

CONGREGAZIONE
PER GLI ISTITUTI LA VITA CONSACRATA
E LE SOCIETÀ DI VITA APOSTOLICA
Prot 11. Ls. 5276/01

DECREE

"The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world" (Can 6: 51). With these words the Lord reveals the true meaning of the gift of his own life for all people. He also shows us the intimate compassion that he has for every person. He expresses through a deeply human feeling the saving intention of God for all, that they might obtain true life."

BENEDICT XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum
Caritatis*, no. 88.

Through a meeting in 1943 between Fr. Godfried Spiekman of the Congregation of the Most Holy Sacrament and the young Antoinette Golsteijn, a plan of Fr. Spiekman became a reality, a plan which was an adaptation to the times of an earlier idea of St. Peter Julian Eymard.

Based on the model of Mary in the Upper Room adoring her Son in the Eucharist, some women began to live their consecration in the world, making their lives the locus and instrument of the revelation of the love of Christ for each person. Their apostolate was carried out through activities

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proper to the laity and reached out to all people, above all to those who were further away from a sacramental life.

The little group worked from the beginning in the city of The Hague. It received its first approval as a Pious Union on 31 May, 1956 from Bishop Antonio Jansen, then Bishop of Rotterdam. Some years later, with a decree of 8 May 1963, Bishop Jansen erected *Servitium Christi* as a secular Institute of women. From that year the Institute spread into France, Belgium and England. In the following years it expanded not only in Europe but also to other continents.

On 30 March 2001, Bishop Adrian van Luyn, Bishop of Rotterdam, appreciating the valuable contribution which *Servitium Christi* made to the Church and expressing his positive evaluation of this very vital and solid group, asked the Holy See to grant pontifical recognition to the Institute.

After a careful examination of the life of the Institute, of the Constitutions which govern it and of the other documentation submitted, the Congress of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, meeting on 13 October, 2010, recognised the Institute *Servitium Christi* as worthy of being included among the secular Institutes of pontifical right.

Following the consent of the Holy Father, kindly manifested on 26 October 2010, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, with this Decree, elevates the secular Institute of women *Servitium Christi* to the status of pontifical right with all the rights and

obligations deriving from this and approves the revised text of its Constitutions, the prototype of which is conserved in the Archives of this Dicastery.

We entrust the Institute *Servitium Christi* to the protection of Mary, the Eucharistic woman, that each member might integrate in herself the full consecration of life according to the evangelical counsels and the full responsibility of her presence and transforming activity in the midst of the world. Looking at Mary, the woman of the *fiat*, may every consecrated woman be responsive to the voice of the Spirit, attentive to this voice manifested in people's lives and in the events of history. Together with Mary, woman of hope, may each member reflect the life of the Gospel beatitudes, welcoming each person as a sister or brother in Christ.

All things to the contrary notwithstanding.
Given at the Vatican, 9 December 2010

20 MAR. 2010

RULE OF LIFE
Secular Institute Servitium Christi

Official English text

February 2010



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RULE OF LIFE

Secular Institute Servitium Christi

Chapter 1 THE NATURE OF THE INSTITUTE

1. SERVITIUM CHRISTI

"Servitium Christi" is a secular Institute of Pontifical Right, founded in the spirit of and following the norms of the Apostolic Constitution *"Provida Mater Ecclesia"*.

Father Godefridus Spiekman, S.S.S. with Miss Antoinetta Golsteijn as co-foundress, founded the Secular Institute *"Servitium Christi"* on the 6th of January 1952 in The Hague, The Netherlands.

The Sacred Congregation for Religious granted the *"Nihil Obstat"* to the Statutes of *Servitium Christi* on 29th March 1963 and Mons. M.A. Jansen, the Bishop of Rotterdam — The Netherlands, canonically established *Servitium Christi* as a Secular Institute of Diocesan Right on 8th May 1963. Pontifical Right Status was granted by Holy See on 9th December 2010.

2. THE FOUNDERS

Inspired by Saint Peter Julian Eymard, the founder of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament and the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, Father Godefridus Spiekman, S.S.S., with the collaboration of Ms. Antoinetta Golsteijn, founded and established this Institute of consecrated laywomen in response to the needs of a secularising society.

The members of the institute are to draw inspiration from these committed people and shall spend time to study their lives.

3. THE MEMBERS

The members are women living in the world, dedicated to seek the perfection of charity in the service of God's Kingdom, for the honour of God, the building up of the Church and the salvation of the world, according to the spirituality of Saint Peter Julian Eymard.

They remain in their respective milieus while influencing the world with the gospel values by living an exemplary Christian life. Their life is an expression of the celebration of and prayer in the presence of the Eucharist.

In response to God's love and vocation, animated

and nourished by the gift of the Eucharist, members are bonded by vows and living in communion, to bring Christ's presence into the world, attentive to the needs of the human family.

Chapter 2 THE SPIRIT AND IDEAL

4. OUR CHARISM:

***"It was before the festival of the Passover, and Jesus knew that the hour had come for Him to pass from this world to the Father. He had always loved those who were his in the world, but now he showed how perfect his love was."*¹**

The history of God with humanity is a history of freely given love, manifested in the Incarnation and Redemption.

Christ, the Word made Flesh, shows this Love in giving Himself in the Eucharist and staying with us forever.

We wish to respond to this love by the gift of ourselves, living in the Church and in the world as consecrated lay women.

Jn. 13: 1

Servitium Christi manifests a special spirit of fellowship with the Congregations of the Blessed Sacrament and the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, because we share the same Eucharistic charism.

5. OUR IDEAL

Our ideal is to live the mystery of the Eucharist in all its dimensions, united with the gift of Christ Himself and following the spirituality of Saint Peter Julian Eymard.

His intense life of prayer and Eucharistic apostolate encourages us to live his spirit of love, so that God's Kingdom be realised both in the Church and in the world.

This gift of self is manifested by a bond to live a life of renunciation of self and of love to our fellow creatures.

By doing this, we take part in the Paschal Mystery of Christ.

Chapter 3 FOLLOWING CHRIST

6. OUR VOCATION: "*You did not choose Me, no, I chose you; and I*

***commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit,
fruit that will last.*** ⁿ²

Every vocation is a gift from God. Through our baptism He personally called each one of us to live our Christian life radically by giving ourselves.

This personal call to live a life in the secular institute can only be answered by dedicating ourselves through celibacy, placing ourselves radically and totally at the service of the Kingdom of God and the salvation of the world.

7. OUR CONSECRATION AND VOWS

Our consecration to God and the Church is our way of deepening our baptismal vows. We remain in the world while we live out our consecration by taking the vows of chastity in celibacy, poverty and obedience.³

By following the Lord's example in the evangelical counsels, we give witness to our total commitment to Christ and the Church.

Our Eucharistic Spirituality demands that we live

2 Jn. 15: 16
3 cf. Can. 573 §2

and work according to the spirit of love that Christ shows when He gives Himself to us in the Eucharist.

We want to freely answer God's love, which Christ shows us in the Eucharist by our consecration. We live this consecration as lay women in the midst of the world. In this way, we contribute to the world's transformation and salvation according to God's plan.

In making our vows according to the Rule of Life and the Statutes of the Secular Institute "Servitium Christi" we accept the obligations of this Rule of Life and commit ourselves to live them.

8. CHASTITY IN CELIBACY

"In the same way an unmarried woman, like a young girl, can devote herself to the Lord's affairs; all she need worry about is being holy in body and spirit."⁴

By the vow of chastity, we freely give our heart to God just as Christ did. In the Eucharist He gives

4 1 Cor, 7:34

Himself totally to God and to us.

We try to emulate Christ's gift of Self in accordance with the Spirit of Saint Peter Julian Eymard. Our vow of chastity in celibacy is a consequence of and a support in this spirit of self giving.

By professing chastity in celibacy we make ourselves available to serve His Kingdom in the world, looking forward to the fullness of the world to come in which "God will be all in all". Therefore we renounce marriage.

Our vow of chastity requires psychological and emotional maturity.

To live this commitment with inner freedom, we deepen our intimate union with Christ each day and strengthen our relationships with everyone, both inside and outside the Institute.

The love of Christ shall be reflected in the way we deal with and accept others, treating them as they are with respect, good will and warmth.

9. EVANGELICAL POVERTY

"Remember how generous the Lord Jesus

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was: He was rich but He became poor for your sake, to make you rich out of His poverty. ⁵

Following Christ's example, we love the Father with complete abandonment and trust, and we live a life of availability to others.

By the vow of poverty we use only those things in daily life, which are necessary in relation to our social status and a sober lifestyle. We practice hospitality, generously share our material and spiritual goods with others, learning to give and receive in a spirit of poverty.

In accordance with the nature of our Secular Institute, we retain full possession of our temporal goods, meeting our own needs and contributing to the needs of the Institute. Before making major financial decisions we consult with the Regional Directress.

To be poor for the love of Christ also means that according to our circumstances we shall accept and embrace our physical, social and spiritual limitations. We are ready to be questioned and to admit our failures and our lack of courage to change.

10. OBEDIENCE

"I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but to do the will of the One Who sent me."

By the vow of obedience we conform our own will to the will of God just as Christ did. He came to carry out the Father's will.

In obedience to our Rule of Life and the General Statutes, we accept the directives of our legitimate moderators in a climate of dialogue and a spirit of faith and trust in the Lord, keeping in mind the signs of the times.

As lay women living in the world, our obedience is characterised by availability, initiative and personal responsibility, all done with right discernment.

11. CONSECRATED SECULARITY

We live out our consecration as lay women in order to shape and sanctify the world from within, in our own local milieu, in our professional work or employment, and by our commitment in the local Church and in society.

Our vocation means: being like salt and yeast, always and everywhere at work in the world.

Consecrated Secularity asks us to seek and be witnesses of the Kingdom of God in the world, by using the means of the world and directing the things of the world according to the will of God.⁷

12. CONVERSION

"I will leave this place and go to my father and say: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.'"

We always want to live in a loving relationship with God and with one another, but, like the prodigal son, we recognise our sins and the need to change.

By His death and resurrection, Christ offers us reconciliation with His Father. At his invitation we frequently receive the sacrament of Reconciliation.

This experience of God forgiving us demands from us forgiveness for our neighbour and ourselves.

⁷ cf. LG 31
⁸ Lk. 15: 18

13. WITH MARY

"All these joined in continuous prayer, together with several women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers."⁹

The Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus and Mother of the Church, is our model for a life of consecration and total gift of self. She is intimately bound up in the redeeming work of Christ.

We honour Mary as the Servant of the Lord, with a love like that of the apostles, whom she lived and prayed with.

We place ourselves under her protection as Saint Peter Julian Eymard did, and we venerate her under the title of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament.

Chapter 4 OUR MISSION: "SERVITIUM CHRISTI"

"As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world, and for their sake consecrate myself so that they too may be

consecrated in truth" I° "for the life of the world."

14. PRAYER AND ACTION

In accordance with our charism and spirituality, the celebration and prayer in the presence of the Eucharist occupy the centre of our life.

To help us in our spiritual life, and taking into account our secular life, we commit ourselves to celebrate the Eucharist, pray in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, read the Scriptures, make an annual retreat and perform other spiritual exercises.¹²

Following the example of Jesus who washed the feet of his disciples, our Eucharistic prayer bears fruit in active service to people.

15. EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

"I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and that bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world."¹³

10 Jn. 17: 18- 19

11 cf. P.F.

12 cf. Can. 719. §§1 and 2

13 Jn. 6: 51

The celebration of the Eucharist, daily where possible," is the very centre, source and strength of our vocation to consecrated life.

In the Eucharistic Celebration we remember the life, passion, death and resurrection of the Lord and we enter into the dynamism of the Paschal Mystery.

16. ADORATION

"Every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father."¹⁵ "Be persevering in your prayers and be thankful as you stay awake to pray."¹⁶

Faithful to our charism, which received the approval of the Church, prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament is a priority in our life.

In this way, we lengthen our time of Eucharist every day for an hour in prayers of adoration, praise and thanksgiving, reconciliation and petition.

By this kind of prayer, we internalise the spirit of Jesus' gift of self, so that our whole life may become a Eucharistic service.

14 cf. Can. 719. §2

15 Phil. 2: 11 b

16 Col. 4: 2

This prayer, made in the name of and at the request of the Church, forms part of our mission.

We look upon it as an intercession during which we present to God the needs of the people, of the Church and of the world.

17. APOSTOLATE

"If I then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what have done to you."¹⁷

Our apostolate is exercised in the world, in ordinary daily life, in professional work, employment and social contacts.

The charism of our Institute challenges us to apostolic activities centred in the Eucharist, such as evangelisation, catechesis and the liturgy.

To follow Jesus' example we will look for ways to love and serve others, especially the poor, the sick and those living at the margins of our society.

We will pay attention to the needs of the Church and the world so as to contribute spiritually and materially to help solve their difficulties.

17 Jn. 13: 14 - 15

We are aware that our life and mission will be unfruitful unless we are continually nourished by encounters with the Lord and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 5 OUR COMMUNITY

"The fact that there is only one loaf means that, though there are many of us, we form a single body, because we all have a share in this one loaf."¹⁸

18. COMMUNITY OF CONSECRATED LAY WOMEN.

We have freely chosen to realise our vocation in this institute, as lay women, living by ourselves, with our respective families or in groups.¹⁹

However the spirit of communion prevails regardless of our proximity or distance from one another.

Christ is the force that gives us life; it is the source of and the power to live our consecration in the world in communion.

¹⁸ 1 Cor. 10: 17

¹⁹ cf. Can. 714

Because the Eucharist is the sacrament of unity in love, our Institute ought to be recognised by this mutual love among its members.

Every member accepts responsibility to create and maintain a good family spirit. A welcoming attitude, respect for each other's talents and an open and sincere dialogue will sustain the development of our vocation.

19. MEETING AND ENCOUNTER

Our communion is strengthened by our commitment to attendance at meetings, which are favourable times for review of life, permanent formation and mutual growth in faith and friendship, in a fraternal and cordial atmosphere of sharing.

This communion helps each individual member and the whole Institute *Servitium Christi* to be attentive to and involved in the weal and woe of society, the Church and other Secular Institutes.

Chapter 6 FORMATION

"He taught them many things in parables, and in the course of his teaching he said to them: "Listen!" 20

20. THE IMPORTANCE OF FORMATION

In God's plan each member has been called to this state of life with her personal goal and mission.

It is in Christian life that the continuing growth of the human person attains its true dimensions.

Through baptismal grace each member has her life project and will work on this with all her talents and capacities.

It is the responsibility of the Regional Directress and her Council, and of the members to promote formation, whether initial, extended initial or permanent.

21. FORMATORS *"... because he taught them with authority . . . 1121*

The main Formator is the Holy Spirit, waiting for the active response and participation of the candidates and members, who have been called into *Servitium Christi* and have to discern and decide.

The Regional Directress, with the consent of her

Council, appoints Directresses of Formation to guide candidates and members, especially in the initial and extended initial stages of formation. Their mandates cease at the election of a new Regional Council, but can be renewed.

The Directress of Formation guides and supports candidates and co-members on their specific way to perfection: in the process of growth in vocation, in consecrated life and into the community of *Servitium Christi*.

She respects the precious uniqueness of the person and consequently stimulates and challenges her in an open dialogue and a loving atmosphere.

When a candidate or member asks for incorporation, the Regional Directress shall consult the Directress of Formation before a decision is made.

Personal Spiritual Director

Apart from the support given by priests to the Directress of Formation, each member freely chooses a personal Spiritual Director to whom she may be able to regularly open her conscience with simplicity and confidence, to be guided properly in the ways of the Lord.

22. STAGES OF FORMATION

The candidate or member shall observe the following stages of formation:

1. A period of orientation of at least six months, which may result in admission.
2. An initial formation period of three years, leading towards first vows and temporary incorporation into the Institute.
3. After first consecration an extended initial formation for six years, in preparation for perpetual consecration.

Stages 2 and 3 could be prolonged by one and two years respectively at the most.

23. GUIDELINES OF FORMATION

The institute offers guidelines and a formation plan for the initial, extended initial and ongoing formation.

24. ONGOING FORMATION

Growth is a lifelong process, for which the person herself is primarily responsible.

The institute offers guidelines and programmes to promote ongoing spiritual growth of professed members, comprising lectures and reflections and

exchange of mutual experience in spiritual and social life.

25. THE SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT

The Spiritual Assistant supports and advises the Region/Centre to deepen the spirituality of the members and assist in the formation of candidates and members.

Chapter 7 INCORPORATION TO THE INSTITUTE

26. ADMISSION TO THE INSTITUTE

Candidates must have the following qualifications for admission.

1. They are Roman Catholics, and do not belong to a religious order or congregation, nor to another secular institute;
2. They have attained the age of majority according to the laws of their country. (The maximum age to be determined by the corresponding Regional Council in agreement with the General Council.)
3. They are celibates;
4. They are self-sufficient;

5. They have the physical, psychological and social qualities to live the ideal of the Institute;
6. They are prepared and willing to study (if possible) the official language of the Institute.

A person cannot validly be received into the Institute with any of the impediments given in Can. 721.

After the candidate has been in contact with the Institute for at least six months and she has become familiar with the life, the spirituality of and the obligations to the Institute, the candidate may freely submit a letter of request to the Regional Directress for admission to the Institute. The Regional Directress, with the consent of her Council, can admit her.

The admission is celebrated with a religious ceremony according to the Institute's ceremonial.

The mutual responsibilities according to the Rule of Life and the Statutes take effect from the day of admission.

After admission the candidate shall start to follow an initial formation programme, lasting for at least three years, leading towards temporary incorporation to the Institute.

The candidate herself or the Regional Directress, with the consent of her Council, may prolong the initial formation for a maximum period of one year.

27. FIRST INCORPORATION

At the end of the three years initial formation period, the candidate may freely submit a letter to be admitted to first consecration. The request must explicitly express the desire to bind oneself to the Institute and to live the ideal of *Servitium Christi*.

The Regional Directress with the consent of her Council may admit her if she shows sure signs that she is called and mature enough to embrace our way of life.

The member expresses her first incorporation by professing the vows of chastity in the celibate state, poverty and obedience, for the duration of one year.

This incorporation may be renewed each year for six years, after having requested in writing and having obtained approval from the Regional Directress with the consent of her Council.

During this period the member continues with her extended initial formation.

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The candidate and/or the Regional Directress,

with the consent of her Council, may prolong this period twice for one year. The period of temporary incorporation however shall not exceed eight years.

In case of non-approval of a candidate for permanent incorporation, that person must leave the Institute.²²

The member is accepted by the community and abides by all the requirements stipulated.

28. PERPETUAL INCORPORATION

After six years of extended initial formation, the member may freely submit a letter of request to the Regional Directress to be admitted to perpetual incorporation. The Regional Directress with the consent of her Council, after a due process of evaluation and discernment, may admit her.

Perpetual consecration is the definitive commitment by which the member incorporates herself forever to the service of God, the Church and the world.

22 cf. Can. 720

29 DEPARTURE FROM THE INSTITUTE

1. During the period of initial formation the bond with the Institute may be terminated at any time, either by the member herself or by the Regional Council for just and legitimate cause. This should be done in writing.²³
2. A temporarily incorporated member can freely leave the Institute when the time of incorporation is completed, or, for a grave reason she may freely request an indult to leave the Institute. The General Directress with the consent of her Council can grant this indult.²⁴
3. A member with perpetual incorporation, who wishes to leave the Institute, must, after seriously weighing the matter before the Lord, petition the Apostolic See through the General Directress.²⁵
4. To transfer to a religious Institute or to a society of apostolic life or from them to the Institute, the permission of the Apostolic See is required, whose instructions must be observed.²⁶
5. In cases of dismissal, provisions of Canon 729 are carefully followed.

The directress, who, by law is competent on the

23 cf. Can. 726. § 1

24 cf. Can. 726. §2

25 cf. Can. 727. §1

26 cf. Can. 730

matter shall proceed with patience, discernment and charity, as a pastor caring for her sister.

Chapter 8 AT THE SERVICE OF THE MEMBERS AND THE INSTITUTE

*"In Christ, we speak as men of sincerity, as envoys of God and in God's presence."*²⁷

30 GENERAL GOVERNANCE

The general government is the highest bond of unity in the Institute.

The general government is composed of the General Assembly when in session and the executive General Directress and her Council.

31 PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNANCE

The Governance of the Institute is performed, at the various levels, by appropriate authorities: by general assemblies and by directresses with their councils. When exercised in a spirit of service and collegiality it is of help to the members in their search for God and the fulfilment of their mission.

²⁷ 2 Cor. 2: 17b

In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity,

governance is carried out through a just decentralisation: each member, community and level of government has full responsibility to take the decisions that fall within one's competence, which are seen to be necessary for the accomplishment of one's tasks.

At all levels of government, authority is exercised by those, who are called and legitimately elected and/or appointed. Once elected or appointed, they obtain the appropriate rights, obligations and responsibilities at the service of the members and of the Institute, in personal responsibility, which originates in the vow of obedience.

Universal and proper law determines the cases in which the Directress must obtain the advice or the consent of her Council, or when the Directress votes with her Council in a collegial decision.

32 THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly, when in session, is the highest authority in the Institute. It is a collegial assembly, in which the members of *Servitium Christi* as a whole are represented.

It is convoked by the General Directress one year prior to the end of her term of office.

For grave reasons and with the consent of her Council the General Directress may convoke an extraordinary General assembly.

The General Assembly comprises:

1. The incumbent Directress General and members of her General Council, who sit by right;
2. Elected members, who must be more numerous than the non elected participants.

A limited number of members may be invited to the General Assembly by the General Directress, with the advice of her Council.

The General Assembly decides whether the invited members have the right to vote.

The General Assembly evaluates the past and reflects on the present situation of the Institute, its charism and mission with respect to the signs of the times and makes plans for the future until the next General Assembly.

The General Assembly elects the General Directress and the members of the General Council.

Each decision of the General Assembly is taken

by the vote of an absolute majority of the members present.

33. RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

1. To strengthen the spiritual life of members through a profound study of the charism and its practice in daily life;
2. To evaluate the true situation of Servitium Christi through the study of the six years' reports of the General Directress and the Regional Directresses on the spiritual and apostolic life;
3. To evaluate the position of Servitium Christi in the Church in general and in each region;
4. To make decisions concerning the organisation, financial arrangements, policies and programs for the whole Institute in accordance with its aims.
5. To elect the General Directress, four Consultors and a Substitute by majority vote, for a term of six years. They can be re-elected for a second six years' mandate in succession.
6. To decide by voting on necessary revision of the Rule of Life and/or the Statutes.

(i) The changes in the Rule of Life or the charism need a majority of two thirds of the votes cast by the members present with the

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right to vote.²⁸ All amendments of the Rule of

Life must be confirmed by the Holy See.

(ii) The amendments to the Statutes require an absolute majority of the votes cast by the members present with the right to vote.²⁹

7. To approve the annual general financial statement presented by the general treasurer;
8. To establish new centres and regions.

All members of the Institute participate indirectly in the General Assembly by praying and studying the themes and propositions presented during the time of preparation for the General Assembly.

Each member has the right, either individually or with others, to send in writing, any request or proposition directly to the General Assembly.

34. THE GENERAL DIRECTRESS AND THE GENERAL COUNCIL

The ordinary governance of the Institute is entrusted to the General Directress and the General Consultors.

The General Directress and the Consultors and a Substitute are elected by the General Assembly.

28 cf. Can. 119 § 2

29 cf. Can. 119 § 2

The General Treasurer is appointed by the General Directress with the consent of her Council.

The members of the General Council exercise a role of animation and co-ordination. The members of the General Council distribute among themselves the different tasks.

When the General Directress requires the consent of her Council before making a decision, at least two consultors must be present at the meeting. The remaining two shall have been advised of the proposal and have been given adequate time to respond. The consent of the majority of the consultors present is required for validity. If only two are present, the consent of both is required.³⁰

For decisions, which do not require the consent of the Council for validity, the members of the Council can be consulted without a physical meeting, provided that all are notified of the meeting and the agenda in due time, and have the opportunity to respond. Their opinions must be confirmed in writing.

In any event these council members are expected to maintain regular contacts.

30 cf. Can. 127 §§ 1,2

35. THE GENERAL DIRECTRESS

The General Directress is the principle of unity and of animation.

She represents the Institute.

Her role is to animate, coordinate, inform and correct, with the assistance of her Council.

The General Directress has the following responsibilities and duties.

1. She strives to deepen the understanding of the nature and ideal of *Servitium Christi*.
2. She maintains contacts with the Regions and Centres; and visits them at least once during her mandate. This visitation however may be delegated.
3. She maintains contacts with other secular institutes.
4. She represents *Servitium Christi* at the Congregation of Institutes for Consecrated Life in Rome.

The General Directress makes the decision, with the consent of her Council, on the following:

1. The interpretation of the Rule of Life and the Statutes; this interpretation remains valid until the next General Assembly.
2. The erection and suppression of a Region,

together with the corresponding Regional Council. All this must be ratified by the following General Assembly.

3. The departure of a member with temporary incorporation, according to the norms of can. 726 §2.
4. The General Directress acts collegially with her Council in the decision to dismiss a member according to the norms of can. 699 §1.
5. The approval of the procedures for the elections of the Regional Directress and the Regional Council members.

The General Directress makes the decision with consultative voice of the Council on:

1. The appointment of the Assistant General Directress and General Treasurer.
2. The guidelines for spiritual formation programs.
3. Practical guidelines for the development of spiritual life.
4. The study of important problems proposed by or submitted to the Council.
5. The preparation and convocation of the General Assembly at least one year in advance.
6. The preparation and convocation of the Amplified General Council meeting at least six months in advance.

36. THE ASSISTANT GENERAL DIRECTRESS

The General Directress appoints one of the General Consultors to be the Assistant General Directress. The Assistant General Directress is the permanent representative of the General Directress.

1. She is responsible for the general archives and for the general administration of the Institute.
2. She safeguards the right and timely turnover of accountabilities and records and the delivery of documents to the successor.

37. THE GENERAL TREASURER

The General Treasurer is a member of the General Council, responsible for the finances and administration of temporal goods of the Institute, in as much as these do not belong to the various regions.

The General Treasurer has the following responsibilities and duties:

1. She examines the financial reports from the Regions and presents them to the General Council for ratification.
2. Every year she shall present the financial situation of the Institute to the Regional Councils.
3. Likewise, she shall present the next three years budget at the beginning of the mandate and during the amplified General Council meeting.

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4. She shall advise the General Council

concerning the percentage of revenue the members shall contribute to the Institute, taking into account all the financial facts.

38. VACANCIES IN THE GENERAL COUNCIL

When the office of the General Directress becomes vacant, the Assistant takes over the direction of the Institute until the next General Assembly. The General Council has to be completed by swearing in the elected Substitute as new Consultor.

In case the position of a Consultor becomes vacant, the General Directress shall swear in the elected Substitute as new Consultor.

If any further vacancy of the Council occurs, the General Directress with the consent of the remaining members of the Council appoints another member to fill the vacancy.

If the General Directress seems, in the opinion of the members of the General Council, to be unable to perform the tasks proper to her office because of illness or any other reason, the Council will advise the Holy See and abide by its decision.

For serious reasons the General Directress, with

the consent of the remaining consultors, can dismiss a member of the General Council. The Holy See must be immediately notified.

In all cases the mandates are valid until the next General Elections. A member who has served only part of a mandate remains eligible for election to two full terms of office.

39. THE GENERAL ECCLESIASTICAL ASSISTANT

The General Ecclesiastical Assistant assists the General Council:

1. by advising in theological, ethical and canonical issues.
2. by setting up guidelines for the spiritual aspects of formation.
3. by maintaining contact with the priests, who take part in the formation of the members at regional and local level.

As a procurator he is a mediator and liaison representative between the institute and the Holy See.

The Ecclesiastical Assistant must be a priest of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament.

The General Directress, having consulted her

Council presents a nominee to the Superior General of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament for appointment.

His mandate is co-terminus with that of the General Council of the Institute and may be renewed.

40. REGIONS

In its structure and governance, *Servitium Christi* is divided into Regions. Each Region can be divided into Centres.

41. THE REGIONAL DIRECTRESS AND THE REGIONAL COUNCIL

The Regional Directress is a major moderator.

1. The ordinary governance of the Region is entrusted to the Regional Directress and her Council. The Regional Council consists of at least two Consultors.
2. The Regional Directress and the Regional Consultors are elected by all the members of the Region with the right to vote. They may be re-elected for a second successive mandate.
3. The elections are done in the same way as for the General Directress and Council. The result of the elections shall be transmitted to the General Directress for confirmation.
4. The newly elected Regional directress appoints

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the Assistant Regional Directress from among

the Consultors.

5. The Regional Treasurer is appointed by the Regional Directress with the consent of her Council.
6. The Regional Directress meets with her Council at least once a year. For the validity of decisions requiring the consent of the Council, at last two Consultors must be present, and a member who is unable to be present is consulted. For all meetings, all the Consultors are notified about the date and place of the meeting and its agenda in due time.

42. THE REGIONAL DIRECTRESS

The Regional Directress is the principle of unity and animation in a particular duly established Region. She represents the Institute in her Region. Her role is to animate, co-ordinate, inform and correct members with the assistance of her Council.

The Regional Directress has the following responsibilities and duties:

1. She strives to deepen the understanding of the nature and ideal of Servitium Christi in her Region;
2. She facilitates contacts between the members, Centres, the General Council, and vice versa;

3. She maintains contacts with new candidates;
4. She supports the Directresses of Formation
5. She maintains contacts with the Local Bishops and with other Secular Institutes in her Region;
6. She gives report of her Region to the General Council at least once a year;

She makes the decision, with the consent of her Council on following matters:

1. The confirmation of the election of Local Directresses and Assistant Local Directresses;
2. The appointment of Directresses of Formation, in consultation with the proper Local Directress;
3. The admission of new candidates to the Institute; determining the maximum age for candidates to be admitted, as well as the conditions for accepting widows and/or single mothers;
4. The admission of candidates and members to temporary and perpetual consecration, after consultation with the Directress of Formation and the Local Directress and members of the proper Region or Centre;
5. The erection and suppression of Centres;
6. The procedure and organisation of elections;

She makes the decision, with the consultative vote of her Council on other matters that may arise from time to time concerning her Region, or

individual members of her Region.

The Regional Directress may temporarily dispense a member from complying certain provisions of the Rule of Life and/or the Statutes.

There must be valid reasons, and it must be done in dialogue with the General Council.

43. THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL DIRECTRESS

The Assistant Regional Directress is the permanent representative of the Regional Directress. She is responsible for the regional archives and the administration of her region.

She safeguards the records of the Region and their delivery to the successor.

When the office of the Regional Directress is vacant, the Assistant Regional Directress assumes the governance of the Region until the next regional elections.

44. THE REGIONAL TREASURER

The Regional Treasurer is a member of the Regional Council. She is responsible for the finances and administration of temporal goods belonging to the Region under the direction of the Regional Directress.

45. VACANCIES IN THE REGIONAL COUNCIL If the office of Assistant Regional Directress becomes vacant, the Regional Directress appoints a member of the Council to fill the vacancy.

If the office of Regional Consultor becomes vacant, the elected Substitute assumes her office. The General Directress is immediately informed of these changes.

46. CENTRES

The Region may be sub-divided into Centres. The members of a Region may ask their Regional Council to group them together into one or more Centres. The decision rests with the proper Regional Directress with the consent of her Council.

Members who do not belong to a Centre are directly under the Regional Council of the Region to which they belong.

The members of a Centre elect from among themselves a Directress and an Assistant to the Directress. This election requires confirmation by the Regional Directress.

Their mandates last for three years and they may be re-elected twice successively.

47. THE LOCAL DIRECTRESS

In the Centre the Local Directress is the principle of unity and animation and she represents the Institute.

The Local Directress has the following responsibilities and duties:

1. She strives to deepen the understanding of the nature and ideal of Servitium Christi;
2. She facilitates the contacts between the members and with the Regional Council;
3. She supports the Directress(es) of Formation;
4. She gives a report of her Centre to the Regional Council at least once a year;
5. She is responsible for the financial viability of the Centre and shall make report to the Regional Council and to her members. In this task she may be assisted by a Local Treasurer;
6. She organises recollections and meetings annually with the consent of the Regional Directress.

48. THE ASSISTANT LOCAL DIRECTRESS

The Assistant to the Local Directress is the permanent representative of the Local Directress. She is responsible for the archives and the administration of her centre. She shall safeguard the right and timely turnover of accountabilities and the delivery of documents to the successor.

49. THE LOCAL TREASURER

She is a member who may assist the Local Directress in her responsibility for finances and the administration of temporal goods belonging to the Centre.

She is appointed by the Local Directress with the consent of the Assistant Local Directress, from among the members of the centre.

50. VACANCIES IN THE CENTRE

In case the office of Local Directress becomes vacant, the Assistant Local Directress takes over the direction of the Centre until next elections in the centre.

The Regional Council prepares elections in the centre.

51. DISPERSED AND NEW MEMBERS

Members who do not belong to a centre shall depend on the Regional Council to which they belong.

In cases where a member does not belong to in a definite Region, it is the General Directress who decides to which Region she belongs. For all things concerning the Institute, the member shall be considered depending on the designated Region.

Newly accepted members, established groups and centres that do not belong to a Region yet, are directly under the supervision of the General Council.

52. ELECTIONS

All elections are held after invoking and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Those elected accept the appropriate rights, obligations and responsibilities of the mandate at the service of the members and the Institute.

All incorporated members have active voice in elections, and have passive voice in the election of delegates to the General Assembly.

The General Directress, General Consultors and Substitutes, and Regional Directresses are permanently incorporated members.

Regional Consultors and Substitutes, Local Directresses and Assistant Local Directresses are members who have been incorporated for at least three years.

53. MANNER OF ELECTIONS

1. In all elections, the votes of an absolute majority (i.e. more than one half) of the

members present with the right to vote are required for election.

2. In all elections, after two inconclusive ballots, a ballot is taken between the two candidates with the highest number of votes in the second ballot. In case there are more than two, the ballot is taken between the two senior by age. After a third inconclusive ballot, the person who is senior in age is considered elected.³¹
3. All elections are to be done by secret ballot.
4. In case a member who has the right to vote cannot be present during the elections, she may submit her vote in writing for one scrutiny only for each candidate to be elected.

54. COMMUNICATION

The decentralisation of government and the diversity of members in different cultures and communities necessitate reliable and regular communication between the members themselves and at the various levels of government, so as to preserve unity, to assure effective coordination and to promote better understanding and mutual assistance.

Each level of government shall put up a system of communication to enhance efficient circulation of

31 cf. Can. 119 § 1

necessary and important information in the entire Institute.

Chapter 9 ADMINISTRATION OF TEMPORAL GOODS

55. PRINCIPLES OF ADMINISTRATION OF TEMPORAL GOODS

"Each one of you has received a special grace, so, like good stewards responsible for all these different graces of God, put yourselves at the service of others. ."

The Secular Institute *Servitium Christi* can acquire, possess, administer and dispose of temporal goods.³³

The administration of temporal goods of the Institute expresses and fosters evangelical poverty. It is governed by the norms of Book V of the Code of Canon Law and by its proper law.³⁴ Goods donated to the Institute must be used in accordance with the intentions of the donors.

The Institute consists of the Generalate and the

32 1 Pet. 4: 10

33 cf. Can. 634 § 1

34 cf. Can. 718

Regions, which are public juridical persons in the Church, and as such have responsibility for the administration of their temporal goods, with due accountability.

Centres do not have juridical personality unless they are established as an independent entity by the General Directress with the consent of the General Council.

56. THE GENERALATE AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF TEMPORAL GOODS

The General Directress and her Council are responsible for the administration of the temporal goods of the Institute as a whole, including the supervision of the administration of the temporal goods of Regions and Centres.

The General Directress through the General Treasurer renders an account of the finances and goods of the entire Institute to the General Assembly and to the Amplified General Council meeting.

57. REGIONS AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF TEMPORAL GOODS

The Regional Directress and her Council are responsible for the administration of the temporal goods of the Region as a whole, including the

supervision of the administration of the temporal goods of the Centres, which belong to the Region.

The Annual Financial Report, the budget and the annual financial statement prepared by the Regional Treasurer are presented to the Regional Directress for approval with the consent of her Council. The report is then presented to the members and to the General Directress.

58. CENTRES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF TEMPORAL GOODS

The Centre is responsible for the administration of the temporal goods of the Centre. The Local Directress receives the financial contribution of members of the Centre. A percentage of this revenue is contributed to the Regional Council.

The General Council determines the percentage of both contributions.

The Local Directress, assisted by the Local Treasurer, renders account of the finances and the goods of the Centre to its members and to the Regional Council by means of a budget and an annual statement.

59. MEMBERS AND TEMPORAL GOODS Each member retains the independent

acquisition, ownership, administration and disposal of her temporal goods. When joining the Institute she informs the Regional Directress about her personal property.

Consistent with her financial situation, each member has the obligation to contribute to the support of the Centre and the Region to which she belongs and to the Institute as a whole according to Institute and Regional policies.

60. CESSATION OF THE INSTITUTE

The suppression of the Institute and the disposal of its goods are reserved to the Holy See.³⁵

Chapter 10 THE VALUE TO BE ACCORDED TO THE RULE OF LIFE

61. THE VALUE

The Rule of Life expresses the original inspiration of our founders adapted to the continual growth of the Body of Christ and attentive to the needs and challenges of the world.

The Statutes express its principles more

35 cf. Can. 584

concretely and give practical application, which holds good for the entire Institute.

By accepting it as a gift from the Lord and by conforming our lives to it, as our consecration commitment requires, we are strengthened in fidelity to our Eucharistic mission in the Church and the world.

Chapter 11 FORMULAS

The Institute shall have the following formulas of devotional commitment and consecration/incorporation to the Institute

62. FORMULA OF DEVOTIONAL COMMITMENT

"Summoned by the love of God, manifested in Jesus Christ

and celebrated in the Eucharist, I intend to respond to God's gift with the gift of myself.

For this reason,

full of confidence in the grace of God,

under the protection of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament

and of Saint Peter Julian Eymard

I _____ freely undertake

to start my period of initial formation
in the Secular Institute Servitium Christi, to live
according to the Gospels
and to work in the world
so that the reign of Christ may come.
Amen".

63. FORMULA OF CONSECRATION

"Summoned by the love of God, manifested in
Jesus Christ and celebrated in the Eucharist,
I intend to respond to God's gift
with the gift of myself.

For this reason,
full of confidence in the grace of God,
under the protection of Our Lady of the Blessed
Sacrament and of Saint Peter Julian Eymard,

I _____ (name)

freely make the annual (perpetual) vows
of chastity in the celibate state,
of poverty and of obedience,
according to the Rule of Life and the Statutes
of the Secular Institute Servitium Christi,
to live according to the Gospels
and to work in the world
so that the reign of Christ may come.
Amen".