



Sisters
Hospitallers



Constitutional Review

Did you know that our Institution is undergoing a Constitutional Review process?

Learn more about what the process entails from sister Laurinda Faria.

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Member of the Constitutional Review Commission



My name is Laurinda Faria, Sister Hospitaller from the Province of Portugal and member of the Commission tasked with preparing and promoting the project to review and update our Constitutions. Many of you may wonder what this process entails, what is its scope, its objective, and who will be affected by the changes...

Significance

The Congregation's Constitutions serve as our "Book of Life", thus named by our Founder. They articulate the history of hospitality, as lived by the sisters who formed the first community and by successive generations of Sisters Hospitaliers. It is an abiding text that changes infrequently, unlike the Constitutions of nations or states.

Papal approval of the Constitutions gives the Congregation its juridical, canonical, and legal standing. The first Constitutions, drafted by Father Menni in 1882, were amended to reflect the changes needed in a fledgling Congregation and its progressive development. Then, in 1908, Pope Pius X definitively approved the text presented, thereby recognising the Congregation on an ecclesiastical level.

In 1923, our Constitutions incorporated the modifications required under the 1917 Code of Canon Law and remained thus until the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). As a result of conciliar reflection, the Church required that the congregations revise their Constitutions in order that, in addition to the canonical laws by which they are governed and the common fundamental principles of consecrated life, they clearly specify the origin of the Congregation, their charism and spirituality, as well as their lifestyle and mission, among other necessary topics, for full identification. This re-working became definitive in 1983 and remains in force to this day, with minor amendments to certain articles.

Only the Congregation's highest legislative power, the

General Chapter, can amend the Constitutions. They also require approval from the Pope. The General Chapter approves the Directives, which include the practical ways to undertake the life and mission of the Congregation, but they do not require approval from the Apostolic See.

Objectives

The current Constitutional review aims to achieve several objectives: to better define the theological foundations of our consecrated life; to more clearly express the Congregation's identity in the Church; to characterise everything we do according to the Hospitaller charism; to update the ways in which we pursue our mission in communion with others, not consecrated in religious life; and to address the social and legal changes that affect our Hospitaller activity.

As Congregation law, the Constitutions affect the Hospitaller Institutions, since the principles, criteria, and doctrinal statements are prescriptive and constitute a mandatory reference for mission options around the world.

Involvement and impact

The Constitutional review is participatory in nature. A draft (working document) of the Constitutions and Directives, resulting from the reflection of all sisters and other participants, will be presented to the General Chapter for analysis.

This process gives us an opportunity to revitalise our passion to emulate Jesus in the hospitable life and follow in the footsteps of our founders. After examining 12 dossiers that explore several issues in-depth, the communities will deliver the results of their spiritual discernment. These contributions demonstrate great faith in God, the Source of Hospitality, and a strong commitment to the future of the mission pursued by the Hospitaller Institution.

The goal of the process is to revitalise religious consecration, to be sentinels in a world of suffering, and serve as prophets of hospitality.

