



CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY

Constitutions and Statutes



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Approved by the Extraordinary General Chapter July 2022
Approved by the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life
on the 24th September 2023

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DICASTERO
PER GLI ISTITUTI DI VITA CONSACRATA
E LE SOCIETÀ DI VITA APOSTOLICA

Prot. n. A 127⁻¹/2022

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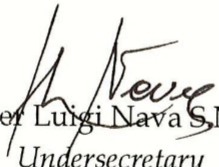
The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, at their Extraordinary General Chapter in July 2022, voted to accept changes to their Constitutions to be submitted to the Holy See for approval.

After careful study of the amended document, with the present Decree, this Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, approves the revised text of the Constitutions, according to the text presented and retained in the Dicastery Archives.

May the living of this renewed expression of your Constitutions, assist you in living out the spirit of the Gospel while deepening your desire to be instruments of God's Mercy for all people, through your daily life and action.

Given at the Vatican, on the 24th day of September 2023, Feast of Our Lady of Mercy.

✠ José Rodríguez Carballo, O.F.M.
Archbishop Secretary


Fr. Pier Luigi Nava S.M.M.
Undersecretary



Historical Resumé

On the 24th of September 1827,
Feast of Our Lady of Mercy,
Catherine McAuley, a woman of prayer and compassion,
opened a house in Baggot Street, Dublin
for the relief, education and protection
of women and children marginalised by poverty.

On the 12th of December 1831
she, Mary Anne Doyle, and Elizabeth Harley
made religious profession
at Presentation Convent, George's Hill, Dublin.
This event marked the foundation
of the Religious Sisters of Mercy
under the patronage of Our Lady of Mercy.

On the 24th of March 1835
Pope Gregory XVI gave approval and blessing
to the Institute for its dedication to the work
of 'helping the poor, relieving the sick in every possible way,
and safeguarding, by the exercise of charity, women
who find themselves in circumstances dangerous to virtue'.

On the 6th of June 1841, the year of Catherine's death,
Pope Gregory XVI formally approved
the Rule and Constitutions of the Institute.
On the 18th of February 1926, its status
as an Institute of Pontifical Right
was confirmed by the Holy See.

In the ten years of her religious life
Catherine founded ten convents in Ireland and two in England.
At the end of her life, looking to the future, she said
'if the Order is my work
the sooner it falls to the ground the better;
if it is God's work it needs no one'.

Since then the Institute spread across the world,
to North America in 1842,
to Australia in 1846,
to New Zealand in 1850,
to South America in 1856,
to Africa in 1896
and to the Philippines in 1954.

The original foundations in Ireland
flourished and expanded over the decades,
establishing motherhouses and branches
throughout the whole country and abroad.
After Vatican II, these autonomous communities
began to merge within their separate dioceses.

By 1985, a congregational Union of Pontifical Right
had been established in each of the 26 dioceses in Ireland.
Their common Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy of Ireland
was approved by the Holy See on the 12th of December 1985.

In 1994, these Twenty-six Unions, with Houses
in Ireland, England, Canada, United States,
Kenya, Nigeria, Zambia, Peru and Brazil,
together with the Sisters of Mercy of South Africa,
united to form one Congregation.

On the 10th of July 1994, by Decree of the Holy See,
The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy,
was formally established as a single Institute.

On the 16th of April 1995, the Holy See approved
the Constitutions of the new Congregation.

These Constitutions were revised
by the Extraordinary General Chapter in June 2022
and approved by the Holy See on the 24th September 2023.

CONSTITUTIONS
OF THE
CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY

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CHAPTER 1

CALLED TO MERCY

1. Hearing the call, and walking in faith as disciples of Jesus Christ, we encounter the living God, the God of mercy and the God of all comfort.

*The God of
Mercy*

The life and death of the Lord Jesus who 'loved us and gave himself for us' was a mission of mercy to the poor and oppressed to the sick and the sinner, to the cry of all creation.

The resurrection of Jesus, his victory over evil, sin and death, discloses the power of that mercy to bring new life, hope and freedom to all.

2. Our holy Foundress, Catherine McAuley, was deeply affected and formed by God's tender compassion for all.

*The Charism of
our Foundress*

Inspired by mercy and gifted with mercy she brought God's steadfast love to people living in poverty and distress. Animating her companions with that same vision and trusting in the providence of God, she founded the *Sisters of Mercy* in 1831.

'God knows I would rather be cold and hungry than that the poor in Kingstown or elsewhere should be deprived of any consolation in our power to afford'.

3. Mercy, the source of forgiveness, healing and restoration, and its preferential love for the poor is the characteristic spirit of our Congregation.

*The Spirit of
the
Congregation*

Mercy is the call, the charism and heritage which forms and reforms our lives. It enables us, through the power of the Spirit and in the name of the Church, to reach out with courage and compassion to Christ's suffering members, and to witness to the constancy of God's loving kindness in every age.

4. The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, proclaiming mercy to the ends of the earth, is the first and supreme norm of our life.

*Mercy Life and
the Gospel*

Our *Mercy Way of Life* as religious women, living a communal life, professing the evangelical counsels, answering 'the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth', represents a particular manifestation of that Gospel.

Through our apostolic consecration we participate in the holiness of the People of God, and give our lives completely to the saving mission of Christ.

5. Mary of Nazareth, blessed among women, opened the way to her Son's mission, pondered its mystery, shared its pain and was named Mother of all disciples at the moment of Christ's supreme act of mercy.

*Mother of
Mercy*

Under the title of *Mother of Mercy* she is the special patroness and guide of the Sisters of Mercy.

6. *The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy* is an international Congregation of Pontifical Right, formed by the union of twenty-seven Congregations in Ireland and South Africa and inaugurated on the 14th of July 1994. Its members profess public vows of chastity, poverty and obedience.

Inter-community support and affection, prudent trust in local leadership and close ties with the local Church marked the foundations of Catherine McAuley.

These traits of Mercy culture allowed for adaptability, mobility, and creativity and continue to be relevant into our own time.

CHAPTER 2

SENT IN MERCY

Community

7. In Jesus' filial relationship with God we encounter the wondrous mystery of the Trinity, the communion of Father, Son and Spirit totally given in mutual knowledge and love.

*Source of
Community*

God's creative enduring purpose,
to be wrought in mercy,
invites and enables all
to share in the communal life of the Trinity.
In Jesus Christ, the beloved Son
and by the work of the Holy Spirit
'we, though many, become one in him'.

8. In the Church and because of the Church, our *Mercy Way of Life* together, rooted in and founded on love, enables us to experience, to express and to work in a specific way, for the universal reconciliation offered and signified by Christ Jesus.

*Community in
the Church for
the World*

Together, we are sent in compassion
as the Father sent Jesus,
to bear the pain of humanity
and to share the yearning of all creation
that finally all might be one in the cosmic Christ.

9. Founded on the Eucharist, our communal life together
in local and congregational settings,
is a work of mercy,
drawing us individually and corporately
in openness and humility
into the mystery of the Risen Christ among us,
into mutual self-giving love,
into seeing our place
within the whole earth community.

*Mercy
Community*

Our communal life urges us to share that mystery,
giving and receiving
in compassionate love and kindness,
with whom and wherever we live and work.

10. Loving one another as sisters in Christ,
we gladly accept and reverence every sister
with affection and trust.
Belonging to each other by religious profession
we share what we are,
and forgive each other as Christ has forgiven us.
We support each other in our communal life
and in our various ministries
building the Kingdom of justice and peace.

*Community of
Love*

We show special love and concern
for those who are sick among us,
and special gratitude and care
towards those who have grown old among us.

*The Sick and
Elderly*

We treasure the heritage of 'union and charity'
left us by our Foundress Catherine McAuley
and by generations of Mercy sisters.
Catherine's last wish
was that the sisters should continue
to 'preserve union and peace among each other'.

*Our Heritage of
Union and
Charity*

We welcome and encourage the diversity
of persons and gifts among us,
all contributing to the rich unity of our life.

We choose to forego our own preferences
for the sake of others and the common good,
sharing in the on-going conversion and self-denial
implicit in the following of Christ.

Self-denial

We exercise responsibility and discipline
in social situations and in the appropriate use of the media.

We gently and humbly call one another
to be true to our dedication to Christ
and to the service of God's 'poor ones'.

Praying and listening together as one,
we seek to discern God's action in and around us
and to respond in fidelity to our charism and tradition.

Discernment

11. As religious women dedicated to apostolic mission,
our communal life together
reflects the rhythm and interdependence
of contemplation, action and leisure,
each aspect receiving appropriate space
so that contemplation overflows in mercy
and our mercy ministry draws us into contemplation.

*Contemplative
Stance*

12. United in heart and mind, in spirit and purpose,
in mutual support and care for one another,
we give witness to and strengthen our communal life
by commitment to regular expressions
of prayer, reflection, relaxation and celebration together.

Communal Life

Recognising our changing profile of life and ministry,
our various places of residence
are approved as described in the Congregational Statutes.

Residence

The warmth of our community life
opens out in hospitality to all.

Hospitality

13. The Mercy Cross and a silver ring
are symbols of our belonging to Christ.
We dress in a simple manner
appropriate to the times and cultures
in which we live and minister.

Symbols

Prayer

14. As we lift our hearts in prayer
we encounter the God of mercy.

*The Gift
and Call
of Prayer*

God our Father cares for us;
Jesus our brother calls us his friends;
the Spirit of love awakens us
to the mystery of the Trinitarian life within us
and teaches us to pray, in truth and awe,
the filial word 'Abba'.

Pondering in our heart like Mary,
prayer leads us to conversion,
to the unutterable knowledge of the living God,
and to love beyond all telling.

Prayer enables us to discover
the image of the Lord in God's 'poor ones',
and the presence of the Creator
in the whole of the Universe.
Prayer draws us, and sends us,
to the sacrificial love and service of mercy.

Our communion with the living God
is expressed daily
in worship and praise,
in listening and contemplation,
in surrender and intercession;
and in the self-giving mission of mercy
it reaches its fullness.

15. As Sisters of Mercy in the Church our prayer, personal and communal, expresses an ecclesial concern for the coming of God's kingdom of justice, mercy and peace throughout the world. *Ecclesial Dimension*
16. Our communal prayer signifies that God is the source of our communal bonds. Through the cycle of the Sacred Liturgy and through participation in the Eucharist, daily where possible, we enter into the ever-present memorial of Jesus, are gradually transformed into the pattern of his life and death, and strengthened to be given in mercy. *Liturgy*
Eucharist
- We pray Morning and Evening Prayer, together when possible, in union with the Church in all ages and with the saints in heaven. *Prayer of the Church*
- Aware of our need for repentance individually and communally, we frequently seek the gift of conversion and pardon in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and the healing ministry of Christ in the Anointing of the Sick, where appropriate. *Sacraments of Reconciliation And the Sick*
- In appreciation and love we pray through the Liturgy of the Dead for those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith and mercy. *The Dead*
17. Other forms of communal prayer, which express our common faith and mission and which reflect our apostolic spirituality, support and enrich our personal prayer and the quality of our life together in Christ. *Communal Prayer Support*

18. We find inspiration for prayer
in the life-giving Word of God,
in our Hebrew and Christian roots,
in the teachings of the Church,
in the writings of Catherine McAuley,
in the beauty of nature,
and in other sources of Christian spirituality. *Food for Prayer*
19. In personal prayer we are invited
to be open to God's gracious self-revelation
and to remain in loving communion with Christ Jesus.
Through the work of the Spirit in our hearts
we grow in wholeness and in the service of mercy. *Personal Prayer*
- We commit ourselves to set aside time daily
to be present to the God who loves us,
carrying in our heart all whom we encounter.
20. We reserve days of quiet reflection
and longer periods of retreat throughout the year. *Retreat*
We avail of spiritual direction
according to each one's need.
21. Within our personal and communal prayer
we reflect on the quality of our lives
according to the Gospel and our Constitutions. *Review*
We seek to recognise God's presence in our daily lives
and to distinguish the movement of the Spirit
from the pull of selfishness within us.
22. Internal and external quiet spaces
facilitate a contemplative heart and mind, *Stillness*
and enable us as women of prayer
to be attuned to the voice of God
and responsive to the call of mercy.

23. Mary, Mother of Mercy and Mother of the Church,
inspires and supports us in prayer.
Her 'magnificat' song in praise of God's mercy,
her trusting compassion at Cana,
and her pain-filled presence at Calvary,
draw us to seek her intercession for the whole world.

*Mary and
Prayer*

We express our love for her
in joyfully celebrating her feasts
in contemplating the mysteries of the Rosary,
and in our desire to be as Mary in today's world.

24. We cherish the spiritual traditions handed on to us,
especially devotion to the Passion of Christ,
and to the Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament.
We are open to new forms
of prayer and spirituality in the Church
as the Spirit leads us.

*Traditional
Devotions*

Consecration

25. Protecting the gifts of the Spirit,
the Church invited Catherine McAuley and her companions
to seek permanence and fruitfulness
for their works of mercy
in a way of life consecrated
by the profession of the evangelical counsels.

*Religious
Profession
of vows*

Our religious profession of the evangelical counsels
flows from our consecration at baptism.
By the profession of public vows in an apostolic Congregation
we freely and totally dedicate ourselves to God,
seeking the fullness of love in the service of mercy,
and becoming in a particular and prophetic way
a sign of the Church here and hereafter.

With Mary we humbly respond to God's call,
recognising our religious consecration as a gift.
We commit to live all the days of our life
as disciples of Jesus Christ
who was chaste, poor and obedient for our sake.

Vow of Chastity

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| 26. | Consecrated chastity is a particular life-response to the personal all-embracing love of Christ. Through it we choose to give ourselves and our life-giving capacities to him, without reserve and without recall, for the service of his merciful love. | <i>Nature of Chastity</i> |
| 27. | By the Vow of Chastity we commit ourselves to live in consecrated chastity in total celibate self-surrender to Christ. Loving him with undivided heart we are empowered to reach out with love to those around us, to our suffering sisters and brothers, and to the whole earth community. | <i>Vow of Chastity</i> |
| 28. | Living consecrated chastity generously and positively we give witness to the fulfilling mystery of Christ's love, and to the constant presence in the Church of God's steadfast love for all that exists, now, and in the life to come. | <i>Witness of Chastity</i> |
| 29. | Consecrated chastity is a particular call and gift. We pray earnestly, especially through the Eucharist, for a deeper understanding of its mystery and for the integrity and strength to keep faith with him who always keeps faith with us. | <i>Gift of Chastity</i> |

30. The faith, sharing and friendship of communal life,
its challenges and blessings,
nourish and support in us
the grace and maturity of consecrated chastity,
so that we may bear fruit that will last
in works of mercy for the world.

*Support of
Chastity*

Vow of Poverty
31. As Sisters of Mercy we freely choose
to imitate Jesus Christ
who became poor for our sake.
Recognising the limitations of the human condition,
and the depletion of our earth's resources,
we seek to live in simplicity and freedom of heart,
responding to all affected by injustice and deprivation.

*Nature of
Religious
Poverty*

We hold community goods in common
and depend on the Congregation for our material needs.
Trusting in Divine Providence
we gladly share what we have
with those who are living in need.

32. By the Vow of Poverty
we renounce the independent use
and disposal of material things,
and surrender to the Congregation
whatever we earn by our work
or receive as a religious,
by way of gift, pension or insurance.

*Vow of
Poverty*

We retain the right to own personal property
and the capacity to acquire property.
However, by the vow of poverty
we may not administer it ourselves.

Before temporary profession
each sister freely cedes
the administration of such property,
making arrangement for its use and revenues
in an appropriate legal way.

Before perpetual profession every sister makes a will, valid in civil law, providing for the disposal of any property she possesses or may come to possess.

After some years in perpetual profession, as stated in the Congregational Statutes, a sister may, for the sake of the Gospel, and with the permission of the Congregational Leader, renounce her patrimony and/or her right to acquire property.

33. Consecrated poverty calls us to be poor in fact and in spirit, individually and communally. Simplicity and moderation in all things characterise our Mercy expression of consecrated poverty.

*Poor in Fact
Poor in Spirit*

It calls forth in us a spirit of generosity in the use of our resources, for the sake of our life and mission, giving witness to an authentic *Mercy Way of Life*.

34. The spirit of poverty obliges us and the charism of Mercy impels us, to stand with those who are poor, and to work for social and ecological justice in accordance with Church teaching.

*Social Justice
and Work*

It calls us to witness to the dignity and value of human work as a source of sustenance, development and service among God's people, and to concern for the needs of planet Earth.

35. Our Mercy expression of poverty challenges us to be generous with our time and talents,
to be open to other ideas and ways,
to be willing to change and adapt,
to be free to go where we are needed and sent,
to accept success or failure, plenty or want,
to treat with care things we possess in common,
to review our lives in the light of justice,
to be aware of our own poverty
and so to receive in simplicity from others.

*Spirit of
Poverty*

Vow of Obedience
36. Through consecrated obedience
we put on the mind of Christ,
who became obedient unto death,
even death on a cross
and so accomplished his mission of mercy –
the redemption and transformation of the world.

*Nature of
Obedience*

United as Sisters of Mercy in the love of Christ
we daily seek to recognise and fulfil God's will.
We dedicate ourselves to be channels of that will
showing forth God's loving kindness to the world.

37. By the Vow of Obedience
we commit ourselves to obey our Leaders
in accordance with the Constitutions.

*Vow of
Obedience*

United together through vowed obedience,
we support the ministry of leadership
which gives direction and encouragement
to our communal mission of mercy,
in service and companionship with those in need,
and to the call to lay down our lives for many.

For grave reasons, with the advice of her Team the Congregational Leader may give a command in virtue of the vow of obedience.

Such a command must be clearly understood and communicated in writing or in the presence of two witnesses.

38. The spirit of consecrated obedience calls us to be co-responsible for our communal life and mission, to listen and search together in dialogue and love for God's will in our present circumstances, respecting the Leader's authority in the final decision.

*Spirit of
Obedience*

In prayerful discernment together, especially during the Congregational Chapter, the Holy Spirit fills us with wisdom and courage to respond to contemporary needs, faithful to our sound traditions and creative in our obedience to the charism of mercy within us.

39. In keeping with human dignity, and in humility and gratitude, we freely bring our various gifts of nature and grace to the fulfilment of consecrated obedience in the ministries assigned us.

*Human
Person and
Obedience*

Living in consecrated obedience we contribute to our own human development giving witness to the freedom of the children of God and to a loving dedication to God's will, which is at the heart of the Christian faith.

40. The Leader, fulfilling the ministry of authority given by the Church in the name of Christ, offers a loving service to the sisters in calling forth their responsible obedience. The Leader seeks to unite and animate the community by respecting each person, and inspiring in all an ever-deeper fidelity to the call to mercy.

*Obedience
and Authority*

41. As religious women in the Church called, consecrated and sent in mercy, our Constitutions embody our common faith-vision and are our Book of Life after the Gospel.

*Obedience to
Constitution*

The Constitutions are a means of preserving in us fidelity to the legacy of Catherine McAuley, and of constantly calling us to conversion.

By religious profession we accept these Constitutions as our *Mercy Way of Life* and see in fidelity to them the fundamental manifestation of our consecration.

Mission and Ministry

42. The Church continually proclaims the mercy of God in all ages.

*Apostolate
in the Church*

The Sisters of Mercy were born into the Church as the 'walking nuns' who sought to alleviate and eradicate pain, want and misery.

For the love of Christ and his suffering members, as consecrated women of the Church inspired by the spirit of Catherine McAuley, we gladly give ourselves by our vowed life to the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. The image of Christ in all who suffer, and the presence of the divine in our fragile earth, draw us into the heart of God, and move us to be channels of God's tender mercy so that our mission and ministry become a source of contemplation and holiness.

*Apostolic
Spirituality*

Endowed with the charism of mercy –
a love that is more powerful
than evil, sin or death –
we are enabled to respond to pain
with tenderness and compassion,
with courage and perseverance,
with God’s unconditional love.

Charism

43. Our Foundress fostered in her sisters
a deep compassionate concern
for the sick and dying poor,
for those at risk in society
and for the spiritual needs of people around her.

*Particular
Ministries*

This concern urges us to be in solidarity
with those who are poor and oppressed,
with those who are displaced or excluded,
and to bring rich and poor together
in mercy, justice and service.

It urges us to work for ecological well-being,
for the protection and sharing of natural resources,
and to engage in efforts to limit harm to our planet.

It also urges us to be involved with people
in human and spiritual development
through education, catechesis, shared prayer, visitation
and in the building of the Christian community.

Our compassionate care of the sick,
and our patient endurance of suffering,
in union with our crucified Lord
are fruitful ministries of mercy.
Inspired by Catherine’s reverence for people,
and her particular insight into the role of woman,
we proclaim and uphold the dignity of all -
persons and peoples at all stages of life.

44. As Sisters of Mercy we have a special tradition of serving in the local church. *Local Church*
In our various ministries we collaborate with the bishop, clergy and laity and with other religious institutes.
- Together with associates and co-workers, we collaborate with all who make the Gospel of justice and healing live in today's world.
45. Belonging to the universal Church, missionary in its very nature, *Universal Church*
we seek to incarnate the mercy of God, in outreach to developing societies, in service to migrants and refugees, and in action to eliminate poverty, according to the limits of our resources.
46. In discerning God's design for our apostolates we prayerfully consider together *Reviewing Ministries*
the needs of our times, Catherine's preferential love for the poor, the cry of the suffering earth, the call of the universal and local church, and our own talents, resources and limitations.
- In the light of this discernment we frequently reassess our present ministries, being open to the possibility of withdrawal from some and ready to accept new forms of mercy apostolate.
47. The Congregational Chapter *Approval*
evaluates our apostolic activities and promotes the exploration and adoption of new areas of mercy outreach.
- The Congregational Leader and Team ensure that the sisters are suitably trained for their various ministries.

48. Every sister shares in the mission of the Congregation.

*Sharing and
Growth in
Mission*

As we grow in apostolic holiness
we give witness in our lives
to the compassionate word we proclaim
and become, in truth, Sisters of Mercy.
Acknowledging our own human weakness
we recognise that it is only through God's mercy
that we can, in turn, be merciful.

The sisters warmly support
and encourage one another
in their various expressions of mercy,
and find in their life together
the joy of mercy given and mercy received.

CHAPTER 3

FORMED IN MERCY

49. Our response to the call to *the Mercy Way of Life* is accomplished gradually, through a life-long process of encounter with the God of love who is rich in mercy, and with the experience of consecrated life imbued with the charism, heritage and mission of the Sisters of Mercy. *Gradual Process*
50. By our understanding of and esteem for our *Mercy Way of Life*, by seeking integrity in word and deed, by sharing our lives with those around us and by praying the Lord of the harvest, we foster vocations to our Congregation, in co-operation with the God who calls. *Vocations*
51. In discerning a vocation to the *Mercy Way of Life* and observing the norms of universal law, a desire to love God and God's poor ones, an ability to live in community, and an appropriate human and spiritual maturity are deemed necessary. *Suitability*

Path to Membership

52. The path to membership is a gradual one with three successive formative stages – pre-novitiate, novitiate and temporary profession – in order to discern and foster God's action in each new sister. It culminates in perpetual profession. *Stages*

53. The formative programme follows the directives of the Holy See, and is adapted as far as possible to the needs of the individual, to particular and local circumstances and is open to periodic revision.

Programme

54. The directress shall in her own life give witness to a deep love for God and for all who are in pain, want or misery. She shall have experience of the *Mercy Way of Life*, an understanding of human and spiritual growth, and an ability to relate appropriately with those participating in the programme. Having the qualities of wisdom and compassion, of gentleness and firmness, she will seek to recognise and respect the working of God's grace in each new candidate. She shall be suitably prepared for this ministry and be perpetually professed as described in the Congregational Statutes.

Qualities of Directress

The directress is responsible for overseeing the spiritual and cultural training of the individual. She guides and accompanies her on the journey to a deeper awareness of God's faithful love, to a knowledge of our Mercy life and heritage, to an understanding of the evangelical counsels, and to a response to the cry of the poor in our world, calling forth the individual's unique talents and grace.

Ministry of Directress

She assists the individual to grow in personal responsibility, to relate with others in community and to test the authenticity of her call to Mercy.

55. Co-operation with the formative process is the responsibility of the person seeking admission. The members of the community support her by the witness of their own faithfulness to growth and on-going formation, by sharing with her their spiritual and mercy experience, and by remaining true to the spirit of our Foundress, Catherine McAuley. *Personal Responsibility and Community Support*
56. The formation personnel are appointed, and the formative programme is approved, by the Congregational Leader with the consent of her Team as prescribed in the Congregational Statutes. *Appointment of Personnel and approval of Programme*
- Pre-novitiate*
57. Pre-novitiate is a preliminary time of introduction to the *Mercy Way of Life* and of guidance into a life of prayer. The candidate is helped to reflect on the nature of God's personal call to her, and to make a responsible decision in choosing to become a Sister of Mercy, in accordance with the Statutes. *Pre-novitiate*
- Novitiate*
58. At the end of the pre-novitiate the candidate requests admission to the novitiate. If considered ready and after due consultation the Congregational Leader may admit the candidate to novitiate according to the Congregational Statutes. *Admission to Novitiate*
59. Each individual shall have a period of retreat before entering the novitiate and before making temporary profession. *Retreat*

60. The novitiate programme concentrates on the meaning of the consecrated vowed life. Through meditation on the Word of God, through participation in the liturgy, through personal prayer and reflection the novice is invited to deepen her personal relationship with Christ and to grow in self-knowledge and Christian virtue. She is helped to assimilate the spiritual heritage of the Congregation and appreciate its mission in the world.

*Novitiate
Formation*

61. The duration of the novitiate is two years. The Congregational Leader may dispense from the second year or any part of it. The canonical period of one year required for validity shall be spent in a novitiate community designated in writing by the Congregational Leader with the consent of her Team. The canonical period is invalid if the novice, at intervals or continuously, is absent for more than three months. An absence of fifteen days or more must be made good.

*Duration of
Novitiate*

Responsibility for this period is reserved to the directress of novices under the authority of the Congregational Leader and Team.

62. One or more periods of apostolic service may be integrated into the novitiate programme according to the norms of universal law. These periods help the novice to develop a love and compassion for all in pain or need, and help her to assess the demands of the *Mercy Way of Life*. When these periods are spent outside the novitiate community the novice remains under the authority of the directress of novices.

*Apostolic
Formation*

63. The novice is free to withdraw at any time from the Congregation. She may be asked to leave by the Congregational Leader after due consultation. *Leaving the Novitiate*
- Temporary Profession*
64. At the end of the novitiate the novice requests admission to temporary profession. The Congregational Leader, after due consultation and with the consent of her Team, admits the novice to temporary profession. For a good reason the novitiate may be prolonged but not beyond six months. *Admission to Temporary Profession*
65. By temporary profession the novice becomes a member of the Congregation and takes on the privileges and responsibilities of our common life and mission. *Temporary Profession*
- For the love of Christ, she willingly professes public vows of chastity, poverty and obedience within the life and mission of this Congregation according to its Constitutions, and in preparation for perpetual profession.
- Her act of profession is received by the Congregational Leader, or her delegate, in the name of the Church.
66. Temporary profession is ordinarily made for a period of not less than three years and not more than six years as specified in the Congregational Statutes. *Duration of Temporary Profession*
- For good reasons the Congregational Leader with the consent of her Team may allow a sister to renew temporary profession for a further period, provided that the total time in temporary profession does not exceed nine years.

67. The formative process during temporary profession continues the process provided during the novitiate. It combines professional and apostolic training with continuing growth in holiness and shall include experience of community life.
- Formation of temporary Professed*
- Under the guidance of her directress the sister is helped to develop her potential and to integrate prayer, work and leisure in the fullness of the *Mercy Way of Life*.
68. The temporary professed sister is free to leave when the term of her profession has expired, or to request dispensation from her vows. The Congregational Leader, after due consultation and with the consent of her Team, for just reasons, may refuse renewal of profession or admission to perpetual profession, or, for a serious matter, initiate a dismissal process of the temporary professed member.
- Separation*
- Perpetual Profession*
69. When ready to do so, after prayer and discernment, the sister freely requests admission to perpetual profession. The Congregational Leader, after due consultation and with the consent of her Team, grants the request if the sister is judged suitable.
- Admission to Perpetual Profession*
- The Congregational Leader or her delegate, receives the perpetual vows of the sister in the name of the Church.
70. Perpetual profession is preceded by a designated period of retreat in an atmosphere of prayer and reflection.
- Retreat*

71. Perpetual profession in our Congregation is a definitive offering of oneself to God in a life-giving consecrated relationship resembling the union of Christ and the Church.

Perpetual Profession

By perpetual profession we enter into a permanent covenant with God with our sisters and with the Church, expressing our desire to persevere until death in the *Mercy Way of Life*.

Trusting in God's fidelity to us and the gift of the Spirit within us we desire to live in fidelity to God all the days of our life, witnessing to God's steadfast love and mercy from generation to generation.

72. The Act of Public Profession of Vows shall include the following expression of commitment:

*Heavenly Father,
In the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
and under the protection of our Lady of Mercy,
I(N), guided by your Holy Spirit,
freely choose the Christian way of life in the Church
which is sealed by the evangelical counsels,
and vow to you Lord God
perpetual* chastity, poverty and obedience
according to the Constitutions
of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy.*

Act of Profession

*I dedicate myself entirely to you,
and resolve to live the Mercy Way of Life,
in a community of love
imbued with the grace and mission of mercy,
especially to the poor and marginalised.*

*May your loving kindness which endures forever
and the prayers of the Church and of my sisters
support me until you have completed
what you have begun in me today.
I ask you(N) Congregational Leader/delegate
of this Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy
to accept my vows in the name of the Church,
on this day of
in the year of our Lord
(for one/three years.....etc.)

Life-Long Formation

73. Throughout the whole of our lives
God continues to call and form us
in the image of Jesus, the beloved Son.
By a continual conversion and response
to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit
we gradually become who we are – Sisters of Mercy.

*Formation
Continues*

On-going formation fosters and supports
our continuing growth in Christ
through which we become ever more
compassionate channels of mercy,
faithful to the spirit of Catherine McAuley.

74. Each succeeding stage of life
brings a new invitation to leave all
and follow Christ.
At each stage we witness in a new way
to our confidence in God’s loving kindness
and to the promise of eternal life.

75. The Congregational Leader bears special responsibility
for growth and renewal in the Congregation.

Responsibility

Local communities shall avail of opportunities
for spiritual and personal renewal,
and for the development of professional
and other skills to meet the social and pastoral needs
of our evolving and changing world.

CHAPTER 4

UNITED FOR MERCY

Governance and Leadership

76. Called, formed, consecrated and sent in Mercy we are sustained in unity of heart and mind by the service of governance and leadership.

*Mercy
Congregation*

Our Congregation is one juridic entity. Its structure consists of a network of formal units – local communities and branches. The nature of authority exercised in each unit is determined in the Constitutions and Statutes.

77. As a Congregation of Pontifical Right we observe the norms of the Holy See and respect the ultimate authority of the Holy Father.

*In Union with
Church*

Working in collaboration with people of good will we serve and promote the life and mission of the Church, with due regard to the special character and charism of our Congregation.

78. Members live in faithfulness to Catherine McAuley's legacy of 'union and charity', to service among people in poverty or distress, and to active concern for our Common Home.

Members

Members seek to embody the Congregation's life and mission, with openness and generosity, with flexibility and mobility, reverencing the community-of-all-life locally and globally, in humble awareness of our place in the evolving universe.

Members live in local communities as circumstances indicate, and belong to branches established in various international settings.

79. The gentle, merciful spirit of Catherine McAuley pervades the ministry of leadership within the Congregation. This service is exercised in the spirit of the Gospel, through dialogue, consultation and subsidiarity in accordance with universal and proper law.

Approved by the Church, and according to our charism, designated authority is held by those duly elected or appointed to constitutional or ministry roles. Delegated authority is exercised as described in the Congregational Statutes.

Leadership is a pastoral ministry of love, uniting, guiding and animating the Congregation. It calls forth a form of governance where the principles of collegiality, delegation, respect, and co-responsibility are valued and fostered. Members and leaders together engage in personal and communal discernment.

Leaders call members to respond, with others, to the spiritual, social and ecological concerns of our time, in creative fidelity to our heritage. Leaders seek to develop a life-giving environment where prayer, human development, inner freedom and communion is encouraged among the sisters.

Honouring our differing capacities and locations, the mission of compassionate presence and prayer is a graced and cherished ministry among us. Respecting the dignity and uniqueness of each member, equality, kindness, inclusivity and mutual support are the hallmarks of our Mercy relationships in Christ Jesus.

The pastoral and prophetic ministry of leadership in nurturing and deepening our communal life for mission, is supported by coordination of administrative services and/or the provision of external assistance, with due regard for necessary accountability and final responsibility, as described in the Congregational Statutes.

Our governance structures are rooted in integrity and respect, in justice and transparency, and in unswerving trust in divine providence.

80. The charism of the Congregation, animating all members, inspires and enables us to live-out the *Mercy Way of Life*. We commit our lives and resources to the service of all who suffer respecting and cherishing the earth, our Common Home.

Charism

Local Community

81. The vitality of the Congregation is reflected in the quality of our local life and mission. Formed by the Word, and immersed in the life of the Trinity, the charism of Mercy calls us, individually and collectively, to be committed and available to our Mercy communal life and ministry.

Witness

Members engage in the spiritual and corporal works of mercy seeking to be compassionate presence in all circumstances.

Each member commits to personal and communal prayer, to right relationships with God, self, and the community, the Church, the human family, and all creation.

*Member
Responsibility*

Our activities reflect the call of the Congregational Chapter in response to the movement of the Spirit in our times. Each sister participates, as far as possible, in the congregational discernment processes and actively supports their outcomes, in accordance with Congregational Statutes.

Each member, in a spirit of generosity and love, contributes to the up-building of our communal life in both local and branch settings. Every sister is supported by, and accountable to the Congregation, as determined in the branch directives.

All professed sisters have active and passive voice except where limited by universal or proper law and described in the Congregational Statutes.

82. Local Communities are groups of vowed members, committed in faith to the following of Christ, and to one another as Sisters of Mercy. The life of the local community is shaped by its members and by our Mercy charism. Through contemplation, discernment and mutual support, the local community seeks to be a prophetic voice of compassion and justice, and to be a witness to God's steadfast kindness in our evolving world.

*Local
Communities*

In a spirit of discernment and shared responsibility the local community determines its form of leadership, and distributes other roles as required according to the branch directives.

Leadership

Local leaders attend to the well-being of members, remind us of our shared values and commitments, and ensure the community's inter-connectedness within its branch, and within the Congregation.

Local communities are formed as required, according to intent, need, or circumstance as prescribed in the branch directives. Observing the provisions of Church Law, the local community is a constituent part of a branch. It is established, confirmed, modified or dissolved by the branch leadership as the situation requires, following consultation with membership and in accordance with the branch directives.

Established

Intermediate Governance

Branches

83. A Branch is a network of local communities, and is established with due regard for present and emerging circumstances.

A branch provides for the organizational needs of local communities and ministry, and maintains a high level of flexibility and subsidiarity, as appropriate.

Each branch fosters a sense of communal heart and mission. It seeks to shape and review the quality of community life, to be responsive to the signs of the times, and to influence the policies and direction of the Congregation through various participative means.

With an open and generous spirit, in the service of mercy mission, branches interrelate and share with each other through arrangements confirmed by the relevant branch leaders.

The number and parameters of branches are confirmed by the Congregational Leader and Team after due consultation and discernment, as determined in the Congregational Statutes, respecting the requirements of civil law where relevant.

In accordance with the branch directives, the Branch Leader may be elected by the branch membership and confirmed by the Congregational Leader and Team; or be appointed by the Congregational Leader and Team in consultation and discernment with the members. The term of office and number of team members are determined in the branch directives.

*Branch Leader
and Team*

The Leader of a branch is accountable to the Congregational Leader and Team according to the Constitutions and Congregational Statutes.

Within the branch, the leader and team exercise designated authority for the works of the charism, for the assignment and support of members, and for the care of material resources, as outlined in the Congregational Statutes.

The Branch Leader may receive delegated authority for other responsibilities as circumstances require, and may represent the Congregational Leader in religious and civil domains, as determined in the Congregational Statutes.

The Congregational Leadership Team, together with branch leadership promote and enable co-operation and unity among the branches and within the Congregation.

Communion

Congregational Governance

84. The Congregational Chapter, when in session, is the central unifying authority in the Congregation. It determines the direction and policies for life and mission in accordance with the Constitutions and Statutes. It elects the Congregational Leader and Team, it evaluates the quality of our religious life together and promotes the charism of the Congregation.

Chapter

Chapter is a special instrument of unity and renewal with which all members are invited to engage. Through it we reflect on our fidelity to the Gospel, on the spirit and legacy of our Foundress and on the call to mercy within the current reality and the changing profile of membership.

The Chapter is convoked every six years unless otherwise decided by the previous Chapter, and as determined in the Congregational Statutes. The Congregational Leader, with the consent of the Team determines the date and place, and presides at its sessions.

Term

Should the office of Congregational Leader become vacant, the Chapter is convoked immediately by the Assistant Leader and, if possible, held within six months, unless a Congregational Chapter is due within one year.

Representative of all members, chapter is composed of ex-officio members and elected delegates, as prescribed in the Congregational Statutes.

Composition

The Congregational Leader and Team, are ex-officio members of the Chapter. The number of elected delegates constitute at least two-thirds of the chapter membership.

The Chapter approves and amends Congregational Statutes and determines other governance matters for the Congregation. It approves the overall manner of financing and administering congregational funds and resources.

85. In a spirit of prayerful discernment, the Congregational Leader is elected by the Chapter for a term of six years, unless otherwise decided by the previous Chapter and as determined in the Congregational Statutes. She may be re-elected for one consecutive term only. She must be at least six years perpetually professed in the Congregation, be faithful to the Gospel and the Constitutions, and bear witness to the *Mercy Way of Life*.

Election of Leader

For the election of the Congregational Leader a two-thirds majority is required on the first and second ballots, and an absolute majority on the third and fourth ballots.

Only the two candidates with the highest number of votes in the fourth ballot are eligible for the fifth and final ballot. In the event of a tie the election is decided by drawing lots.

86. The Congregational Team consists of at least four members, *Team*
as prescribed in the Congregational Statutes.
Team members are elected one by one
with an absolute majority on first and second ballots,
and a relative majority on any further ballot.
- Members eligible to be elected
must be at least four years perpetually professed in the Congregation
and may be re-elected for a second consecutive term.
- The Assistant Leader is chosen by the Chapter *Assistant*
from among the already elected members.
For this choice, an absolute majority is required
on the first two ballots
and a relative majority on any further ballot.
- The Assistant governs the Congregation
should the office of Congregational Leader
become vacant or impeded.
- Should a vacancy arise on the Team
the Congregational Leader
with the remaining members of the Team,
acting collegially, elect a successor to fill the vacancy.
- Team members may be given specific responsibilities
with appropriate delegated authority.
87. The Congregational Leader exercises personal authority *Role of
Leader*
in leading all members, branches, and works
of the Congregation, in consultation with the Team,
in accordance with the Church's Universal Law, proper law
and the directives of congregational chapters.
- She, together with the Team,
constitutes the primary focus of unity
and leadership within the Congregation.
She maintains a high level of participative leadership
and delegates responsibility within the Team.

She confirms the shape and nature of branches after due consultation and with the consent of the Team, as prescribed in the Congregational Statutes. The Congregational Leader with the consent of the Team, and in consultation with the members of the branch, may establish, modify, or dissolve a branch.

She appoints or confirms sisters to positions of congregational responsibility, and to leadership roles in the branches.

She, or her delegate, makes a formal visitation of the branches as prescribed in the Congregational Statutes.

The Congregational Leader acts with the consent or advice of the Team on all matters specified in the Church's Universal law or proper Law.

88. Conscious of Christ's boundless love and mercy, aware of the interconnectedness of all life, and concerned for the wide-spread pain of our earth community, the Congregational Leader and Team encourage members to be a compassionate presence in our differing realities, and seek to enliven the spirit of 'union and charity' left us by Catherine McAuley.

*Leader
and Team*

Listening to the voice of membership, and to the call of our charism, they facilitate the engagement of all members in works of mercy, in congregational, inter-congregational, in local and global contexts.

The Congregational Leader and Team regularly gather the leaders of branches to promote unity, discernment and the culture of mercy throughout the Congregation.

They have final responsibility for congregational assets and the approval of internal budgets.

The Congregational Leader, with the consent of the Team, appoints the Congregational Secretary and Treasurer according to the Congregational Statutes.

Administration of Material Goods

89. We value the resources of the earth as gifts of God for the common good receiving them in a spirit of reverence and accountability. We support one another and our mission through our work and resources, and willingly share whatever we have.

In the spirit of consecrated poverty we commit to supporting people in need and to care for our Common Home, by living a simple life-style while prudently holding concern for our future.

Spirit of Poverty

For the sake of our Mercy mission, the Congregation has the right to acquire, retain, administer and alienate material goods within the bounds established by the Church's Universal Law, proper law and civil law.

Congregational funds and resources are held for the support of the mission of the Congregation, for our common life, and for charitable activities, within the Church's Universal Law and civil law. The management of funds reflect our commitment to ethical and eco-friendly practices and policies.

Mission

The financial policies and directives of the Congregation are determined by the Congregational Leader with the consent of the Team, following competent advice as appropriate, and in accordance with directives of the Chapter. The principles of good governance, and the requirements of canon and civil Law, determine the modalities for the ownership and administration of material goods, as described in the Congregational Statutes.

Policies

For the sake of the common good, leaders and members, according to their roles, hold responsibility for the proper management of the material goods entrusted to their care.

Authority

The ultimate authority and responsibility for the administration of such goods is reserved to the Congregational Leader and Team in accordance with the Church's Universal law, our proper law and civil law.

90. The limits of ordinary and extraordinary administration are set by the Congregational Leader with the consent of the Team. In matters of alienation and other transactions which might endanger our Congregation's patrimony, incur debts or other obligations, the written permission of the Congregational Leader with the consent of the Team is required for validity.

Limits

The permission of the Holy See is required when the value of the transaction exceeds the limit set for the area.

Separation

91. Any separation from the Congregation is preceded by careful discernment and carried out with dignity, kindness and respect. In all forms of separation the procedure required by canon law is observed.

A sister in perpetual vows may transfer from our Congregation to another institute with the permission of the congregational leaders of both institutes and the consent of their teams.

Transfer

The permission of the Holy See is required to transfer to a Secular Institute or Society of Apostolic life, or to transfer from one of these into our Congregation.

The duration of the probation period is at least three years.

Its manner is determined in the Congregational Statutes.

92. For grave reasons the Congregational Leader with the consent of the Team may grant exclaustation for up to five years to a perpetually professed member.

Exclaustation

For grave reasons, a sister in temporary vows may be granted an indult to leave by the Congregational Leader with the consent of the Team.

Separation

An indult of departure for a sister in perpetual vows is reserved to the Holy See and granted for very grave reasons only.

In the case of dismissal of a sister, or of a sister who has decided to leave, the procedures required by canon law shall be followed.

Respecting the requirements of canon law and the resources of the Congregation, our support for those who separate from us is marked by equity and appreciation, and we continue to hold them in our prayer and affection.

Proper Law

93. These Constitutions are the primary code of our Proper Law. A two-third majority vote in the Congregational Chapter and the permission of the Holy See are required to change them.

The final interpretation of the Constitutions is reserved to the Holy See.

The Congregational Statutes are the secondary code, and are enacted by the Congregational Chapter. This code may be amended by an absolute majority vote in Chapter.

The Congregational Leader, with the consent of the Team promulgates policies and directives, applicable to all or certain parts of the Congregation, addressing formation, financial stewardship, integrity in ministry and other significant matters.

Where necessary, a process of mediation may assist in the resolution of conflict.

94. The Congregational leader and Team give practical Interpretation of the Constitutions, and within the limits of authority, may dispense a sister, a local community, a branch or the entire Congregation from the disciplinary norms of proper law.

END



Congregational Statutes

Approved by the Extraordinary General Chapter July 2022
Approved by the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life
on the 24th September 2023

CHAPTER TWO

Sent in Mercy

12. Places of residence are approved by the Branch Leader and Team according to the needs of life and mission, following consultation with sisters involved.

32. After at least fifteen years in perpetual profession, a sister may renounce patrimony and/or her right to acquire property. The renunciation is formally made in a document valid in civil law.

CHAPTER THREE

Formed in Mercy

54. The directress of formation shall be at least three years professed in this Congregation.

56. The Congregational Leader following consultation with the Branch Leadership appoints the formation personnel and approves the formative programme with the consent of the Team (Council).

57. The duration of the Pre-novitiate period is between six months and two years.

58. The Congregational Leader may delegate to the Branch Leader the authority to admit a candidate to the novitiate where appropriate.

66. Temporary Profession may be renewed for periods of one or more years within the length of three to six years.

CHAPTER FOUR

United for Mercy

79. The specifics and limits of delegated authority are given in writing.

A common/centralised structure(s), managed with external expertise/assistance, may be established by the Congregational Leader with the consent of the Team, for the purpose of co-ordinating and providing administrative services and functions for the Congregation and the Branches.

Administrative
Structure

Local Community

81. Each member familiarises herself with the approved policies of the Congregation. She observes the national and universal norms of the Church on integrity and best practice.

Sisters in temporary vows do not have voting rights in Chapter.

Intermediate Governance

83. A Branch is a network of local communities established by the Congregational Leadership. It is not a juridic entity.

Consultation with membership to consider and propose various options regarding the number, shape and nature of branches, shall precede the final decision for their establishment by the Congregational Leader and Team.

Following consultation with members, the Branch Leader and team provide for the internal functioning of the branch, for the oversight of local communities, for access to any common administrative centre and for the drawing up of branch directives.

Branch directives are approved by the Congregational Leader and Team.

A Branch Leader has designated authority for the constitutional tasks of the role. The position is not equivalent to that of a canonical major superior.

A Branch Leader may be given delegated authority from the Congregational Leader for further tasks.

Having regard to practical considerations, and following due consultation, the Congregational Leader and Team determine the limits of delegated authority given to a branch leader regarding ministry, formation, finance, property, local visitation and other relevant matters, appropriate to the particular circumstances of the Branch.

Limits

The Congregational Leader and Team with the Congregational Treasurer determine the time-scale for reporting and accountability.

Leaders of branches support and facilitate the implementation of congregational chapter decisions.

Congregational Governance

84. A Chapter may decide by a two/third majority to shorten the interval between Chapters. Such a change does not become operative until after the following term of six years.

Chapter

The term of office of the Congregational Leader and Team is likewise determined to be co-terminus with the interval between chapters.

The Congregational Leader formally convokes the Congregational Chapter at least one year before the opening date. She announces the date and place, the number of delegates and denotes the particular reports to be furnished to the Chapter.

With the consent of her Team the Congregational Leader may appoint the congregational secretary and treasurer as ex-officio members.

The number of delegates to be elected is decided by the Congregational Leader with the consent of the Team. It shall be representative of the whole Congregation.

Delegates

The Congregational Leader and Team may use an appropriate means to add up to five extra members as delegates, to ensure representative balance according to criteria of mission, equity, and proportionality.

The election of delegates shall ordinarily be completed and published at least six months before the opening of Chapter.

Other persons may be invited to participate in Chapter without voting rights, as determined by the Congregational Leader and Team.

The Chapter preparatory committee is appointed by the Congregational Leader and Team to co-ordinate the work of preparation, including the election of delegates. Delegates are elected from an open panel in at least two phases, facilitated by a committee(s).

Preparatory
Committee

In consultation with the Congregational Leader and Team the preparatory committee prepares the agenda, methods of participation and timetable for the Chapter sessions, to be presented to the Chapter for approval. Draft documents for the Chapter are made available to sisters, who may submit their signed suggestions to the committee.

In advance of the Chapter, the preparatory committee sets up processes of discernment within the Congregation for securing a list of nominations for the offices of Congregational Leader and Team. The list is made available to all members.

The Congregational Leader presides at the formal opening of Chapter. The relevant norms are read and the roll is called. At least two-thirds of the capitulars must be present. Scrutineers are elected; facilitators and secretaries are approved. The rules of procedure are presented and voted on.

Opening

The Congregational Leader presents a Report on the life, mission and concerns of the Congregation. Reports on financial affairs and formation are also presented.

86. The Congregational Chapter determines the number of members on the Congregational Team.

Team

The election of Team members takes place at a time determined by the Chapter, and presided over by the newly elected Leader.

Team members observe confidentiality regarding matters pertaining to their role.

87. The Congregational Leader and Team, in discernment with the members determine the configuration of branches across the whole Congregation. Branches

After due consultation with members the Congregational Leader and Team continually evaluate the appropriate structural configuration of the Congregation.

- The Congregational Leader or her delegate makes a formal visitation of each branch at least once during her term of office. Visitation

88. The Congregational Secretary is appointed for a set term, renewable, and shall have responsibility for preserving all documents, records and archives, relating to the administration and history of the Congregation. Secretary

- The Congregational Treasurer is appointed for a set term, renewable, and shall have oversight of and responsibility for all finance and property matters. Treasurer
The Treasurer ensures the appropriate protection of assets and the preservation of deeds, titles and trustee lists according to universal, proper law, and civil law.

The Treasurer presents a regular report on financial affairs to the Congregational Leader and Team as required by canonical and civil regulations.

Administration of Material Goods

89. In certain circumstances specific branches may be delegated to acquire, administer and alienate certain material goods as determined by the Congregational Leader with the consent of the Team. Delegation
- The Congregational Leader, with the advice of the Team, approves the limits of internal expenditure in each branch following consultation with its leader and team.
- The Congregational Leader with the consent of her Team determines the manner of administration of resources, approves any formal financial administrative entity, and sets the limits of congregational expenditure by leaders, sisters, or appointees in areas of responsibility, in accordance with canonical and civil norms Approval
- Financial policies and directives shall reflect the values of accountability, transparency, oversight and highest ethical standards in the administration of material goods. Standards
- A Civil Constitution may be adopted, by the Congregational Leader and Team for the appropriate administration of Trusts, Companies, Charities or other civil entities established by the Congregation. Civil
90. Upon the winding up of any civil Trust/Company/Charity, the Congregational Leader with the consent of the Team shall determine the distribution of remaining material goods to other Charities in harmony with our charism, according to the provisions of canon law and civil law. Wind-up

Separation

91. A sister who wishes to transfer from another congregation to our Congregation is assigned to a branch by the Congregational Leader with the consent of the Team following consultation with the branch leadership.

Transfer

END

APPENDIX I.

MATTERS ON WHICH THE CONSENT OF HER TEAM IS REQUIRED BY THE CONGREGATIONAL LEADER in accordance with Canon Law

- 1.** Admission of sisters to perpetual profession.
- 2.** Transfer of sisters to or from the congregation.
- 3.** Allowing a sister in temporary vows to return to secular life.
- 4.** Re-admission of a sister who has legitimately left the congregation and the determination of the type and length of preparation needed in such re-admission.
- 5.** Permission to live outside the congregation in the circumstances permitted by universal law. (Exclaustration)
- 6.** Appointment to, or, for grave reasons, the removal from office of the congregational treasurer or the congregational secretary.
- 7.** Acceptance of the resignation of a congregational team member, congregational treasurer, congregational secretary.
- 8.** Appointment of a sister to fill a vacancy on the congregational team until the next congregational chapter.
- 9.** Establishment, modification or dissolution of intermediate structures.
- 10.** Approval of accounts of the congregational treasurer and the making of contracts in the name of the congregation.
- 11.** Approval of extraordinary expenditure or alienation to be undertaken by the Congregational leadership team.
- 12.** Approval of any expenditure or alienation, which is outside of their competency, to be undertaken by Branch leadership team.

- 13.** Purchase of property, construction of new buildings or notable extension to existing buildings.
- 14.** The granting of permission to a sister to renounce patrimony and/or her right to acquire property (Constitution 32, Statutes 32).
- 15.** Other important matters specified in Canon Law or in our proper law.

APPENDIX II.

GLOSSARY

ABSENCE: The permission given to a member by the Congregational Leader, with the consent of the Team, to live apart from the Congregation for an extended period of time for a just cause; or an absence of more than one year, can be granted in cases of sickness, the pursuit of studies, or the exercise of an apostolate in the name of the Congregation.

ACTIVE VOICE: The right to vote in an election. **PASSIVE VOICE:** The right to be a candidate (voted for or against) in an election. Although some institutes give active voice to members in temporary profession, it is not considered feasible to give them passive voice, since they have not yet made a permanent commitment of themselves to the particular institute.

ADMINISTRATIONS (of Goods): Transactions involved in acquiring and managing temporal goods. Ordinary administration involves transactions which are not beyond those authorised by approved budgets and guidelines. The statutes of the Congregation must express limits and procedures for the authorisation of extraordinary acts of administration.

ALIENATION (of Property): The transfer of ownership of temporal goods to someone else. Property owned by public juridic persons (PJP) in the Church is ecclesiastical property, and can be alienated only with the necessary authorization in order to protect the patrimony of the institutes/congregation.

APOSTOLIC SEE: A term referring not only to the Holy See and the Sovereign Pontiff, but also to the Secretary of State, and other offices and secretariats.

AUTHORITY - Designated: The normal authority, within the limits of the office, for the role to which one is appointed or elected. Designated authority lasts for the term of office.

AUTHORITY - Delegated: This is added authority for tasks which are not normally within the role to which one has been appointed or elected. It is given for a specific task, in writing and time bound.

BRANCH: The name given to an intermediate unit of our Congregation. A Branch comprises a designated network of local communities and does not have major canonical status.

Cession (of Administration): A juridic act by which the administration of personal property is turned over to another party who is willing to assume the obligations. This is effected through a document similar to the power of attorney. Religious must complete cession papers before first profession.

CHAPTER (Congregational): The highest extraordinary authority in a religious institute. Except in very small institutes, this representative body is composed of ex officio and elected members. It functions collegially and is charged with preserving the spiritual patrimony of the institute, renewing the life and mission of the congregation according to that patrimony, electing the Congregational Leader, and dealing with the major affairs affecting all.

COLLEGIAL: In the canonical sense, acting with equal right or authority. A chapter is a collegial group. Canon 699 requires a Congregational Leader and Team who do not normally operate as a collegial group “to proceed in collegial fashion” in weighing evidence for the dismissal of a member. In this case a Team must comprise at least four members.

COMMON LIFE: Having material goods in common, living in dependence on the Congregation, observing the common norms for life and mission prescribed in the Constitutions.

COMMUNAL LIFE: The experience of sharing life together, of common prayer, of mutual support and committed relationships, rooted in the Gospel, for the sake of the mission and ministry of mercy.

CONGREGATIONAL LEADER (Supreme Moderator): The major superior or moderator who has authority in the whole institute, its branches, houses, and members according to proper law.

COMPETENT AUTHORITY: A designated person or group having the authority to act validly according to law in particular situations (a diocesan bishop, a Congregational Leader, a general chapter, etc.)

CONSENT (of the Team): A positive vote by a majority of the team members required in certain cases for valid action by a Leader. This consent is sometimes called deliberative vote. In contrast, “hearing the team” requires that the team members at least be consulted before action is taken.

When consent for an action is given by a team, a leader is not thereby bound to act on it. In other words, the team cannot bind the leader to act, but only not to act.

CONSTITUTIONS: The primary book of proper law by which the Congregation is governed. It contains the expression of the institute's nature, purpose, and spirit, its way of formation, incorporation, living and governance. Constitutions are often supplemented by other collections called statutes, directives.

DEPARTURE: The definitive separation from an institute of consecrated life, formerly called secularization. An indult of departure carries the dispensation from vows and the cessation of all rights and obligations flowing from incorporation.

DISMISSAL: A juridic procedure by which a member's incorporation in an institute of consecrated life is terminated on the initiative of the institute. This may be done only for very grave causes, which are also external, imputable, and juridically proven. A decree of dismissal must be confirmed by competent ecclesiastical authority before it has effect.

DISPENSATION: A relaxation of the law, granted by competent ecclesiastical authority, such as in the case of impediments which would invalidate entrance to the novitiate. Dispensation from vows follows from legitimately granted indults of departure from religious life or from decrees of dismissal.

EXCLAUSTRATION: A temporary form of separation from a religious institute. The vows remain, but the individual is exonerated from the obligations which cannot be observed in the new form of life. Active and passive voice is lost.

IMPEDIMENTS: Conditions which would invalidate, or make illicit, one's admission into a religious institute (such as age, a marriage or other sacred bond). Dispensation from the impediment must be sought before admission.

INCORPORATION: The act by which an individual becomes a member of an institute. This is effected through the profession of the evangelical counsels. Rights and obligations according to universal and proper law follow from incorporation.

MAJOR LEADERS (Major Superiors): Those who govern a whole institute, a province or equivalent part, or who govern autonomous houses such as abbeys or priories and their vicars.

PATRIMONY: The temporal patrimony includes all of the goods in funds, properties, securities or any other material goods which belong to an institute. The spiritual patrimony concerns the nature, purpose, spirit, charism and character of the institute according to the intent of the foundress, and the institute's sound traditions.

PONTIFICAL INSTITUTE: An institute erected by the Apostolic See or approved by it through formal decree. As pontifical, the institute is immediately and exclusively under the jurisdiction of the Apostolic See in matters of internal governance and discipline.

PROBATION: The time of formation and discernment prior to formal incorporation in an institute. Initial probation in religious institutes is called novitiate. The transfer process calls for a minimum of three years' probation in the new institute.

PROFESSION: The formal act by which religious assume observance of the three evangelical counsels by public vows, and are thus consecrated to God through the ministry of the Church and incorporated into the Congregation with the consequent rights and obligations.

PROPER LAW: The law of an institute of consecrated life, including as a principal code, the fundamental law or Constitutions and other collections of statutes or norms by which the institute is governed.

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE: An institute of consecrated life in which members, according to proper law, pronounce public vows and lead a community life in common.

RENUNCIATION: A legal act by which a religious gives up personal ownership of monies, of goods, in favour of the institute or some other person or group.

TEAM (Council): A body of advisors whose role is to assist those in governing offices. In cases designated in universal and proper law, their consent or counsel is necessary for validity of acts.

SEPARATION: A general term for the various forms of being temporarily or permanently removed from the life of an institute. This may take the form of transfer, exclaustation (religious only), departure, or dismissal.

SIMPLE OR ABSOLUTE MAJORITY: More than half of the valid votes cast.

SUBSIDIARITY: The principle of subsidiarity was one of the ten guiding principles in the revision of the code of Canon Law. Simply expressed, it means that decisions would be made at the appropriate level.

SUPPRESSION: A legal act by which the existence of a house, province, or institute is terminated as a juridic entity.

TRANSFER: The canonical process by which a perpetually professed or incorporated member of one institute changes her membership to another institute. After a period of probation, a new profession is required, except between autonomous monasteries of the same institute, or federation, or confederation.

UNIVERSAL LAW: The Code of Canon Law applicable to the whole Church. Also termed Common Law.

VOTE: For a vote to be valid, it must be free (without fear, coercion or deceit), secret, certain, absolute and determinate (c 172). Canonical elections must be by secret ballot, and any one member of a chapter may request a secret ballot in decisive issues. Other less formal ways of voting may, validly, by common agreement, be used in carrying out chapter business.

