namely for those offices mentioned in 718.3g, h and 718.3i.
- l) Admission to profession or final profession in the houses under the generalate. In the provinces the admission to final profession with prior approval of the provincial council; similarly the admission to the diaconate and to the ordination.
- m) The transfer or dismissal of a professed member are to be made according to can 684-704.
- n) Permission for professed Brothers, ten years after their final vows to renounce their temporary goods for life (L 322; RL 5).
- o) Concluding contracts in the name of the Congregation and also the approval of the annual account made by the treasurer general for the generalate and for the entire Congregation.
- p) Approval of extraordinary expenses which exceed the amount fixed for the individual case by the general chapter.
- q) Permission for just reasons, capital assets and other assets of the Congregation to dispose of, to bond, to encumber with mortgages, to lease, for rent or lease contract, or assume debts, always observing the guidelines of the general chapter and the law in force.
- r) Start-up or change of associations or civil legal forms of organisation under which the individual institutions in the respective countries are operated or partake in the legal dealings.

- 718.4
- a) The superior general with his council carries out the decisions and directives of general chapter and sees to the observance of the Constitutions of the Congregation.
 - b) The superior general with his council is empowered to dispense from temporary vows and with full reserve to the ecclesiastical regulations, to decide upon re-admission.
 - c) He can permit a professed Brother, on legitimate reasons, to live, up to the maximum of one year, outside a house of the Congregation. He can also delegate this power in individual cases to the other major superiors with their councils.

Vicar General

- 718.5
- a) The superior general appoints one of the assistants to be his vicar. He must be finally professed and have completed 30 years of age.
 - b) The vicar general represents the superior general in his absence or when unable to function, with the same powers as the latter. However, he may not use this power to contradict the intentions and the will of the superior general.
 - c) If the superior general dies or relinquishes office for any reason, the vicar general takes his place. It is his duty to convoke the general chapter as soon as possible, which is to be held within six months.

Secretary General

718.6 See also 718.1c and 718.2a, d. Further points to be observed are:

- a) He assists the superior general in the exercise of his office.
- b) He takes the minutes of the sessions of the general council.
- c) He arranges and keeps all the documents and acts concerning the Congregation, its administration and history and is responsible for the archives and the chronicles.

Treasurer General

718.7 See also: 718.1c and 718.2a, c.

He cannot be at the same time a general assistant.

- a) The treasurer general performs his office according to the directives of the superior general; he is accountable to the superior general and his council. In an annual report, he informs them on the economic situation of the provinces and regions. In a spirit of poverty and charity, he administers the goods of the Congregation and supervises the provincial administrations.

He deals with the expenditures and legal transactions of the ordinary administration within the limits of his office. The same applies to the provincial treasurer, regional treasurer and house treasurer (can 638 § 2).

- b) The treasurer general keeps in a secure place or puts in a bank deposit box all deeds, bonds and cash that is not needed for daily expenses. He keeps a precise account of all these matters.
- c) He files all written documents affecting property and assets and presents an exact report for the entire Congregation to the general chapter.

Procurator General

718.8 See also 718.1c and 718.2d.

The duty of the procurator general is, by commission of the superior general and following his directives, to attend to the affairs of the Congregation with the Apostolic See. All business with the Apostolic See, even that of a single Brother, must be done through him. He keeps the general administration informed of the decisions, documents and developments in the Church which concern us. He is to keep strict professional secrecy about business transactions.

Houses directly under the Generalate.

- 718.9
- a) The houses subordinated to the generalate form an independent domain under the direct government of the superior general. He appoints a superior for each of these houses with delegated powers that are basically the same as those of the local superiors.
 - b) It pertains to the superior general to staff these houses with Brothers from different provinces, in consultation with the provincial superiors concerned. For the election to the general chapter the regulations under number 716.5d apply.
 - c) All that is written for the province and its government, its rights and duties or any other regulations applies accordingly to the superior general and his council in view of the houses subordinated to him.

Visitation

719 The main purpose of the visitation is to promote unity in Christ and in the community and to strengthen the spiritual life of Brothers in each house.

The task of the visitor is, therefore, to reflect with the confreres their apostolic and charitable religious life and thereby to promote a sense of solidarity that the Congregation cares for each and every one.

The visitation gives the superior general as well as the provincial superior an exact knowledge of the religious and professional life of the Brothers and of the needs of each community.

Thus, all our life and activity remain better directed towards our common goal and are performed according to the Constitutions of our Congregation.

719.1 The visitor discusses privately with each Brother and with the entire community, what comes within the scope of the visitation. The superior and the entire community help in every way towards a fruitful visitation and support it with their prayers.

719.2 During the sharing with the visitor, each Brother is to think of his responsibility in the community. He shares everything which he believes before God he has a duty to communicate but in spirit of truth and love.

The visitor listens to all opinions expressed. Where there is a conflict of opinion, he listens to both sides.

719.3 The visitor is to inspect also the buildings and furnishings to see whether they comply with what is required and whether the living quarters of the community are in keeping with the spirit of evangelical simplicity.

He examines the administration, the minutes of the provincial council or the house council, the chronicles and the archives.

719.4 A delegated visitor has those powers which were given to him by the one who appointed him. These powers are to be made known at the beginning of the visitation.

- 719.5 The provincial superior or the delegated visitor sends a detailed report (exclusive of matters of conscience) to the superior general who with the consent of his council may decide about and promulgate important proposals of the visitor.
- 719.6 If a community desires a written report about their community life, the visitor may write it. The report is to be talked about with the community concerned and serve as a help for orientation until the next visitation.

Archives

- 720 The generalate, the provinces and houses keep archives. In them should be kept all important things that give information about the spirit, the history, the life and the work of the Congregation.**
- 720.1 In the general archives - and accordingly in the provincial and house archives – are kept original records, acts, documents and relevant papers concerning the Congregation, provinces and houses.
- 720.2 The ordinances and circular letters of the major superiors as well as all important exchange of letters are to be kept. Provinces and houses that do not keep their own archives, take care that the documents concerned are sent to the general archives. – Matters which are to be kept secret are to be kept separately under lock and key. The superior is to inspect these so called “confidential archives“ from time to time and to destroy whatever is no longer needed or could harm someone’s reputation.
- 720.3 Each set of archives has a register of acts and documents which has to be kept current and up-to-date. The classifications of the archives are done according to the directive and regulations provided.
- 720.4 The archives must be kept in a safe place.
- 720.5 Acts and documents may not be inspected by others or taken from the archives without the permission of the superior. If permission is given for something to be taken, it is to be registered exactly with date, name and place.

Provinces and Regions

- 721** The most important duty of the provincial and regional administrations is to form their Brothers into a religious community, so that they may be living witnesses of the consecration to God; a sign of the reality of the present and coming kingdom of God, the kingdom of His love.
- 722** Provinces are established by the generalate (718.3a). The province is a juridical person (entity), a community consisting of at least three houses that should be basically self-sufficient regarding personnel, candidates and finance.
- 723** Regions are also established by the generalate (718.3a). A region consists of at least two houses. It is subordinate either directly to the generalate or to a province.
- 724** Whatever is said in the Constitutions or determined in any other way for the province and its government, its rights and duties, also applies to the regions unless there are other things within the nature of the matter, expressive regulations or special decisions.
- 724.1** Where there is neither a provincial nor a regional government, these powers are demised to the respective major superiors.

Provincial Chapter and Regional Chapter

- 725** The provincial chapter is the assembly that is convoked in order to consult or decide on important matters of the province and if necessary to prepare for the forthcoming general chapter.
- 725.1** The provincial superior with the consent of his council convokes the chapter and decides upon the venue.
- Should an extraordinary provincial chapter take place, number 716.2 holds good.
- 725.2** What has been said for the general chapter under 716.4b, 716.5b and 716.5c is to be applicable to the provincial chapter.
- Members by right are:

the provincial superior and his council, the provincial treasurer, the superiors and the novice master.

In accordance with the principles laid down in 716.5c every provincial with his council determines the number of delegates to be elected to the next provincial chapter (716.5b).

Confreres in temporary vows without the right of voting may attend the provincial chapter; their number is decided by the provincial government.

725.3 Under the chairmanship of the provincial superior, the chapter fulfils the following duties:

- a) Examination of the report presented by the provincial superior on the state of the personnel, religious discipline and the economic situation of the province. The report (except) the balances which can be inspected any time at the office of the provincial superior, as well as the proposals for the chapter are to be presented to the capitulars in written form at least two weeks prior to the provincial chapter.
- b) Formulation of the reports, submittals and proposals to be presented to the general chapter.
- c) Election of the delegates to the general chapter according to numbers 716.4b and 716.5a-c.
- d) The superior general or the appointed delegate by the general council has always the right to take part in the provincial chapters. He chairs the provincial chapter.
- e) The decisions of the provincial chapter requires the approval of the superior general and his council.

Provincial Superior and Regional Superior

726 The provincial superior gives the incentive within his province for the realisation of its mission, in close coordination with the general administration, with the other provinces, as well as in fraternal cooperation and co-responsibility in the different fields. He should be open-minded towards the spiritual, ecclesiastical and social life in the Church, the Congregation and in his own province. He promotes the faithful observance of the Rule, the Way of Life and the directives. He cherishes a spirit of sharing and communication, of open-mindedness and unity and strives to foster these attitudes among all the Brothers.

726.1 For the appointment of the provincial superior, the superior general according to 718.3h, requests by a direct survey from every Brother of this area, nomination of one to three suitable Brothers with reasons of their choices. The general council is bound to announce the names of the three candidates with the most votes in alphabetical order. The provincial superior should be appointed from among these three candidates.

726.2 The provincial superior is appointed for three years and may be re-confirmed. Re-confirmation for a third term of office can in exceptional cases be applied for only at the Apostolic See.

The provincial superior has his residence in the house designated by the general council. – He must have been finally professed for at least 3 years and has completed 30 years of age (can 623).

726.3 The most important duties of the provincial superior are the following:

a) He is to be available to each Brother and endeavour to know and understand them; he recognises their capabilities, in order to put them where they may best realise our mission and their own growth.

b) He is to foster the systematic training of the Brothers, especially of those who are still in probation before their vows. In doing this, he takes into consideration the request of the individual as well as the needs of our common mission in the Church.

c) He is the immediate superior of the house superiors. He visits them often, reflects upon common duties and problems with them, gives directives and examines their reports thoroughly.

- d) Within his own province, he can dispense in matters of religious discipline, for a definite time, in consultation with the immediate superiors.
- e) The Brothers under his jurisdiction can be transferred from one house to another, or be given a special mission after fraternal discussion with them and after consultation with the house superiors concerned.
- f) He has the right, in agreement with those responsible, to admit postulants, and to dismiss postulants and novices after hearing the novice master.
- g) He is duty bound to visit all the houses in his province possibly once a year. The visitation has above all a pastoral character; it is a common examination of various fields and offers opportunity for dialogue. It is to promote the apostolic and charitable work and the fraternal unity.
- h) Every year, he sends to the superior general a written report on each novice submitted to him by the novice master. Likewise another report on the spiritual, personnel and economical state of his province and of each house.

In addition, he submits an annual statement of accounts prepared by the provincial treasurer and approved by the provincial and his council.

- i) Together with the provincial council, he supervises the administration of temporal goods (cf. 727.1d und 727.2g und h), paying attention to the rights and needs of each house.

Provincial Council and Regional Council

- 727** **The provincial council is to assist the provincial superior in the government and administration of his province.**
- 727.1 a) According to the size of the province, the provincial superior is assisted by two or four assistants, the provincial treasurer and the provincial secretary. In smaller provinces, the two last ones can be appointed from the number of the assistants.

- b) They are appointed in accordance with number 718.3h and must be finally professed. Their term of office ends with that of the provincial superior. The assistants, the treasurer and the secretary can be re-appointed.
- c) The provincial superior appoints one of his assistants to be his vicar. He must be finally professed and must have completed 30 years of age. – He takes the place of the provincial superior in case of absence, inability to attend, death or removal.
- d) To deal with all important matters and as often as it is necessary, the provincial superior convokes his council, at least three to four times a year. The provincial treasurer takes part in these meetings when matters concerning property, administration of goods or economic affairs are dealt with.
He has the right to vote in such affairs.
- e) In regard to sessions of the provincial council what is said about the general council under 718.2d-f is to be observed.

727.2 **The following decisions require the consent of the provincial council:**

- a) In consultation with those responsible for the postulancy, to determine the place, the duration of the postulancy or its prolongation for each postulant.
- b) Admission into the novitiate.
- c) Decisions about the activities and studies of the novices and their relationship with the professed Brothers according to the decisions of the chapter, in consultation with those responsible.
- d) Fixing of reimbursement for expenses in the postulancy and novitiate.
- e) Admission to temporary vows according to the provisions of 612.2.
- f) Fixing of the date and venue of the provincial chapter.
- g) Expenses, which in an individual case do not exceed the amount for a province established at the general chapter.
- h) Auditing and approving of the annual financial statement.

- i) Approval of the vicar of the provincial superior and appointment of the local councillors and the treasurer in accordance with 731.5b.
- j) Appointment of the leader of the Juniorate. (613.3).

727.3

Decisions of the Provincial Council that need the approval of the General Council:

- a) Appointment and removal from office of the superiors and the novice master in accordance with 718.3i.
- b) Appointment and removal from office of the provincial assistants the provincial treasurer or the provincial secretary and also their replacement in case of vacancy through death or prolonged impediment (718.3h).
- c) Establishment, transfer and dissolution of the novitiate (can 647).
- d) Admission to final vows, diaconate and ordination to priesthood (718.3m).
- e) Heavier responsibilities imposed upon a province or house.
- f) Finalisation of important contracts, taking on debts, disposal of property and objects of value, as well as expenses which in an individual case exceed the amount fixed for a province by the general chapter.

Provincial Secretary and Regional Secretary

727.4 See also 727.1b, c. Further points to be observed are:

- a) He attends the meetings of the council and takes down the minutes thereof.
- b) On the instruction and following the directives of the provincial superior, he attends to the routine correspondence.
- c) He arranges and keeps in a safe place all the documents and written papers relating to the administration and history of the province; he takes charge of the archives and keeps the chronicles.

Provincial Treasurer and Regional Treasurer

- 727.5
- a) The provincial treasurer performs his office in accordance with the directives of the provincial superior. He is to be consulted in all matters of the administration of the province (727.1; 718.7a).

 - b) In economic matters, the directives and decisions of the general chapter and provincial chapter and the ordinances of the general superior and provincial superior are binding. All superiors have to ensure that the provinces and its houses are not burdened with debts which cannot be paid within a reasonable space of time.

 - c) If donations or legacies are made to the Congregation, these goods of whatever nature become the property of the Congregation as such, provided no other stipulations are attached to them. In other cases they become the property of the province concerned or the house, to which they are expressly given.

Community

- 728** The Brothers of a house form a community. As such, they are a sign of unity, love and apostolic mission of the Church.
- 729** In joyful harmony the community is to be one heart and one soul in prayer, work, trials and sharing of goods, like the first Christians at the time of the apostles.
- 730** Every community has its own duty and fulfils it in active obedience in accordance with our Constitutions and in agreement with the government of the Congregation.

Superior

- 731** The superior must be a Brother who is finally professed. His concern is for the physical and spiritual well-being of each Brother and of the entire community. He endeavours to create an atmosphere of mutual trust. He respects the self-responsibility of all for the community. He encourages their initiatives and inspires them to active obedience. He also gives them according to the possibilities space for their personal growth. With his assistants he makes the decisions that are due to him.
- 731.1** After consulting the Brothers in the community in an appropriate way, the superior is appointed by the provincial superior with the consent of his council for a period of three years (can 625 § 3) – likewise the superior of a house subordinate to the generalate is appointed by the superior general with the consent of his council.
- His term of office in the same house can be prolonged for a further three years after consultation with the Brothers in the community.
- For a third period of office in the same house, a fresh consultation with the Brothers preceded by consultation with the local ordinary, is required.
- 731.2** The superior appoints his vicar who will be also one of the assistants. This appointment requires the approval of the major superior with his council.

731.3 It is the duty of the superior to see to it that the Rule and the Way of Life and also the ordinances of the major superiors be faithfully observed and that religious discipline and order be maintained. Above all, he sees to it that the sick Brothers receive proper care.

The superior is duty bound to stay in his community and for an absence of more than seven days, he needs the permission of the major superior (can 629).

731.4 He gives an annual report to the major superior on the state of personnel and financial situation of the community.

Larger amounts of money, which are not needed for daily expenses are to be transferred to the generalate or the province respectively after consultation with the major superior in order to realise communion of goods.

Vice Superiors and Assistants

731.5 a) According to the size of the community of the house, the superior has one or several Brothers as assistants and a treasurer. They form his council and are appointed by the general government or the provincial government after hearing the opinions of the Brothers of the community concerned. In the provinces the superior general is informed of the appointment.

b) The deputy of the superior is approved by the council of the relevant major superior (727.2i).

c) With the expiration of the term of office and the change of a superior, his deputy and the members of his council are also relieved from their offices. However, they may be re-appointed.

d) The deputy of the superior assists him in the performance of his office, exercises all the powers delegated to him by the superior and represents him in case of absence or inability to attend. He draws the attention of the superior to mistakes which may arise.

- e) The superior is duty bound to ask his Brothers of his council in everything that is important for the house and community life.

At least once a month a discussion in common is held. In case a significant matter is concerned or extraordinary expenditures, the superior must get permission of the major superior prior to closing the business deal unless it is a matter of grave urgency.

- f) In houses where there are less than six professed Brothers, all the Brothers take part in the house council.
- f) For technical questions, secular experts should also be invited to a discussion in common.
- h) The following should be discussed within the entire community: information and advice about important community matters, daily time table, programme of work, dates for retreats and holidays, examination of community life, economic problems, common works of charity etc.

House Treasurer

732 The house treasurer handles his duties as a religious, i.e. as one who stands above the earthly goods in his mind. He endeavours to give witness to an active love of neighbour and close cooperation with his Brothers. He fulfils his duties in justice and in a spirit of common poverty.

- 732.1 a) The treasurer is entrusted with the administration of temporal goods. He acts in agreement with the superior and his council. In a small community, this office can be linked with the office of the superior or one of the assistants (see also 718.7a).
- b) The monthly reports prepared by the house treasurer are presented to the superior and his council for approval. The superior forwards these reports to the major superior for the attention of the treasurer general or the provincial treasurer respectively.

Novice master

733 The novice master is to be a man of prayer and self-control, exemplifying maturity of character and behaviour, a man of solidity and stability, of sound judgment, with love for the Congregation and zeal for the glory of God.

He must be finally professed and have completed 30 years of age.

Profession formula

734 I, Brother ..., make this promise in honour of God. I am firmly resolved to consecrate myself to God and to follow Christ in religious life for life.

Therefore, in the presence of the Brothers here assembled I vow into your hands, Brother ... (name of superior or his authorised representative) to live for ever (for ... years) in celibate chastity, poverty and obedience according to the Rule of Saint Augustine and the Way of Life of the Brothers of Mercy of Mary, Help of Christians.

With all my heart I place myself at the disposal of this religious community in order, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, confident of the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of our blessed Father Peter Friedhofen, to attain perfect love in the service of God and the Church.

The superior says:

In virtue of the authority conferred upon me I receive your vows in the name of the Church. I entreat God earnestly to grant you grace to accomplish in your life the self-offering you are now uniting with the Eucharistic sacrifice of our Lord.

Confirmation of vows after retreats or at profession anniversaries

734.1 *Priest:*

Introductory words

Brothers:

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. / Amen.

I confirm with all my heart my consecration to God / and to the service of the Church / as well as my vows to live in celibate chastity, poverty and obedience for the sake of the kingdom of God / according to the Rule of Saint Augustine / and the Way of Life of the Brothers of Mercy of Mary, Help of the Christians.

Priest:

By the intercession of the most blessed Virgin Mary, the blessed Father Peter Friedhofen and the patron saints of your (our) Congregation may almighty God grant you joy and strength faithfully to follow his Son and to persevere on the way to the end of your life.

Regulations of Canon Law and By-Laws

810 Admission into Postulate and Novitiate

1. For admission the following documents are required:

- a) Personal application in writing with attached curriculum vitae;
- b) Birth certificate, certificate of baptism and confirmation, parochial certificate of good conduct; if the applicant has not yet come of age parent's consent in writing;
- c) Diplomas or leaving certificates of schools attended; certificates about vocational training and professional career;
- d) Health certificate, vaccination certificate, eventually psychological or psychiatric opinion (can 645 § 1 and § 3).

2. The precepts of canon law have to be taken heed of (can 641-645).

3. Requirements for admission to the novitiate:

- a) "All relevant information has to be obtained conscientiously and discreetly before candidates are admitted to the novitiate" (can 645 § 4);
- b) if a candidate has previously been admitted to a seminary or a college, a sworn written testimony of the respective rector with the agreement of the local ordinary has to be obtained;
- c) if the person in question has previously been admitted to the postulate or novitiate of another religious institute of consecrated life, such a testimony has to be requested from the major superior of the institute.

4. One is invalidly admitted to the novitiate:

- a) who has not yet completed the seventeenth year of age;
- b) who is a spouse in marriage;
- c) who is presently held by the sacred bond of any institute of consecrated life or who is incorporated in any society of apostolic life, with due regard to the precept of can 684;

- d) who enters any institute as a result of force, or grave fear or fraud, or whom the superior admits as having been impacted in the same way;
- e) who has concealed his incorporation in any institute of consecrated life or a society of apostolic life;
- f) who has fallen away from the faith or is still adherent to another faith community;
- g) who is indicted for a grievous crime or has to fear prosecution

5. One is validly but illicitly admitted:

- a) who is burdened by debts which he is unable to repay;
- b) who is still obliged to render account or is involved in secular affairs, which might result in litigations claims or other inconveniences for the Congregation;
- c) who has to support destitute parents or grandparents; likewise who has still to support and bring up his own children;
- d) who belongs to the Eastern rite and lacks the written permission of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches to join a religious community of the Latin rite.

820 Vows and Holy Orders

1. Requirement for taking vows are:

- a) being of age;
- b) completion of novitiate according to canonical regulations (can 605-612);
- c) admission by the relevant superior after ballot of the provincial council (can 612.2; 727.2e);
- d) the understanding of the whole range of the implications of this religious act and the free choice of the bond;
- e) the express profession of the vows;

- f) the acceptance of the profession by the relevant superior.
2. Profession obliges the Brother to live in consecrated chastity, poverty and obedience for the sake of the kingdom of God according to the Rule of St Augustine, the Way of Life and the directives of the Congregation.
 3. By profession, the Brother becomes a member of the Congregation with all rights and duties; but he does not have a passive voice in elections before taking final vows.
 4. When a Brother has taken Holy Orders, the provincial superior has to notify the parish priest of his baptismal parish.
 5. Leaving the Congregation and re-admission are possible.
 6. Canon law governs this case by canons (can 688, 689, 691 und 690 § 1).

830 Administration of Property (314-323; 315.1-323.1)

1. Every professed Brother retains legal ownership of his possessions and the capacity to acquire additional property, but with the restrictions mentioned under 315; 320.1 and 323,1.
2. a) Before taking temporary vows or thereafter, in case he comes into property, the Brother has to leave the administration of his property for the time he is bound by vows to someone else, whom he may freely choose.
In addition he has to dispose of the use and the usufruct of his property.

b) If he wishes to transfer the administration and the usufruct of his possessions to the Congregation or if he wishes to change the former settlement, he needs the permission of the provincial superior. If the change to be affected is to a considerable extent in favour of the religious community, it has also to be approved by the Holy See.

c) Upon leaving the Congregation all agreements made about property become null and void.
3. a) Before taking first vows, but at latest before final vows, in full freedom the Brother has to make his will regarding all existing or still accruing assets (can 668 § 1).

- b) For changes to the will after vows, a Brother needs the permission of the superior general. He can delegate this authority to the other major superiors with the consent of his council (RL 6).
4. Brothers can also perform such legal acts as are required by civil law where property rights are concerned. But they need the permission of the superior or the permission of the superior general if a civil act results in the sale of property.
 5. The Congregation, the province and the community can acquire, own and administer movable and immovable material goods. The administration is the responsibility of the respective treasurer. (727,5c).
 6. Brothers who are commissioned to manage property have to respect the budget of the relevant administration they are answerable to.
 7. Brothers who are in legitimate charge of funds will conscientiously keep proper records, which must be available for inspection by the legitimate superiors or treasurers at any time.

840 Departure, Dismissal and Transfer

1. Postulants and novices can be dismissed for a just cause by the provincial superior after hearing the novice master (can 689). The reasons for dismissal are to be discussed with the novice or postulant beforehand by the provincial superior.
2. Dismissal of Brothers in temporary or final vows as well as transfer to another religious institute is governed by the Code of Canon Law. The matter is to be handled according to canons 684-704. It has to be kept in mind that for canons 697.3 and 699 § 1 the following holds good: “notary” is to be understood as “secretary”. “To proceed collegially” does not mean “with consent of the council”, but that the voting rights of the superior general equal those of the council members and that the result of the voting is binding for him.

In the case of serious external scandal or very grave imminent harm to the Congregation, a Brother can be immediately expelled from the religious house by the superior general with his council or, if there is a danger in the delay, by the provincial superior with his council or, if necessary, by the house superior with the consent of his council. The matter, however, is to be submitted right away to the judgment of the Holy See either by the superior general or by the local Ordinary.

3. If a Brother in temporary or final vows wants to leave the Congregation, he has to apply in writing, stating his reasons to the superior general if he is in temporary vows or via the superior general to the Holy See if he is in final vows.
4. The uncurtailed personal assets have to be returned to the Brother who is leaving the Congregation, but without yields. This does not apply if the Brother has disclaimed his property (322). In any case he cannot claim requital for work he accomplished and recompense for damage he might have suffered.

The Congregation, however, is to grant him in kind consideration the necessary stop gap relief, the amount which is determined by the provincial superior for the individual case, by the superior general for a Region.
5. When a religious in final vows transfers from another religious institute to our Congregation, he cannot take final vows with us before completing a probationary period of three years (can 684 § 2). During this probationary period, he is to be introduced by appropriate instruction to the spirit and the way of life of our Congregation (can 684 § 4).

850 Voting Rules

At elections to various offices or functions within the Congregation attention has to be paid to the following:

1. Voting is possible in various ways:
 - a) by means of paper slips, balloting balls or an electronic voting-machines;
 - b) for matters of minor importance decisions can be taken by means of manual signs or oral consent.
2. The written and cast ballot is valid only, if:
 - a) it is free and secret;
 - b) it designates the elected person unmistakably;
 - c) it names one person only;
 - d) it has no condition attached;
 - e) it does not nominate the voting person himself.

3. The result of the voting is valid only if attained with the required majority of valid votes.
4. For the validity of the outcome of the voting the following may be required:
 - a) a qualified majority of the votes, i.e. at least two thirds (2/3) of the valid votes;
 - b) an absolute majority, i.e. at least one vote in addition to one half of the valid votes;
 - c) a relative majority, i.e. the highest number of valid votes given individually to one of the various candidates;
5. If at the voting nothing else has been expressly decreed, the relative majority at the third ballot carries the day after two ballots which did not reach an absolute majority.
6. If the third ballot is an equality of votes between several Brothers, the senior by profession wins the election. If they are of the same profession age, seniority of age decides the issue.
7. All professed Brothers have active voting rights, but only Brothers in final vows have passive voting rights.
8. If the common good calls for dismissal from office, responsibility rests with the authorities that arranged the election or its confirmation or made the appointment.
9. If the provincial council decrees so, the following electoral procedure can also be used for the election of the delegates to the provincial chapter or the general chapter:

In the first ballot the absolute majority is decided according to RB 850.4b.

If a second ballot is required, only those brothers can be elected who obtained the largest numbers of votes in the first third, as far as they have not been elected yet by means of an absolute majority. If in the ballot for the last position in the first third there is an equality of votes between two or more Brothers, all of them are eligible.

If a third ballot is necessary, the general rule of RB 850.5 and 6 applies. (716.5a and b).

10. The delegates who were not elected in the final ballot of the elections to the provincial chapter and the general chapter rank as substitutes in proportion to the number of votes they received (716.5a and b).

860 The General Chapter

1. Preparation of the Electoral Chapter

- a) The general chapter is preceded by provincial chapters.
- b) The Brothers elect their delegates to the provincial chapter according to the directives about the provincial chapter. (725.2 and 3).

The members of the provincial chapter elect the delegates to the general chapter. (716.5 and 6; 725. 2 and 3).

- c) The statement of accounts (with exception of the balance sheets, which can be inspected any time at the office of the superior general) as well as the petitions addressed to the chapter should reach the capitulars in writing at least two weeks before the opening of the chapter.

2. The Procedure

- a) During the chapter the superior general or his vicar presides.
- b) He opens it and ascertains the presence of the capitulars by roll call.
- c) Preceding the elections, the superior general or his vicar presents a written report on the religious – spiritual situation of the Congregation since the last general chapter; on its mission in society and in the Church; on the personal and disciplinary situation; on the administration of the property of the entire Congregation as well as of the provinces and the individual houses.

The capitulars especially the provincial and regional superiors are given the opportunity to give their view on the report, to supplement it and through questions ask for more information.

- d) For the verification of balance sheets three Brothers from among the capitulars are to be elected who were not involved in their elaboration and approval.
- e) Then two tellers are elected by relative majority.

- f) The secretaries of the chapter are appointed by the general council and their appointment is confirmed by the general chapter; they keep conscientiously the minutes of the chapter proceedings.
- g) Then the election of the superior general takes place.
- h) If a Brother, not present at the chapter is elected superior general, he is to be summoned at once to attend. No decisions can be taken before his arrival. Consultations and commission meetings may take place.
- i) Between the election of the superior general and that of his councillors there is to be a break, the length of which is determined by the chapter.

If it is desired by three or more capitulars, a break of comparable length is inserted also between the individual ballots.

- k) In order to facilitate the election of the assistants, the newly elected superior may carry out among the capitulars an informative sounding as to whom they would want for the office of the four assistants and he may announce the list of the proposed candidates.
- l) Thereafter, the chapter elects the four assistants of the superior general, the treasurer general and the secretary general according to what has been said about these offices in the directives.
- m) For practical reasons the general chapter in question may decide with a three fifths (3/5) majority to deal with some issues of the chapter of affairs already before the electoral chapter.

3. Preparation of the Chapter of Affairs

- a) The questions or the summary of the topics of major moment which are to be dealt with in the general chapter have to be distributed to all Brothers in good time for study and joint discussion in their local communities, in the provincial chapter etc.
- b) Statements and additional petitions etc. are submitted to the general administration, which will carefully evaluate them possibly assisted by a commission.

4. Procedure and Tasks of the Chapter of Affairs

- a) The agenda is determined in the opening session of the chapter of affairs.

For the running of the chapter of affairs, the superior general can appoint moderators (facilitators) or have them elected. He can also call in expert advisors for certain areas.

- b) The main tasks of the chapter of affairs are:
 - aa) Revising our Way of Life whose text can be changed or re-interpreted if at least two thirds (2/3) of the capitulars desire so, for which the approval of the Holy See is required.
 - bb) Revising the directives and the RB 810-860. Except for the canonical directives they can be changed by the capitulars with a two thirds (2/3) majority without referring to the Holy See.
 - cc) Examining and settling matters of special significance for the spiritual welfare and effectiveness of the Congregation.
 - dd) Deliberating and deciding on all questions connected with planning and adaptation of the apostolic and charitable ministries and administration in line with changing realities and challenges for the Congregation and the foundation or suppression of houses etc.
 - ee) Responding to requests, recommendations and petitions filed by the Brothers.
 - ff) Determining the amount of the annual contribution of individual provinces to the general treasury.

- gg) Determining the sums the superior general may spend by himself or with his council, also determining the upper limit of extraordinary expenditures which must not be surpassed by the provincial or house superiors respectively without approval by the major superiors.
- hh) The decisions of a general chapter are promulgated by the superior general and remain in force, until they are repealed by a general chapter or substituted by other directives.

900 Closing Words

Above all and in all there be love!

The more unanimously all Brothers observe the Rule of St Augustine, our Way of Life and our directives, the richer will be God's blessing on our community.

May love impel all of us to live according to this Rule and Way of life; love towards our own community; love to the poor, the suffering, the disadvantaged and the persecuted, since all are Christ's members all have to be loved: our own confreres and all fellow humans whom we may encounter in our lives.

"By their condition religious bear distinct and eminent witness to the fact that the world cannot be transfigured and offered to God without the spirit of the beatitudes" (LG 31.2):

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness, for theirs the kingdom of heaven. (Mt 5:3-10).

"I therefore beg you to lead a life worthy to the calling of which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the

bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of you calling. Amen” (Eph 4:1-4).

- 901 The Rule of St. Augustine, the Way of Life and the directives constitute the determining order of our lives which we freely accepted to lead us to perfect love. They are guide-lines and means, helping us to recognise the will of God and to fulfil it in a better way.
- 902 The love of Christ urges us to serve God and humankind by means of a joyful acceptance of this order of our lives. Generally speaking, this order does not oblige us in conscience. Transgression is sinful only, if it offends against the vows, the commandments of God or of the Church, if it springs from an inordinate motive or is connected with public scandal.
- 903 In a particular case, the relevant superior can lawfully and temporarily grant dispensation from the observation of certain disciplinary points of our Way of Life.

Abbreviations

A	Documents from Peter-Friedhofen Archive
Apg	Acts of the Apostles
Aug	Saint Augustine
Bf	Letter by Peter Friedhofen, see «New Fire»
CIC	Codex Iuris Canonici – Code of Canon Law
DK	Decree of the Church
Eph	Letter to the Ephesians
ES	Ecclesiae Sanctae (Motu Proprio)
GS	Gaudium et Spes Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World
Jn	Gospel according to John
Col	Letter to the Colossians
Cor	Letter to the Corinthians
L	Way of Life
LG	Lumen Gentium Dogmatic Constitution on the Church
Lk	Gospel according to Luke
Mt	Gospel according to Matthew
PC	Perfectae caritatis – Decree on the up-to-date Renewal of Religious Life
Phil	Letter to the Philippians
Pt	Letter of Saint Peter
R	Rule of Saint Augustine
RC	Renovationis causam - Instruction on the up-to-date Renewal of Religious Formation
RL	Religionum Laicalium - Decree of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life granting certain faculties to the superior general of non-clerical religious
RB	Regulations of Canon Law and By-Laws
Rm	Letter to the Romans
Sa	Statutes of Peter Friedhofen, see «New Fire»
SC	Sacrosanctum Concilium - Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy
Spr	Sayings
Th	Letter to the Thessalonians
V	Legacy of Peter Friedhofen, see «New Fire»
W	Directives