



# REVISION OF CONSTITUTIONS

## WAY OF REVITALIZATION

# 11

## RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY AND GOVERNMENT



Rome, 2019-2021

# Constitutions, Religious Authority and Government of the Congregation

*The service of authority in the Congregation  
Is an expression of the authority of Christ.  
(Const. 98)*

Our **spiritual journey** of revitalisation has now reached theme 11, dealing with the service of authority and religious government.

The Constitutions devote nos. 98 to 149 to this matter. The first numbers address the foundation and the principles of government; these are followed by the laws governing the Congregation; most of the remaining numbers are about the structures of government at different levels, as well as the roles of the people holding posts of responsibility in government.

The main purpose of this Factsheet is to provide an in-depth understanding of the theological and charismatic sense of authority and government in our consecrated life. However, it also takes up all the numbers in part III of the Constitutions, so that the sisters can offer their suggested changes to improve the canonical structures as far as possible and as appropriate. The final Factsheet will deal with the administration of goods.

The document of the 21st General Chapter, to which we may refer, provides important inputs for a more thorough reflection by taking into account today's changing situation. The text challenges us to accept that authority is above all spiritual; the purpose of authority is to "build a fraternal community in Christ", to promote the "spirituality of communion", to help each sister feel that she has been sent to the mission of Jesus and to embody the Passion of the Son to do the Father's will<sup>1</sup> in today's world.

## **Suggested methodology for the First Week:**

- 1. Present the fact sheet as a whole.*
- 2. Propose the work for the first week, the enlightenment.*
- 3. Dedicate time daily to personal reflection.*
- 4. Set a date for the community meeting to share the reflection.*
- 5. Summarise, in the meeting the two or three aspects that can help us in the renewal.*

## **I Week: Enlightenment**

### **➤ In the light of the Word**

Some say that the consecrated life is suffering from a crisis of authority–obedience today, but perhaps it is actually a crisis of a theological understanding of the subject, and therefore a crisis of faith. This is not a matter of trying to harmonise two separate things, but rather two forms

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. HSC, XXI *General Chapter*, 2018, n. 11.

of expressing our joint quest to seek God's plan and the way in which it is fulfilled in our personal and community lives.

The Word of God sheds light on Religious authority and government in consecrated life in terms of its origins and foundation, and sets out the ultimate horizon of its purpose. For the purposes of our reflection here, we may take as our model the way Moses led the People of God in freedom from captivity in Egypt (cf. Ex 18:1-27). Let us look more closely at this text to stress a number of fundamental elements.

Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, learnt about God's work of liberation, using Moses as His mediator and instrument. Moses told him about the wonders the Lord had done for the People, which brought joy and thanksgiving. *«Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the Lord had done to Israel»* (v. 9) and burst into a song of praise and gratitude: *«Blessed be Yahveh, who has rescued from the Egyptian and from Pharaoh, and has rescued the people from the grasp of the Egyptians! Now I know that Yahweh is greater than all the gods...»* (vv. 10-11).

God had a loving plan for His people, and tasked them with a mission that required them to walk along God's path. The authority-obedience of Moses and the people were placed at the service of this plan of God. Their collective awareness of the Lord's intention to create a holy nation was strengthened by the community celebration of faith (v. 12). The people knew that they were obeying or following Moses himself, but also that Moses and the people moved forward under the authority of God. The authority vested in Moses was only a human point of reference, because the One who had liberated, accompanied and saved them was the Lord Himself.

Moses recognised that this authority was divine, as he said in his hymn of thanksgiving: *«Yahweh's portion was his people... Yahweh alone is his guide, with him is no alien god (Dt 32,9.12)*. He was simply a co-worker serving God in humility and with commitment. Even so, Moses had not yet understood how to steer his ministry to animate, lead and accompany the Israelites.

Seeing him in action, Jethro said to him, *"What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, while all the people stand around you from morning until evening?"* (v. 14). As Moses' confidence in the Lord grew stronger, he learnt that the role of animating a faith community did not mean having to bear the burden of all the problems himself, *"For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone."* (v. 18).

Whoever takes on spiritual authority in a community knows that the Lord walks with the brothers and sisters, and so the first thing they must do is to entrust them to Him. *«God will be with you. You ought to represent the people before God and bring their disputes to him. Teach them the statutes and the decisions; show them the way they must follow and what their course must be. But choose from the people at large some capable and God-fearing men, trustworthy and incorruptible, and appoint them as leaders of the people: leaders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, tens»* (vv.19-21). Moses followed the advice of his father-in-law, and the people walked in hope and peace towards the promised land (v. 24).

It is one thing to encourage, stimulate, motivate, and foster reasons for hope and commitment to a vocation and mission; but it is another thing to organise the work, allocate tasks, and foster participation and community co-responsibility. Both these areas become more important when everyone has a sense of being a community of individual vocations and of having been sent to a charismatic mission. Specific human skills are needed to create a co-responsible community,

but when Jesus wanted to make Peter the pastor of the Church, all He asked was: "*Do you love me? Feed my sheep*" (cf. Jn 21:15-19).

Those who receive from God the mandate of authority and governance of a community, through the Church/Congregation, must see themselves as a sister in the company of the sisters, someone who radiates enthusiasm and strength in searching for, interpreting and putting into practice their joint project according to the Will of God. Her first task is to offer a respectful and humble service to building up a community, living with one heart and one soul, as we see reflected in the first Christian community: *«The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed for his own use anything that he had, as everything they owned was held in common. The apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power, and they were all given great respect»* (Acts 4,32-33).

If we wished to sum up, in a few words, the relationship of interdependence between the service of authority and the attitude of obedience, we may usefully re-read the first letter to the Corinthians. This text stresses the primacy of love, or of hospitaller charity, which is the *«foundation and life»<sup>2</sup>* of our Institute. Neither human wisdom, nor education, nor science, nor striving to perform great deeds are sufficient; only mutual love, that springs from a living faith, that reaches the heart of God and responds to the charismatic vocation (vv. 1-3).

Our joint testimony to our support for God's plan for our life and mission requires us to adopt attitudes of humility, service, free-giving, truth, transparency and discernment (vv. 4-7). Mutual forgiveness and a climate of joy and fraternity increase faith and hope, as well as the capacity to persevere when beset by everyday difficulties (vv. 4-7).

Sisters who have a special mission to encourage communities/provinces/the Congregation know that *«Love never fails... now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.»* (vv. 8.13).

### ➤ **In the light of our spiritual heritage**

The word 'authority' comes from the Latin *augere*, which literally means to increase, to take shape, to develop, to grow, to invigorate, to strengthen, to make something prosper, and to sustain. We can therefore say that that authority is the quality, the power and the virtue that helps another person to grow, and to become what she has to be.

We can find useful lessons regarding the theme of authority in our hospitaller consecrated life by drawing on the experiences of Father Benedict Menni and Maria Josefa Recio, not only because they were our Founders, together with Maria Angustias, but because they jointly exercised religious authority to grow, sustain and give vigour to the first generations of sisters in their discipleship of Jesus the Good Samaritan. They accompanied, guided, corrected and strengthened them to enable them to move towards the essentials of the Hospitaller Consecrated Life, the centrality of the Lord Jesus, always alive and present, and the essential aspects of their own consecrated vocation and mission of service to His living Images.

Father Menni, as the director of the Congregation and María Josefa as first Superior, offer us valuable insights to question and shed light on authority and Gospel-based governance in our Congregation today.

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<sup>2</sup> *Constitutions*, 51.

While Fr Menni stands as a key moral authority as Founder and director, without being a superior in the strict sense of the term, Maria Josefa combines the canonical authority of the Superior with moral authority. Both exercised a complementary function of authority and governance, at various levels and ways, and mutual assisting each other.

Let us look at a few elements of Gospel-based authority in Fr Menni. Our Founder was aware of the fact that he directed and accompanied the first sisters as a function given to him by the Holy Spirit and not by his own choice, and as a mission from God: «*Fruit of this Divine Spirit is the foundation of your Congregation*»<sup>3</sup>.

The Congregation and the sisters that form it belonged to God and had a project and mission to which they had been called. «*You know that I love you dearly*»<sup>4</sup>, said Father Menni, and he therefore exercised his authority as a formator and discerned jointly with them, sharing and seeking the will of God together. After founding the Institute, our Founding Father involved Maria Josefa in its governance, and entrusted the sisters' formation to María Angustias<sup>5</sup>.

From then onwards, our Father continued to exercise other areas of religious authority. He directed the spiritual and apostolic development of all the sisters, and drafted the 1882 Constitutions placing the Congregation among the challenges to the world and the Church, and its relationship with and obedience to Cardinal Moreno, spelling out the identity of religious life and the features of the Congregation's Apostolic Mission. He added an organisational section dealing with the involvement of the sisters in the governing bodies and detailed many functional aspects, referring to the apostolic mission, formation and the vows. This organisational section was very important for learning about, and running, the Congregation.

In 1883, he instituted the Council following the death of our Mother Foundress to govern the Congregation jointly with the Mother President<sup>6</sup>, which would gradually be renewed until 1895, when the first General Chapter was convened.

He also examined opportunities for delivering our service to the mentally ill and concluded agreements with local government authorities.

In 1884, he separated the Administration of the Congregation from that of the Order of St. John of God. These functions of government, which had profound and far-reaching implications, were not merely a matter of strategy. He undertook a profound discernment of everything that had to do with the accompaniment and development of the Congregation, for it concerned his essential dedication as the Restorer of the Order and, later, as its Provincial Superior.

Father Menni taught the Sisters and helped them to assimilate the hospitaller spirituality regarding the service of Christ in the sick, and taught them how to treat them and to organise the hospitaller mission. He accompanied the sisters in every respect, and in great detail and, as Maria Angustias says, he was like a mother feeding his children according to their level of maturity at the time. Eventually, and after a period of preparation, he made them face up to, and take on their roles and responsibilities, such as admitting and serving the sick.

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<sup>3</sup> Letter 587.

<sup>4</sup> RMA p. 83.

<sup>5</sup> RMA p. 166.

<sup>6</sup> RMA p. 248.

He planned and financially supported the expansion of the Ciempozuelos House and subsequently, gradually and according to the needs and possibilities.

Although he also became the Provincial of the Hospitaller Order in Spain in 1884, he continued to visit the communities and the sisters personally, as far as he could, providing personalised care to each one of them, always directing them to the Heart of Christ, to the joy of the vocation, and to gratitude for and faithfulness to the Constitutions.

He encouraged, supported, clarified and taught the sisters the spiritual and material aspects of their vocation, correcting and guiding them. *"The direction our Father gives his daughters is like the way a loving mother treats her children to lead them along the right path"*<sup>7</sup>. This approach to accompaniment is particularly important, and involves seeking what is good, and then moving towards it.

Making allowances for the differences between the sisters and their individual characters, Fr Menni adjusted the way he accompanied them *«He tenderly lavished his love on the weakest sisters and was more demanding on the strongest»*<sup>8</sup>. In his numerous letters this emerges very clearly.

In 1909, when Fr Menni offered his project for a life of discipleship of Christ that he had written for the Congregation, namely, the Constitutions, he called the sisters to take on board and personalise its values<sup>9</sup>. This is a very important function of spiritual authority. Each Sister is called to embrace the vocation, the way of life and the mission, lovingly and freely, internalising it in their hearts and taking ownership of it. Authority is not only to safeguard the external order and merely ensure a properly functioning organisation, but also means fostering a radical experience of what is truly essential.

María Josefa Recio accompanied Father Menni as the first superior and Foundress of the Congregation. She was appointed Superior by Fr Menni, because, according to Maria Angustias, she was older than her<sup>10</sup>, and a more advantaged student in the spiritual<sup>11</sup>. *«She showed our Father a tender and respectful love, which she had built up, and would have willingly given her blood to help relieve him of the burden of his many duties (...) she therefore sacrificed herself to help him, and as far as she could, she always seconded our Father's efforts»*<sup>12</sup>.

Our Father's authority and governance, both regarding the organisation and the structural development of the Institute, together with providing spiritual direction, was completed with a female authority the one of Maria Josefa's who nurtured the life of the Institute, and was always present in its daily life from within, fostering the union of hearts, and greatly rejoicing when the Sisters overcame difficulties<sup>13</sup>.

When caring for the sisters, she was attentive to their feelings in their daily lives, and witnessed their hospitaller dedication, choosing the most arduous tasks, making allowances for the different characters and potential of each sister, attentive to the needs of her daughters, with a special dedication to the sisters with a difficult temperament, handling them with patience,

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<sup>7</sup> RMA p. 181.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Letter 730.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. RMA p. 145.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. RMA p. 214-215.

<sup>12</sup> RMA p. 242.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. RMA p. 236.

and at the right moment to make them see the difficulties for themselves, and thereby achieve self-acceptance and forgiveness<sup>14</sup>.

With her experience of the Charism of Hospitality, María Josefa was a driver of the apostolic mission with a great ability to meet needs, being the first one to undertake daily duties and then involve the others, organising the community to serve in the apostolic mission. She was a shining example of how to exercise Gospel-based authority as a service, and not as power.

This joint model of authority and governance is an example of Gospel-inspired and human greatness, with the allocation of different levels and areas of animation and government, contemplating both the great and the small, the extraordinary and the ordinary, taken as a whole. We can see the spiritual human animation within the community and the mission, and the ecclesial and social aspects, the part it played in the area of healthcare, and the changes needed in the organisation and structure of the Congregation to ensure its future development.

### ➤ **In the light of the Magisterium of the Church**

The main mission of authority in Religious Life is to search for God's will together with those who have been called to the same vocation. For that, *«It is equally important to carry out such a search together with the brothers or the sisters; it is this which unites them, making them a family united to Christ»*<sup>15</sup>.

The quality of authority depends on obedience to the Word of God. In order to promote the spiritual life based on the constant search for God's will and guide the sisters to faithfully do His will:

*«will have to cultivate first in themselves an openness to listening to others and to the signs of the times through a daily familiarity in prayer with the Word of God, with the Rule and the other norms of life, in an attitude of willingness to listen to both others and the signs of the times»*<sup>16</sup>.

On this matter, we can learn from what Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI said in his homily at the beginning of his Pontificate, expressing his desire to remain in a state of humble seeking and searching, to ensure that would be as consistent as possible with God's will.

*«My real programme of governance is not to do my own will, not to pursue my own ideas, but to listen, together with the whole Church, to the Word and the will of the Lord, to be guided by Him, so that He himself will lead the Church at this hour of our history»*<sup>17</sup>.

Animating, governing and accompanying the sisters along the path of fidelity to the hospitaller vocation is no easy task, which makes it necessary for everyone *«sharpen the ability to see the encounters of this task in faith, in order that might be inspired to have the attitude of Jesus the Servant who washes the feet of his apostles so that they might have a part in his life and in his love (cf. Jn 13, 1-17)»*<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. RMA 227-228.

<sup>15</sup> CIVCSVA, *The service of authority and obedience*, 2008, n.12.

<sup>16</sup> *Idem*, 13.

<sup>17</sup> Homily of Pope Benedict XVI, OR of 24/04/2005.

<sup>18</sup> *The service of authority and obedience*, n. 12.

This dimension of faith is very important for ensuring that our obedience is responsible, and does not focus on the person in authority, who is also a mediator and equally subject to obedience. Church doctrine teaches us that:

*«First of all, obedience is an attitude of a son or daughter. It is that particular kind of listening that only a son or daughter can do in listening to his or her parent, because it is enlightened by the certainty that the parent has only good things to say and give to him or her. This is a listening, full of the trust, that makes a son or daughter accept the parent's will, sure that it will be for his or her own good»<sup>19</sup>.*

In our efforts to act according to God's will, it is necessary to fully understand religious authority and obedience, as well as the relationship between the sister exercising authority and the sisters who, jointly with her, implement the community project, to avoid falling into authoritarianism, aimless freedom, or childlike submission.

*«Are not therefore two distinct realities or things absolutely opposed but rather two dimensions of the same evangelical reality, of the same Christian mystery, two complementary ways of participating in the same oblation of Christ. Authority and obedience are personified in Jesus: for this reason they must be understood in direct relation to him and in a real configuration to him»<sup>20</sup>.*

The Fraternal Life in Community document reminds us of the principles of the kind of religious government in which authority creates unity among the members and guarantees communion.

*An Authority «is one concerned to create a climate favourable to sharing and co-responsibility, to encourage all to contribute to the affairs of all, to encourage members to assume and to respect responsibility; to promote, by their respect for the human person, voluntary obedience; to listen willingly to the members, promoting their harmonious collaboration for the good of the institute and the Church; to engage in dialogue and offer timely opportunities for encounter»<sup>21</sup>.*

One of the functions of authority is to know how to take decisions co-responsibly and collegially, through dialogue, and to ensure that they are acted upon. Community discernment requires human skills, spiritual wisdom, and personal detachment. When practised with faith and seriously, it offers the best conditions for taking the right decisions needed for the good of fraternal life and the mission.

Here are some important priorities in the service of authority. The sister who exercises it may be regarded as "a servant of the servants of God": *«Authority has as its main task building in unity the brothers and sisters of "a fraternal community, in which God is sought and loved above all»<sup>22</sup>.*

Rereading n.13 of the Instruction "The service of authority and obedience" Persons in authority are spiritual *«when they place themselves at the service of what the Spirit wants to realise through the gifts which he distributes to every member of the community, in the charismatic Project of the institute. (...) Demands a persevering presence, able to enliven and take initiative, to recall*

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<sup>19</sup> *The service of authority and obedience* n. 5.

<sup>20</sup> *The service of authority and obedience*, n. 12.

<sup>21</sup> CIVCSVA, Fraternal life in community, (FLC) 1994, n. 50.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*.

*the d'être of consecrated life, to help the persons entrusted to you to correspond with ever renewed fidelity to the call of the Spirit».*

It is also her responsibility to keep alive the charism of her Religious family in a spirit of creative fidelity: *«keeping it carefully and making it real in the local community and in the province or the entire institute according to the plans and orientations offered, in particular by the General Chapters».*

The same document also states that the commitment to follow Jesus is undertaken within the Church, with which we believe and engage in dialogue, and which we serve; for that *“person in authority have the task of helping to keep alive the sense of faith and of ecclesial communion, in the midst of a people that recognizes and praises the wonders of God, witnessing to the joy of belonging to him in the great family of the Church”.*

In difficult situations of discouragement, crisis or deviation, *«the one who leads the community will recall the perennial values of this kind of life, because today, as yesterday, and as always, nothing is more important, beautiful and true than spending one's own life in the service of the Lord and for the littlest of his children».*

The *Instruction* uses the image of the Good Shepherd speaking about the person who animates and governs her sisters, who offers them the help they need, at all levels, and assures them of the accompaniment they require in every stage in their lives.

*«Leaders of the community are like the Good Shepherd who gives his life for the sheep, because even in the critical moment they do not retreat, but are present, participating in the concerns and the difficulties of the people confided to their care, involving themselves personally; and like the Good Samaritan they will be ready to care for any possible wounds»<sup>23</sup>.*

## ➤ **Community Prayer**

*We propose a time for community prayer which each Community can organise according to their circumstances, and it would be interesting to use this week of **Enlightenment** to strengthen the climate of discernment and praise. A time of celebration already planned might also be used, and giving it the appropriate spiritual motivation.*

## **II Week: Revision**

### **Methodological Guidance:**

- 1. Present the objective of the second week.*
- 2. Motivate the reflection and evaluation of personal and community life.*
- 3. Prepare to share in common.*
- 4. Set the date for the community meeting.*

## ➤ **Revision of personal and community life**

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<sup>23</sup> *The service of authority and obedience, n. 13.*

Mindful of the reflections carried out so far, let us devote time to contemplating authority and government in our Congregation and conduct a review of our personal and community life especially in terms of this particular area. The following questions may be of help:

1. What ideas, aspects, enlightenment, desire filled my heart in last week's reflection?
2. What does the mediation of authority-obedience contribute to living the faith, and practising the charism and the mission?
3. What would we need to correct or foster to make religious governance a matter of dialogue, co-responsibility and participation?
4. What contributions to the Constitutions can give more life and enrich the mission of evangelisation?

**Sharing in Community:** Convene a Community meeting to share the main aspects that can help us to move forward along this path of revitalisation.

## ➤ **Prayer of the community**

### **1. Psalm to give life**

Lord, give me the courage to risk my life for you,  
the boundless joy of devoting all I am to serving you.  
Give me, Lord, wings to fly and feet to walk  
beside the people waiting for me.  
Let me give myself, Lord, to "give life to others"  
in my everyday life.  
Give me, Lord, the desire to give myself wholly,  
to set aside my life to serve the vulnerable.  
Lord, make me a builder of Your life,  
to spread your Kingdom,  
help me to pitch my tent in the world of the sick  
to carry to them the treasure of your saving love.  
Make me, Lord, obedient to your Spirit  
to be led to give my life for the Cross,  
to bring the life that shoots when the seed dies in the soil.

### **1. Prayer to be ready to serve**

Lord, make my eyes bring peace  
and inspire trust and a sense of calm.  
May my mouth utter the right words  
to guide others to do good, to speak of love  
and to spread your message, and proclaim your kingdom.  
Give my mind righteous thoughts,  
pure, fair, firm, and renewing thoughts.  
Enable my ears to listen,  
and to hear the people who need me.

Give my lips genuine smiles and prudent words  
 that give others a sense of peace, welcome, joy and optimism.  
 Give my hands the ability to tenderly caress  
 and offer the great support to those who ask for them.  
 Give my heart the noblest feelings  
 and the ability to love without limits.  
 Give my feet the power to walk without fainting,  
 to bring into reality the utopias that can help us  
 to establish your Kingdom on earth.  
 Imbue my life with the gentleness of hospitality,  
 that makes me show mercy and compassion  
 to all the people I meet along my path.

### III Week: Inputs

#### Suggested methodology:

1. Present the fact of the sheet as a whole.
2. Motivate the community to revise the text of the Constitutions responsibly
3. Share and note down the aspects of change which can drive to a better Hospitaller formation
4. Record the changes suggested for each number in the grid.
5. Send the summary to the Province the following week.

#### Authority and religious government in the Constitutions

Numbers of Constitutions	Inputs
<p><b>The superior, sign of union</b></p> <p><b>57</b> The superior, a sign of union in the community, fosters fraternal love and animates community life in all its dimensions.</p> <p>Together with her we are all responsible and united in the hopes, successes and failures of the community and we all take an active part in animating the same.</p>	
<p><b>Authority, foundation</b></p> <p><b>98</b> All authority comes from God, and all that exists was appointed by God.</p> <p>The service of authority in the Congregation is an expression of the authority of Christ, from whom it was received through the hierarchy of the Church, since it was accepted and approved by her.</p> <p>Its mission is to guide and animate community life and apostolic action, as a help to our sanctification and the service of the Church.</p>	
<p><b>Co-responsibility</b></p>	

<p><b>99</b> The very hospitaller vocation which unites us implies the participation of us all in the life and mission of the Congregation. Those who exercise the service of authority should encourage co-responsibility in all the sisters by means of information, dialogue and consultation. We all collaborate from our own specific situation.</p>	
<p><b>Subsidiarity</b></p> <p><b>100</b> Subsidiarity, unity and charity, based on trust and loyalty, are the principles which regulate relationships between the superiors at the different levels, and with the sisters.</p> <p>Each one should be accorded the relative autonomy needed for the fulfilment of her office, and given the resources to carry it out. She should be replaced only if she asks for it or when required by the common good.</p>	
<p><b>Our laws</b></p> <p><b>101</b> We claim the following of Christ, according to the Gospel as the supreme rule of our life and we obediently accept the norms of Universal Law which relate to us. These Constitutions, approved by the Church, are the basic law of the Institute and the authentic interpretation of them pertains to the Apostolic See.</p> <p>In them is expressed our way of living the Gospel through religious consecration in our hospitaller life.</p> <p>The Directory and other norms of the Congregation determine the practical manner of fulfilling the Constitutions, according to circumstance of time and/ or place.</p>	
<p><b>Authority of the Pope</b></p> <p><b>102</b> The supreme authority in our Institute is the Pope, to whom we owe obedience, even in virtue of the vow. We accept all the direction given by his magisterium.</p>	
<p><b>Internal authority</b></p> <p><b>103</b> Supreme internal authority in our Congregation is exercised extraordinarily by the General Chapter, and ordinarily by the General superior, assisted by her councillors.</p> <p>The exercise of authority is shared at the different levels by the Provincial superiors, Vice Provincials and the Local Superiors, assisted by their respective councillors.</p>	
<p><b>Organic structure</b></p> <p><b>104</b> All the sisters form one, sole body united by the bond of charity and our common vocation. The Congregation, like a living organism, is made up of communities, duly established, and integrated into provinces and vice provinces.</p>	
<p><b>The Province</b></p>	

<p><b>105</b> The province, canonically established by lawful authority, is part of the Congregation. It consists, as stated in the Directory, of several houses, which have a special relationship among themselves and which shared personnel and goods.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of the Provincial superior who, as a Major superior, governs it with her ordinary authority.</p> <p>The province is a legal entity with due autonomy of life and government. It should be established when required by the mission of the Congregation, in conformity with our own Proper Law.</p>	
<p><b>The Vice Province</b></p> <p><b>106</b> A Vice may be set up in those countries where there exist conditions necessary for an autonomous life but where it is not possible to constitute a province.</p>	
<p><b>Establishment, modification and closure</b></p> <p><b>107</b> The establishment, modification and closure of provinces and vice provinces pertains to the General Chapter, and, apart from that, to the General superior, with the consent of her councillors, after hearing the opinion of the Provincial or Vice Provincial Superior and their respective councillors.</p>	
<p><b>House</b></p> <p><b>108</b> A religious house is a legally constituted community, made up of a variable number of sisters who live in the same place, share fraternally in the same charisma, and, under the authority of the Local Superior, carry out the mission entrusted to them.</p> <p>The establishment, modification and closure pertains to the General Superior, with the deliberative vote of her councillors, when she has Heard the opinion of the Provincial Superior and her Council, and according to the norms of Canon Law. Some houses may depend directly on the General superior.</p>	
<p><b>Delegation</b></p> <p><b>109</b> When the case so requires, some houses of the province may form a delegation dependent on the Provincial or General Government.</p> <p>The creation, modification and suppression of delegations is the responsibility of the General Superior, with the consent of her councillors. When dealing with a delegation dependent on a province she will listen to the opinion of the Provincial Superior and her Council.</p>	
<p><b>Incardination</b></p> <p><b>110</b> Each sister is incorporated into the Institute by first profession and belongs to the province which admitted her.</p>	

<p>The General Superior may decide that sisters may belong to another province or vice province. A sister is definitely incorporated into our religious-hospitaller family by perpetual profession and then possesses active and passive voice.</p>	
<p><b>Filling official posts</b></p> <p><b>111</b> Official posts in chapters are filled by election, with an absolute majority of votes of all present in the first and second ballots, and by a relative majority in the third, except in the election of the General Superior. Acceptance on the part of the one elected is required.</p> <p>Outside the time of chapters, the competent superior makes the appointment with the consent of her councillors, according to the norms of the Directory. If it happens in the elections that two sisters obtain the same number of votes, the one elected will be the one who is senior in profession, and if they are of the same seniority, it will be the senior in age.</p>	
<p><b>Postulation</b></p> <p><b>112</b> Postulation for posts will take place only in extraordinary cases and for the good of the Congregation, keeping in mind Canon Law. Two thirds of the votes are required for the validity of the postulation.</p>	
<p><b>Renunciation of an office</b></p> <p><b>113</b> The person who is competent to fill a post has also the authority to accept or not to accept except in certain special cases determined by the Proper Law of our Institute. For grave reasons, or if required for the greater good of the Congregation, the holder of an office may be removed from it, in accordance with Universal Law, by the authority which conferred it, or confirmed her in it. However before this she should be invited to offer her resignation.</p>	
<p><b>Concept</b></p> <p><b>114</b> The General Chapter represents the whole Congregation and is a collegial expression of the sharing of all its members in its life and apostolic mission.</p> <p>Lived in faith and fraternity it is an important time of renewal. We should all collaborate actively and responsibly, with an attitude of docility to the Spirit in an atmosphere of earnest prayer and true conversion, to make it a real paschal event. All the sisters may freely send their suggestions to the General Chapter.</p>	
<p><b>Convocation</b></p> <p><b>115</b> The General chapter is ordinarily held every six years. It is convoked by the General Superior, whose duty it is to decide, with the consent of her councillors, the time and place in which it is to be held, following the norms of the Directory.</p>	

<p>It pertains to the General Superior to preside at the Chapter, to convoke the sessions and propose the questions to be discussed.</p>	
<p><b>Members by right and elected members</b></p> <p><b>116</b> Members with the right to attend the General chapter are: the General Superior, the councillors, bursar and secretary; the provincial and Vice-provincials, or, in the case of a lawful impediment, their vicars, according to the Directory.</p> <p>Members by election are the sisters of perpetual vows elected in the provinces and vice provinces, in accordance with the Directory, in number no less than that of the ex-office members.</p>	
<p><b>Powers of the General chapter</b></p> <p><b>117</b> The General chapter deals with the most important business of the Congregation. It is competence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to examine the state of the Congregation and to promote its spiritual and apostolic vitality and continual renewal in fidelity to our Hospitaller charism;</li> <li>- to study the matters which must be submitted for approval by the Holy See;</li> <li>- to interpret by practical statements, the meaning of the Constitutions, and discuss the formulation, repeal or modification, of any of its numbers;</li> <li>- to give and take decisions on points which relate to the whole Institute;</li> <li>- to examine the administration of temporal goods and see if it abides by the spirit of poverty, justice and charity;</li> <li>- to elect the General superior; the general councillors, bursar and secretary, in accordance with the Constitutions;</li> <li>- to formulate, modify or repeal, if needed, the norm of the Directory.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Election of the General Superior</b></p> <p><b>118</b> The General superior is elected by an absolute majority of votes in the first, second or third ballot. If an absolute majority is not obtained in the third ballot, a fourth is held, in which only the two sisters who obtained the greatest number of votes in the third ballot have passive but not an active voice. The one who obtain a majority in the fourth ballot is elected.</p> <p>If there is a tie in the fourth ballot, the senior in profession is elected and if they are equal in this, then the senior in age is elected.</p> <p>The general councillors, bursar and secretary cease to hold office at the election of the General Superior, and a new election for these offices is held. Thus a new six-year term begins from the date of the election of the General Superior.</p>	
<p><b>Validity of decisions</b></p>	

<p><b>119</b> Two-thirds of the lawfully convoked members must be present for decisions to be valid.</p> <p>Matters to be dealt with by the Chapter will be decided by secret votes, except in the case of less important decisions, at the judgement of the Chapter itself.</p> <p>Two-thirds of the votes are required for petition to the Holy See to modify some points of the Constitutions. An absolutely majority of votes is sufficient to repeal or modify the norms of the Directory.</p>	
<p><b>General chapter during a vacancy</b></p> <p><b>120</b> When the office of General superior is left vacant by resignation, removal or death, the vicar general convokes the General chapter within six months of the date of the vacancy, and with the deliberative vote of the councillors, she decides on the date and place for it to be held.</p>	
<p><b>Extraordinary chapter</b></p> <p><b>121</b> In special cases, at the judgment of the General Superior, with the deliberative vote of her councillors and when she has heard the opinion of the Provincial and Vice provincial superiors, the General Superior may convoke an extraordinary General chapter within a time suited to the urgency of the matter and allowing for its due preparation.</p>	
<p><b>The General superior</b></p> <p><b>122</b> The General superior is a sign of union between the Congregation and the Church and the centre on unity within the Congregation, in which she is always the highest ordinary authority.</p> <p>She represents the Institute in her own right and she has direct authority over all the sisters, provinces and houses. Her term of office is six years, at the end of which she may be re-elected but only for a second term.</p>	
<p><b>Requisites</b></p> <p><b>123</b> The General Superior must be a sister completely identified with the charism of the Institute. She must have love for the Church, a life of prayer, prudence and fortitude so as to be able to assume the responsibility of the charge.</p> <p>She must be at least thirty-five years of age and five years perpetually professed.</p>	
<p><b>Powers</b></p> <p><b>124</b> It is the General Superior's duty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to foster and encourage fidelity to the Gospel, to the directives of the Church and to our Hospitaller charism;</li> <li>- to watch over the mission and the faithful fulfilment of the Constitutions, Directory and the decisions of the General chapter;</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to create a family atmosphere in the Congregation by means of circular letters, visits and other ways she judges suitable;</li> <li>- in fraternal union to assist Provincial Superiors and councillors in matters connected with their office;</li> <li>- to delegate appropriate faculties when required by circumstances;</li> <li>- to visit the houses of the Congregation either herself, or through a delegate, in accordance with what is established in the Directory;</li> <li>- to foster pastoral work for vocations and to urge and take care of unity in formation;</li> <li>- to move sisters from one province to another, taking account of the good of the sisters themselves and of the Congregation;</li> <li>- to administer the Congregation's possessions in accordance with Universal Law and within the norms of our Congregation;</li> <li>- in special cases to dispense sisters and communities, from some disciplinary norms of the Congregation.</li> <li>- Appoint the general bursar and secretary with the consent of their councillors.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Vacancy</b></p> <p><b>125</b> The office of General superior may be left vacant through death, resignation, dismissal or inability to exercise it.</p> <p>If the General Superior believes that she should resign from her office, she should explain her reasons to the Apostolic See, which has the authority to accept her resignation.</p> <p>If, for grave reasons, the general councillors judge that the General Superior should be removed from office, they should present the case of the Apostolic See and abide by its decision.</p>	
<p><b>General councillors</b></p> <p><b>126</b> There should be at least four general councillors, as established in the Directory. In a collegial spirit they help the General Superior in the governance of the Congregation in all that pertains to its life and mission and they discuss the more important matters with her, giving their consent or opinion as laid down by Universal Law and in our own constitutions or when the General Superior herself asks for it.</p> <p>Together with the General Superior the councillors are a discerning community giving spiritual and apostolic animation, forming among themselves a relationship of charity based on the trust and loyalty, which is guarantee of good government.</p>	
<p><b>Requirements</b></p> <p><b>127</b> To be elected as general councillor a sister must be professed of perpetual vows and be endowed with the human spiritual qualities which enable her to fulfil the mission entrusted to her.</p>	

<p>General councillors are elected for six years, and may be re-elected.</p> <p>If the office of one of them should fall vacant, the General Superior, with the consent of her councillors, appoints another sister to take her place.</p>	
<p><b>Elections during a vacancy</b></p> <p><b>128</b> When a new General superior has to be elected, because of death or any other reason, there will also be a new election for general councillors, and appointment of the bursar and secretary general.</p>	
<p><b>General Vicar</b></p> <p><b>129</b> The general vicar is the first of the councillors and is elected first.</p> <p>She takes the General Superior's place in case of absence or inability, and replaces her in the case of death, resignation or deposition.</p> <p>If the general vicar is absent or impeded, the other councillors will take her place, in order of their election.</p>	
<p><b>The General bursar</b></p> <p><b>130</b> The general bursar is a perpetually professed sister who, dependent to the General Superior, administers the temporal possessions of the Congregation.</p> <p>She should do this in a spirit of justice, charity and poverty, for the benefit of the religious family and the hospitaller mission, according to the guidance and norms of the Church and of our Congregation.</p> <p>She gives account of her administration of the Congregation's possessions to the General Superior and her council and to the General chapter at the times appointed by the Directory and whenever the General Superior and her councillors ask for it. She keeps in contact with the provincial bursars.</p> <p>She may also be a councillor, but not the first one. She is appointed for six years, and can be reappointed.</p>	
<p><b>General secretary</b></p> <p><b>131</b> The general secretary is a perpetually professed sister. She helps the General superior and her councillors in the exercise of their functions, and writes the minutes of the council meetings and draws up its official documents.</p> <p>She has charge of the co-ordination and working of the general secretariat and maintains contact with the provincial secretaries.</p> <p>She should possess love for the Congregation, prudence and be capable of guarding confidentiality. She may also be a councillor,</p>	

<p>but not the first. She is appointed for six years, and can be reappointed.</p>	
<p><b>Plenary Council</b></p> <p><b>132</b> The General superior is assisted in her government by the Plenary council, made up of all the general councillors, the Provincial and Vice provincial superiors.</p> <p>This is a consultive organ, and the affairs submitted to this Council will be those decided by the General superior with her councillors.</p>	
<p><b>The Provincial chapter</b></p> <p><b>133</b> The Provincial chapter is a collegial body which exercises in an extraordinary way the highest authority in the province, according to what is laid down in our own Proper Law.</p> <p>It represents the participation and collaboration of all the members of the province.</p> <p>It is ordinarily held every six years, at the time and place determined by the Provincial Superior, with the consent of her councillors, and previously agreed with the General Superior.</p> <p>It is convoked by the Provincial Superior or, failing her, by the provincial vicar, according to the Directory. The General Superior, or her delegate, presides over it.</p>	
<p><b>The extraordinary Chapter</b></p> <p><b>134</b> The extraordinary Provincial chapter is held whenever it is considered opportune for the good of the province, at the judgement of the Provincial Superior, with the consent of the councillors.</p> <p>The approval of the General Superior and her Council is also required.</p>	
<p><b>Members by right and elected members</b></p> <p><b>135</b> Members of the Provincial chapter by right are the Provincial Superior, councillors, bursar and secretary and the superiors of delegations dependent on the province.</p> <p>Members by election are the perpetually professed sisters elected in the manner appointed by the Directory, to number no less than that of the ex officio members.</p> <p>All the sisters of the province have the right and duty to take part in the chapter, by collaborating in the preparatory work by means of suggestions and principally by prayer.</p>	
<p><b>Authority of the Chapter</b></p> <p><b>136</b> It pertains to the Provincial chapter, in an atmosphere of evangelical freedom, in fidelity to the Holy Spirit and to the charism of our congregation:</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to evaluate and foster the spiritual, fraternal and apostolic life of the province, in accord with the Church’s directives, and those of the Constitutions and Directory;</li> <li>- to apply the decisions of the General chapter to the needs and concrete situation of the communities of the province, giving clear and practical guidance;</li> <li>- to encourage and offer guidelines for action in pastoral work for vocations and for the sisters’ formation;</li> <li>- to examine the administration of the possessions of the province, according to the norms of the Directory;</li> <li>- to elect the Provincial Superior and councillors.</li> </ul> <p>Decisions taken in the Provincial chapter need the approval of the General superior and her council, and come into force only after they have been approved and published.</p>	
<p><b>The Provincial superior</b></p> <p><b>137</b> The Provincial Superior governs the province with ordinary authority as a Major superior, according to the norms of the Universal Law and our own Law.</p> <p>She has direct authority overall the houses and the sisters of the province.</p> <p>She should love the Church and the Congregation, possess a life of prayer, have suitable experience and the human and religious qualities which enable her to fulfil the mission entrusted to her with prudence and charity.</p> <p>Election in the Provincial chapter is for six years according to the norm of the Directory; there can be no re-election.</p> <p>She must be perpetually professed, for at least five years.</p>	
<p><b>Authority of the Provincial superior</b></p> <p><b>138</b> It pertains to the Provincial Superior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to maintain in the province the awareness of the ecclesial dimension of religious life, always preserving the unity of the charism, in communion with the whole Congregation;</li> <li>- to encourage and guide the religious life according to our hospitaller charism;</li> <li>- to foster fidelity to the Constitutions, the norms of the Directory, the guidance coming from the chapters and the directives of the General Superior;</li> <li>- to visit the houses of the province frequently, besides making the canonical visitation</li> <li>- to strive that the province may be responsible and committed to pastoral work for vocations and health-care;</li> <li>- to grant dispensation from some points of discipline in particular cases;</li> <li>- to administer the province’s possessions;</li> <li>- to approve the formation programme for the sisters in the different stages and to see that they are followed;</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to live in close communion with the General Superior and to keep her informed about the life and mission of the province;</li> <li>- to assist the local superiors and the formators with their charges;</li> <li>- to allocate the members of the province, bearing in mind the good of the sisters, of the communities and of the mission;</li> <li>- to grant the permission needed for sisters to publish articles on religious and moral matters.</li> <li>- appoint the provincial bursa and secretary with the consent of their counsellors.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Provincial councillors</b></p> <p><b>139</b> The Provincial Superior is assisted in the government of the province by the provincial councillors, who will be at least two, in accord with the Directory.</p> <p>They are elected by the Provincial chapter for six years, and may be re-elected.</p> <p>Provincial councillors must be perpetual professed sisters, prudent and lovers of the Congregation; with concern for the apostolate and a spirit of service. They need the qualities and experience required for the fulfilment of their office.</p>	
<p><b>Mission of the provincial councillors</b></p> <p><b>140</b> the provincial councillors collaborate effectively with the Provincial Superior in the mission entrusted to her.</p> <p>With the Provincial Superior, they form a discerning community for spiritual and apostolic animation. Among themselves they create a relationship of charity based on loyalty and trust, which is the guarantee of good government.</p> <p>To them and the Provincial Superior, applies in due proportion all that has been said about the general councillors with respect to the government of the Congregation. Their consent or opinion is given when stated in Universal Law or if the law of our Institute demands it.</p>	
<p><b>The Provincial vicar</b></p> <p><b>141</b> The provincial vicar is the first of the councillors and is the first one elected. She acts for the Provincial superior when she is absent or impede, and she takes her place in case of death, resignation or dismissal.</p>	
<p><b>The Provincial bursar an Provincial secretary</b></p> <p><b>142</b> The provincial bursar and provincial secretary have, in due proportion, the same attributes, within the province, as the general bursar and the general secretary have for the whole Congregation.</p> <p>They should have the same qualities as those required for them, and are appointed in the manner indicated in the Directory.</p>	
<p><b>Cessation of office</b></p>	

<p><b>143</b> The councillors, provincial bursar and secretary cease to hold office with the election of the new Provincial Superior, proceeding the Chapter to new election of the counsellors. Thus begins a new regular sexennium from that date.</p>	
<p><b>Government of a vice province</b></p> <p><b>144</b> The internal life and government of a vice province re the same as that of the provinces, except in the cases mentioned in the Directory. The Vice Provincial Superior is a Major superior, and in order to be appointed she must have at least five years of perpetual vows.</p>	
<p><b>The Local Superior</b></p> <p><b>145</b> The Local Superior has ordinary authority over the sisters of her community. She is a perpetually professed sister, with a life of prayer, love for the Church and the Congregation, who is prudent and able to foster community life. She is appointed by the Provincial Superior, with the consent of her councillors after due consultation. This needs confirmation by the General Superior with the deliberative consent of her councillors. She is appointed for three years, and may be confirmed for a second three-years period consecutively in the same house.</p>	
<p><b>Responsibilities</b></p> <p><b>146</b> The mission of the local Superior, in accord with the Constitution is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to encourage spiritual life, foster fraternal charity and to advance apostolic action;</li> <li>- to see that the instructions of the Church magisterium, the Constitutions and other norms of the Institute are known and observed;</li> <li>- to keep the local community united to the provincial community, to the Congregation and to the Church;</li> <li>- to live in communion with the Provincial Superior and keep her informed of the life and mission of the community;</li> <li>- with love and care to advance the sisters 'good, helping them to be faithful to their consecration and to the charism of the Institute;</li> <li>- to dispense from some disciplinary norms in special cases;</li> <li>- to correct the sisters lovingly according to the spirit of the Gospel;</li> <li>- to encourage the sisters' interest in their on-going formation in vocational and hospitaller pastoral work;</li> <li>- to acts as representative of the centre and of the community and administer their possessions in accord with the local councillors and with the help of the sister bursar;</li> <li>- to grant the permission required for preaching to the sisters in our churches or oratories.</li> </ul> <p>Representation and the administration of the centre may be vested in another person when its complex nature advises such a course.</p>	

<p>All the sisters should collaborate with the superior in a family spirit, with the work we do, and contribute to the community the gifts we have received from God.</p>	
<p><b>The Delegate Superior</b></p> <p><b>147</b> When several houses form a delegation the Delegate superior governs with the power and attributes conferred upon her by the Superior who delegate with the consent of her councillors.</p>	
<p><b>Local councillors</b></p> <p><b>148</b> The Superior is assisted in the mission entrusted to her by her councillors, appointed in number and in the way indicated in the Directory.</p> <p>The first councillor is the vice superior, who acts as her substitute in her absence, and whenever she is impeded by any cause.</p> <p>The councillors must foster union among the sisters and with the Superior.</p>	
<p><b>The Bursar</b></p> <p><b>149</b> In each community there is a sister bursar, appointed in accord with the Directory, who, in accord with the Superior, administers the temporal possessions. She carries out her work in a spirit of service, poverty, generosity and diligence. She gives an account of her administration to the Local Superior and her councillors in the way appointed by the Directory.</p>	

## IV Week: Celebration

### **Methodology:**

1. *It is very important to celebrate the steps of the way we have walked.*
2. *Prepare a celebration of prayer and another festive celebration.*
3. *We end up giving the fact sheet n. 12.*