

**Congr per gli 1st. di Vita Consecrate
e le Societe di Vita Apostolica**

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GENERAL STATUTES

Secular Institute Servitium Christi

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GENERAL STATUTES

Secular Institute Servitium Christi

00 PREFACE

00.01 PURPOSE OF THE STATUTES

The Statutes concretise the principles of the Rule of Life and determine the practical or juridical norms for their application that are valid for the whole Institute. Their purpose is to ensure that we live a true fellowship in the unity of a common commitment, and to promote the development of the Institute in keeping with the spirit of the Rule of Life.

00.02 NATURE OF THE STATUTES

The Statutes promote co-participation, subsidiarity, co-responsibility and involvement in the activity of the universal Church, as it is immersed in the secular society. Provisions are in line with the spirit of renewal initiated by Vatican II and inspired by the document Apostolic Constitution Provida Mater Ecclesia (1947).

It concretises the principles of the Rule of Life, hence, the headings and numbers correspond.

00.03 AMENDMENTS AND INTERPRETATION

It pertains to the General Assembly to establish new Statutes and to modify the existing ones, in harmony with the Rule of Life. An absolute majority is sufficient and recourse to the Holy See is not required.

Between General Assemblies the General Council is competent to give an authentic interpretation of the Statutes.

Chapter 1 THE NATURE OF THE INSTITUTE

01.01 THE OFFICIAL NAME.

The official and legal name of the Institute is SERVITIUM CHRISTI.

02.01 THE FOUNDERS

Saint Peter Julian Eymard, the founder of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, was guiding lay women united in prayer groups in the presence of the Eucharist. From this source of inspiration they worked with the poor youth in the apostolate of religious and social education, in the big cities in France around 1855.

Later on the female lay group in Paris, active in catechesis, was transformed into the Congregation of the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament.

Father Godefridus Spiekman, S.S.S. was a prisoner/hostage in the Netherlands in 1942, when he rediscovered this original idea of Saint Peter Julian Eymard. This resulted (following the promulgation of *Prvda Mater Ecclesia* in 1947) in the founding in 1952 of the Secular Institute *Servitium Christi*, an Institute of consecrated lay women, co-operating with the clergy, as an answer to the needs of a secularising society.

The first woman invited by Father Spiekman to prepare for such a lay group was Miss Antoinetta Golsteijn. Challenged by the Church and the signs of the times she formed a small group, which grew out into an internationally known Secular Institute.

The members shall study the life and spirituality of Saint Peter Julian Eymard and the founders, the history of *Servitium Christi* as well as orientations of the contemporary Church and the challenges of our time and our own environment.

03.01 THE MEMBERS OF SERVITIUM CHRISTI

The members are women, who have firm determination to live the ideal of the Secular

Institute Servitium Christi. The members shall seek continuously the relevance of their consecration as lay women amidst the concrete situation of their life.

They work together for the realisation of the same vocation and strive to bear witness to a secular life at the service of the Church and the Society according to the Rule of Life.

Chapter 2 THE SPIRIT AND IDEAL

04.01 OUR CHARISM

We shall take ample time to read, study and reflect on materials that will enhance our Eucharistic charism.

The members of the Institute are spiritually assisted by priests, who are preferably members of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament.

Chapter 3 FOLLOWING CHRIST

06.01 OUR VOCATION

As members of Servitium Christi we respond to one

and the same call, that is, to live a secular life centred on the Eucharist, in the Church and in Society. Nevertheless, we remain different in person, abilities, talents and gifts. However, our differences gather us together to enrich and contribute in building the Kingdom of God on earth. We shall contribute and share what we can for the enrichment of our particular vocation in the Church and society.

08.01 CHASTITY IN CELIBACY

Chastity is a frame of mind, by which members 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.

During the period of formation, much attention shall be given to appreciate and discover the reality of the vow of chastity in secular life. This demands the progressive development of personality.

09.01 EVANGELICAL POVERTY

1. Each member shall practice a simple lifestyle, fitting to her social status and environment. The whole human family and the Institute shall be included in the sharing of our goods.
2. Each member shall regularly seek the way of effectively practising evangelical poverty, in

dialogue with the legitimate directress.

3. Each member shall be personally responsible of her temporal goods and needs without prejudice to the provision of the Statutes in terms of temporal goods administration.¹
4. Each member supports the Institute financially, according to her economic capacity.

10.01 OBEDIENCE

1. Obedience is a matter of responsibility for life, for the good of all, as well as of the Church.
2. The bonds, which unite the members to authority, far from being expressed in terms of power and subjection, are expressed rather as an attitude and a willingness to be of mutual service. It is in this spirit of fellowship that each one accepts the service, which is hers, in the certainty of working, each one according to her role, to build up the Body of Christ.
3. The practice of obedience demands a spirit of faith, a sense of responsibility, humility, dedication to the mission of the Institute, and ability to dialogue and fraternal support.

11.01 CONSECRATED SECULARITY

- I. We are consecrated yet we retain the canonical status of "Laity" within the Church.²

¹ cf. G.S. 59.01 Members and temporal goods

² cf. Can. 711

2. There is a profound interdependence between consecration and secularity. The secularity of our consecration expresses our unique form of life in the Church. We shall continue enriching our life as consecrated lay women through studies, reflections and interactions with others in the society.

12.01 CONVERSION

Every member is highly encouraged to approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation whenever possible and as often as she can, unless she is physically or morally incapable, in such case she may attain reconciliation by other means.

In addition to but not replacing the Sacrament of Reconciliation the Church offers us various ways and occasions to ask for and receive forgiveness:

1. an act of contrition and asking forgiveness:
And when you stand in prayer, forgive whatever you have against anybody, so that your Father in heaven may forgive your failings too ³
2. the celebration of the Eucharist: ***"For this is My Blood, the Blood of the covenant, which is to be poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins"***⁴
3. the Liturgy of Penance, in which the believing

3 Mk. 11:25
4 Mt. 26: 28b

community is changed into a place of reconciliation.

4. reading of scripture as the prayer of the Church: ***"Lord, by the words of the Holy Gospel our sins are wiped out."***⁵

5. acts of charity: ***" . . . love covers over many a sin."***⁶

Chapter 4 OUR MISSION : Servitium Christi

14.01 PRAYER AND ACTION

Spiritual exercises such as participating in the prayer of the Church, i.e. the Liturgy of the Hours and the Sacrament of Reconciliation are encouraged.

15.01 EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

We shall take part in the Eucharistic celebration daily. In areas where this is not viable, and after looking at all possibilities the member shall make a plan to fulfil this obligation in some other manner and present this to the Local/Regional Directress for approval.

16.01 ADORATION

1. Prayer in the presence of the Eucharist, preferably exposed, is at the heart of the Institute. We shall give priority to this form of prayer.

5 R.R.
6 1 Pet. 4: 8

2. Adoration and prayer in the presence of the Eucharist may be done individually or communally. In this manner, the member allows herself to experience the ecclesial dimension of prayer.

17.01 APOSTOLATE

1. The apostolate of every individual member shall be carried out with full personal responsibility even if other members are involved in the same apostolate.
2. As an international Institute we are called to take part in a prophetic mission worldwide. This means that members shall be attentive to the needs, conditions, situations and hopes of people by being aware of what is happening all around, by analysis of reality and by reading the signs of the times.
3. We shall do our best to discern the signs of good and evil always in the light of and inspired by the Word of God.
4. In our mission of social involvement we need to develop and foster a critical understanding of social, economic, political, cultural and religious realities. We shall develop skills to understand the signs of the times.

Chapter 5 OUR COMMUNITY

18.01 COMMUNITY OF CONSECRATED LAY WOMEN

1. Members living in isolated places are fully members of the Servitium Christi community.
2. The Local Directress must visit them at least once a year, without prejudice to GS #19.01.
3. Members who are advanced in age receive special attention and facilities to meet their spiritual and material needs.

19.01 MEETING AND ENCOUNTER

1. Community life is deepened and enhanced through regular encounter among the members for meetings, formation sessions, retreats and other forms of gathering.
2. Members are to find ways and reasons to gather together aside from the regular meetings and formation sessions. Regional and Local Directress are to facilitate this occasional gathering as an opportunity to enhance the spirit of communion.
3. Those members living in isolation (remote areas) shall do their best to join this gathering whenever possible.
4. Members who are advanced in age are fully members of the institute. The Regional/Local

Directress or her delegate shall visit them and encourage them to fully participate in the activities of the Region/Centre whenever and if ever possible.

5. Whenever circumstances prevent members from getting together for meetings, other available means must be explored and utilised. The use of modern technology as means of communications may be considered with proper discernment and prudence.
6. We may willingly but selectively welcome guests to share in our recollections to spread our Eucharistic spirituality.

Chapter 6 FORMATION

21.01 FORMATORS

1. There are members who shall be given the task to form candidates. A Directress of Formation shall be properly prepared by taking some courses, modules or seminar to help her carry out the task of forming members.
2. Formators are to be mindful that they are simply the human tool of the real Formator, i.e. the Holy Spirit. Their role is to guide a candidate or member in such a way that this

person will be able to live her consecration in the world, and be eventually incorporated into the Institute.

3. The Directress of Formation should have the following qualities:
 - (i) human and Christian maturity;
 - (ii) sensitivity, understanding, flexibility, ability to listen, to communicate and to discern
 - (iii) theological knowledge, as well as that of the Rule of Life and the Statutes of the Institute
 - (iv) love of the Institute, witnessing to its ideal and to the relationships within it.
4. Periodically the Directress of Formation shall submit report to the Regional Council concerning the development and situation of the candidates/members.
5. The Directress of Formation likewise plays a role in giving orientation and introduction of new candidates.
6. The Regional Council and the Spiritual Assistant shall support the Directress of Formation, both spiritually and materially.

22.01 ORIENTATION PERIOD AND ADMISSION

After an orientation period of at least six months the candidate may be admitted to the Institute. (See *Rule of Life* 26)

22.02 INITIAL FORMATION AND TEMPORARY INCORPORATION

At the end of the initial formation period the candidate may be admitted to temporary incorporation.

22.03 EXTENDED INITIAL FORMATION AND PERMANENT INCORPORATION

1. After the first Profession the member shall continue with an extended initial formation of six years.
2. During the period of the extended initial formation the modules taken during the initial formation shall be deepened and intensified, with new subjects added.
3. After six years of extended initial formation the member may be admitted to perpetual incorporation.

23.01 GUIDELINES OF FORMATION

1. Each member must form herself according to the formation programme of the Institute. The Institute provides formation plans for the three phases, namely initial, extended initial and permanent or on-going formation.
2. The Directress of Formation shall complete the basic plans for initial and extended initial formation according to the religious and socio-cultural needs of the region.

3. There may be one or two members in charge of/assisting in the ongoing formation in a given Centre or Region.
4. It is necessary that attention be given to members who are advanced in age, ensuring on-going contact and informing them of developments in the Institute, in the Church and in society.
5. From the beginning, formation must be orientated towards the sense of responsibility, difficulties caused by serious diseases or death and supporting the elderly members, not only financially, but spiritually and religiously as well.

24.01 ONGOING FORMATION

1. Each member shall make it her duty to continuously deepen her spiritual, secular and intellectual life and to update her apostolate, in dialogue with her Regional or Local Directress, through whatever means available for this purpose.
2. Directresses for their part shall encourage the members to persevere in their efforts to this end.
3. A member may always contact directly her own Directress, the General Directress or another member of the General Council, for whatever concern she wants to bring out and may count on personal attention and guidance.

4. Regions and Centres shall have occasions for conferences to keep the members updated on the developments in sacred and human sciences to become aware of and responsive to the signs of the times.

24.02 FORMATION ON LEADERSHIP

1. Right from admission to the Institute members may be assigned to certain responsibilities in the Centre and Region. Formation shall likewise cater to this need in order to develop leadership qualities.
2. Members are encouraged to deepen their leadership skills and potentials in their professional life and work.
3. Those members with leadership capacities or those who are already elected as directress and in other positions should be encouraged to study and develop specific attitudes and skills to serve the Institute.

25.01 THE SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT

The Regional or Local Spiritual Assistant assists the Directresses of Formation, participates in the formation programme and advises the Region or Centre.

He is a priest, who is familiar with and supports the Eucharistic spirituality and the charism of secular institutes.

He is preferably a member of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament.

The Regional Directress shall nominate and appoint Spiritual Assistants for the Region and Centres in consultation with the Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Institute and the proper Superiors.

The Local Directress may propose a Spiritual Assistant to the Regional Council.

The mandates of the Spiritual Assistants are co-terminus to that of the respective Regional Councils and/or Local Directresses with the possibility of renewal for another term.

CHAPTER 7 INCORPORATION TO THE INSTITUTE

26.01 ADMISSION TO THE INSTITUTE

1. The Regional (or General) Directress and her Council decide to admit new candidates to the Institute after serious discernment concerning the conditions required and shall inform the candidate in writing of the decision made.
2. The admission is confirmed by a devotional commitment.
3. Devotional commitment commences the initial formation period of the candidate.

26.02 REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMISSION

The candidate shall submit the following documents:

1. Certificates of birth, baptism and confirmation;
2. Report of Local or Regional Directress;
3. Letter of recommendation of her spiritual director or parish priest;
4. Recommended: Certificates of studies (if any).
5. For widows: Death certificate of the husband.
6. An indult of departure or dispensation from vows for those transferring from other institutes of consecrated life.

27.01 FIRST CONSECRATION AND INCORPORATION

By professing the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience according to the Rule of Life, a person is incorporated into the Institute with all the rights and obligations proper to a consecrated laywoman.

Towards the end of the three years initial formation period, the candidate may request in writing the Regional Council for admission to incorporation, in accordance with provisions in the General Statutes #22.02, #27.02 and #27.03.

27.02 REQUIREMENTS FOR TEMPORARY INCORPORATION

Having fulfilled the requirements for validity

stipulated in Can. 721, the candidate may be accepted for temporary incorporation by the competent authority, after consultation with the Formation Directress,

For the candidate to be accepted for temporary incorporation, she must show signs of:

1. acceptance of the Rule of Life and the Statutes;
2. love of the Eucharist;
3. profound understanding of the essence of the vows;
4. experience of being Church;
5. development of religious awareness;
6. maturity;
7. basic education;
8. the capacity to be with a group;
9. the ability to develop social contacts;
10. have attended the initial formation sessions;
11. the desire to live committed to Servitium Christi.

27.03 PROCEDURAL NORMS FOR TEMPORARY INCORPORATION

1. The evaluation reports of the Directress of Formation and the legitimate Directress shall confirm the above requirements. The reports shall be submitted to the Regional Directress and her Council.
2. The Regional Council shall listen to the members of the Region or Centre to which the member concerned belongs.

3. The decision to incorporate a candidate, or to extend by one year the initial formation period, is reserved to the Regional Directress with the consent of her Council. The same Council shall transmit the decision in writing, to the candidate as soon as possible.
4. In case the Regional Directress with the consent of her Council, or the candidate herself has taken the option to extend by one year the initial formation period and at the end of this year the candidate is judged not suitable for incorporation, then she has to leave the Institute.
5. A temporarily incorporated member may freely leave the Institute in accordance with the universal norms.⁷

27.04 CEREMONIAL

The profession of vows shall be celebrated within a Eucharistic celebration in accordance with the ceremonial of the Institute. (For formula of vows see G.S 28.02 and Rule of Life 63)

28.01 ACCEPTANCE TO PERPETUAL INCORPORATION

1. The member is judged suitable for admission with the following requirements:

7 cf. Can. 726 §2

- (i) She has completed six years of extended initial formation
 - (ii) She has firm determination to consecrate herself for life;
 - (iii) She has attained a level of maturity necessary to live the life in the Institute;
 - (iv) She has developed belongingness to the Institute;
 - (v) She has shown capacity to live her vows;
 - (vi) She has shown interest in the studies recommended by the Regional/General Council.
2. The evaluation reports of the Directress of Formation shall confirm all this. The Regional Council shall also listen to the members of the Region or Centre to which the member concerned belongs.
 3. The decision to admit the member to perpetual consecration is reserved to the Regional Directress with her Council, who shall transmit the decision to the member in writing.
 4. If the request is granted, the member can make her perpetual vows of chastity in the celibate state, poverty and obedience on the Rule of Life and the Statutes of the Institute.

28.02 FORMULA OF CONSECRATION/ INCORPORATION (Cf. *Rule of Life* 63)

1. The formula must include:

- (i) the name and surname of the member
 - (ii) the commitment through one's free will;
 - (iii) the vows, whether temporary (for one year) or perpetual, of chastity in the celibate state, poverty and obedience, according to the Rule of Life and the Statutes of the Secular Institute *Servitium Christi*.
2. The rite of incorporation shall take place during a Eucharistic celebration, according to the ceremonial of the Institute.
 3. The incorporation shall be confirmed in writing and signed by the member concerned, by the Regional Directress or her delegate, by two witnesses and by the main celebrant of the Eucharist.

29.01 DEPARTURE FROM THE INSTITUTE

If a member has a dispute concerning her rights in the Institute, she should approach the Regional Directress with the aim of reaching an equitable solution by means of mutual consultation, possibly with the help of a third person as mediator.⁸ If the matter is not resolved she can have recourse to the General Directress. Further recourse can be made to the Holy See.⁹

8 cf. Can. 1733.1

9 cf. Can. 1737.1

Chapter 8 AT THE SERVICE OF THE MEMBERS AND THE INSTITUTE

30. GENERAL GOVERNANCE

The Governance of the Institute is exercised at various levels, by appropriate authorities. The general governance is entrusted to the General Directress and her Council with corresponding mandate and term to serve the Institute.

31. PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNANCE

The primary role of authority is to serve the community, above all, in carrying out the principle of:

1. Unity: to accomplish what God does for his Church, that is to bring together, to unite and to establish fellowship through dialogue.
2. Decision-making: to guide the community so that its activity leads to advance towards its ideal.
3. Fraternal correction: to be carried out with respect for human dignity and freedom.

32.01 THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly, when in session, is the highest authority in the Institute. The General Assembly is held every six years.

32.02 CONVOCATION

The General Directress, with the consent of her Council, shall inform the entire Institute of the place, dates and manner of the General Assembly.

The General Directress shall convoke the meeting; all participants must receive the convocation along with the agenda, one year in advance.

32.03 PROCEDURES

The General Assembly decides its working procedures.

Office-holders in the Assembly, such as the Secretary, the Scrutineers and the Presider at the election of the General Directress, if the incumbent is eligible for a second mandate, are elected by the Assembly.

34.01 THE GENERAL DIRECTRESS AND THE GENERAL COUNCIL

1. The General Council consists of the General Directress and four Consultors.
All are elected by the General Assembly. They can be re-elected for a second six years' mandate in succession.
The newly elected General Council decides how to assign the various tasks among themselves.
2. The General Council must guarantee that members from Regions and Centres are duly represented at the General Assembly.
3. Normally the General Council meets once a year, or at least once every two years.

For the meeting, all members of the General Council must receive a notification in time along with the agenda.

34.02 THE AMPLIFIED GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING

The General Council meets all Regional Directresses at least once during its mandate, in between two General Assemblies.

This meeting aims to listen and to have a clear perception of particular problems of each region and centre and to establish effective collaboration between the Regions and the General Council.

The Amplified General Council is a consultative body. Only the General Directress and her Council make decisions on proposals raised during this meeting.

The General Directress shall convoke the meeting six months in advance.

38.01 VACANCIES IN THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Once the completion of the Council is made, the new General Directress shall appoint the new Assistant General Directress.

In all cases the mandates are valid until the next General Assembly.

40.01 REGIONS AND CENTRES

The Institute is divided into Regions, determined by reasons of territory or function.

The following are the conditions to establish a Region:

1. possibility of organisation: at least ten persons, of which three persons can form the Regional Council;
2. possibility of further vocations;
3. a group capable of mutual animation.

A Region can be composed of Centres.

54.01 COMMUNICATION

Apart from spiritual ties, the informal communication and contacts between members form the core of community building.

Because of the Institute's international nature members are scattered all over many continents.

Therefore knowledge and competence of languages is a necessity and a condition in order to facilitate effective communication.

We encourage all members, including candidates

in formation to learn English and/or Spanish according to one's capacities.

English is the official language for all official documents.

54.02 REPORTS

Reports from the different levels of the Institute have the purpose to respond to the need for updated statistics and to furnish information on the life and activities of the members.

We distinguish the following groups of reports:

1. Reports and minutes of General Assemblies, General Council meetings', visitations.
2. Minutes of Regional Council meetings and Centre meetings.
3. Spiritual formation programmes and reports on candidates in formation.
4. Account statements and reports of the general finance.
5. General and financial reports from each Centre and Region once a year.

Each Region and Centre shall send regularly to the General and Regional Council a report on the important events that take place in the community and likewise of any important decision it has taken.

54.03 NOTIFICATIONS

Notifications of the following shall be made to the General Council as a matter of urgency:

1. Appointments, admissions, professions and departures.
2. Notifications of deaths.
3. A summary of the minutes of the Regional Council's meetings.

54.04 PUBLICATIONS

The General Council shall take care of the exchange of actual and local news through a regular newsletter for the entire Institute.

For vocational work Regions shall publish and distribute informative materials.

Any material for publication about and in the name of the Institute should be presented to and approved by the Regional or General Council.

54.05 ARCHIVES

Archives form part of the patrimony of great value; they witness to the life of the Institute.

The Generalate, Regions and Centres shall take care of the conservation of all important documents under their proper care.

Chapter 9 THE TEMPORAL GOODS AND THEIR ADMINISTRATION

56.01 GENERALATE AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF TEMPORAL GOODS

For carrying out this task, the General Directress with the consent of her Council may appoint a Financial Administrator or an Accountant to assist the General Treasurer in administering the goods under the direction of the General Council.

For responsibilities and duties of the General Treasurer: see *Rule of Life* 37

57.01 REGIONS AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF TEMPORAL GOODS

When necessary, the Regional Council may seek the assistance of an expert in financial matters to work with the Regional/Local Treasurer for a proficient administration of goods and properties.

The Regional Council receives the financial contribution of Centres and members under its care.

When it is possible, the Region shall establish a reserve fund as contingency to meet unforeseen material needs of its members.

58.01 CENTRES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF TEMPORAL GOODS

A centre is responsible for the administration of the temporal goods of the Centre.

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

59.01 MEMBERS AND TEMPORAL GOODS

A member may possess material goods, such as: land, house(s), money, stocks and securities, jewellery, etc. When joining the Institute the candidate should inform the Regional Directress of these possessions.

In extraordinary cases, the member shall consult her Directress before making decision. Such cases could be:

1. buying or selling of things that are out of the ordinary, like a house, etc.
2. changing of employment
3. personal financial contribution, etc.

Before permanent incorporation the member should make a will. This must be duly notarised to ensure its validity in the civil law.

A member supports the Institute by regular financial contributions.

In case a member needs material support from the Institute, she may ask the Directress, after she tried all the resources available through the ordinary social services.

60.01 CESSATION OF THE INSTITUTE

The Holy See will decide about the temporal goods of the Institute, according to the directives of Canon Law, Book V and those of Chapter 9 of these Statutes.

Goods may have come from benefactors and testators. The purpose for which the Institute received these goods must be respected and considered seriously.

Other goods must be used as much as possible in line with the purpose of the Institute.