



# REVISION OF CONSTITUTIONS

## WAY OF REVITALIZATION

# 12

## ADMINISTRATION OF GOODS IN THE CONGREGATION



Rome, 2019-2021

## Constitutions and Administration of goods in the Congregation

*«Sound management doubles  
the resources of charity  
to do good to one's neighbour.»*

Const. 1883, 24.3

Our **spiritual pathway** has now led us to our final theme: the Administration of the Goods of the Congregation which the Constitutions address in numbers 150 to 154. This Facts sheet 12 therefore marks the end of the first stage of our reflection.

It is very important to address the issue of the administration of goods, because it gives us the opportunity to expand knowledge and deepen the responsibility to manage them according to the Gospel and the charism.

The enlightenment from the words of Jesus Christ and the Magisterium of the Church makes it possible to appreciate, quite clearly, the value and success of congregational doctrine, from our Founders. May this reflection help us to assume personal and community responsibility, not only in the management of material resources, but also in recognizing and sharing the talents received for the common good.

The XXI General Chapter states that the economic dimension is closely bound up with people and the mission, since the economy determines crucial decisions regarding life, one of which is the need to bear transparent testimony to the Gospel, attentive to the needs of our brothers and sisters in the contemporary world, both internally and externally.

### **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: Illumination**

### **➤ In the light of the Word**

When we talk about goods, it is money that immediately springs to mind. Yet we have other even more important goods which determine how we use the money. We talk about personal, community, and institutional values. Material goods are there to meet human needs and are always used to enable the life and mission of the Congregation in practical terms: to care for people, the sisters and the sick.

When Zacchaeus decided to give away most of his possessions, that had made him a rich man, it was because his encounter with Jesus revealed two things to him: the emptiness of his material wealth and the dignity of the poor he had taken advantage of (Lk 19:1-10).

Jesus' words "*today, salvation has come to this home*" underlines the fact that social justice places the person at the heart of all human activity; the goods that belong to all are intended to be used to enhance the quality of life for all, as we build up our "common home".

This parable of Jesus immediately follows that of minas, or talents (Lk 19:11-26), in which the Lord explains that each of us is responsible for multiplying the gifts we have received for the good of others, because not to do so will mean that we are unfaithful and lazy servants. It appears that the owner of the minas did not expect to enrich himself with the money, for the text does not make it clear whether he had kept the minas earned by his servants, but it does tell us that he entrusted the ones who had managed the money well with caring for the people, and running the towns. Conversely, the unfaithful managers suffered the same fate as the withered fig tree (Mk 11:12-14) which had been unrooted from the ground and cast into the fire.

No wonder Jesus warns us against the eagerness to make sure we can meet all our needs and being excessively concerned about our own life (Lk 12:22-23). What brought joy to Zacchaeus and what rewarded the earned faithful administrators with the blessing of God, was not the earthly goods but the ability to keep up a loving relationship with the Lord, that leads to discovering the beauty and value of sharing with our brothers and sisters. The poor widow's act of giving all she had to live on (Mk 12:41-44) is an example of the passionate sharing of goods to enable life to multiply in others.

We own nothing, but we administer the common goods to use them to perform the Congregation's apostolic project. By virtue of the vow of poverty that we profess, we do not commit ourselves to doing without goods, but to have God as our only precious treasure and pearl (Mt 13:44-46). Experiencing consecrated poverty with this prophetic quality is not automatic. The treasure is buried in the field, and the pearl is not in view. It takes daily striving to discern God's will at every instant, and a resolute decision to leave all our concerns in God's hands.

When the Lord is really our treasure, we feel the urgent need to reflect, discern, and take responsibility for steering our life and mission toward implementing of His plan, looking forward to the future. The Gospel tells us that the man who wants to build a tower takes time to investigate the situation, assess its possibilities and then see whether there is any justification to build it (Lk 14:28-33). This encourages us to develop our capacity to foresee the strengths we need and the measures we have to put in place to ensure that our service to the poor and sick can continue with charismatic and Gospel-inspired quality.

The hospitable project is carried out with other people, professionals on whom their families or others depend, which involves us in offering social responses to their needs, if possible, ranging beyond only their legal entitlements. With regard to the tax to be paid (Lk 20:20-26), Jesus' command, "give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is of God", challenges us to understand reality, to discern the options and to act in compliance with the Gospel.

Let us sum it up as follows: the Father chooses us, hires us to work in the vineyard of hospitality, shares out all the charisms needed for the service and, proceeding along the path each one discovers other gifts that can be put to serving the community and the mission. We must

carefully ensure that we do not appropriate the goods received, but that we administer them by making them bear fruit, and by being wise and prudent like the faithful servant, relying entirely on divine providence, for God remains with us forever.

### ➤ In the light of our spiritual patrimony

As a hospitaller religious institution we have many goods: our vocation, charism, human skills, material and financial resources, etc. We are concerned here with the economic goods, goods that are necessary, without which we cannot live, let alone carry out most of our hospitaller activities, as well as caring for the sisters of the Congregation.

We therefore see that goods are good and necessary, and that the challenge we face is how to correctly own and use them. It is precisely the presence of such goods as our vocation, people, the richness of Christ in our own lives and in communities that guide their proper use.

Addressing the Lord, Father Menni asked: «*When will I learn to appreciate your treasures?*»<sup>1</sup>. «*The Divine Heart of Jesus is our treasure and divine guarantor*»<sup>2</sup>. Evangelical poverty is a fundamental criterion that guides and directs the administration of goods in the Congregation, but equally fundamental are the charism, mission and people's needs.

All these elements were clearly listed, in a climate of Gospel-inspired discernment, in the 1882 Constitutions: «*Study and make proposals to the Council regarding the most appropriate and adequate funds needed to preserve the spirit of poverty in the Institute and the indispensable assistance to be provided to all, and as far as possible increase the resources for the assistance of poor sick women. Sound management doubles the resources of charity to do good to one's neighbour*»<sup>3</sup>.

To use resources properly, according to hospitaller poverty we need to enter into the wisdom of the Gospel. It entails listing the needs of the mission and the sisters, with the ethos of supplying needs, and ensuing sustainability looking ahead to the future. «*While we must endeavour to save money and manage everything soundly, the purpose is to do good*»<sup>4</sup>.

At the heart of management is the human person, because «*a soul (person) is worth more than the whole world*»<sup>5</sup>. We therefore have to seek what is necessary, zealously and with wise diligence, both for the care of the sisters<sup>6</sup>, and especially when sick or impaired<sup>7</sup>, and to help the sick poor<sup>8</sup>, providing them not only with necessities, but also what is appropriate<sup>9</sup>.

The transcendental and faith-based motives handed down by Father Menni and the Foundresses are the ones that drive this ethos, centring around the human person and on the needs of the mission. Considering the person to be the image and presence of God Himself,

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<sup>1</sup> Letter 197.

<sup>2</sup> Letter 326.

<sup>3</sup> Const. 1882, n. 24,3.

<sup>4</sup> J. Orrit, *Análisis del Perfil Directivo de san Benito Menni*, 2007, p. 36.

<sup>5</sup> Letter 144.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Const. 1882, n. 24.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Const. 1882, nn. 91-95.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Const. 1882, n. 24.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Const. 1882, n. 66.

we owed them not only justice but charity. «*It is better to exceed in mercy rather than in justice*»<sup>10</sup>.

Justice and mercy are the guiding criterion for the administration of goods, obviously taking into account the existing resources. These transcendental Christian principles give rise to others, such as trust in providence, clarity, transparency, austerity and prudence<sup>11</sup>.

The sound administration of material goods essentially requires account to be taken of the reality of our world, the growing numbers of poor and needy people<sup>12</sup>, social and economic inequality and the climate of wastefulness that permeates the consumer society. Our Founding Father teaches us to adopt this attitude of looking around us, analytically and compassionately. Reality impacted him, and challenged him, especially the plight of the suffering in the matter of the fair and responsible use of goods.

Both the sisters and the institution itself are called to show solidarity with the plight of the people of today. In the use of our economic goods, we are asked to apply the ethics of the sufficient and the convenient to make a quality response in our apostolic mission. Our Father told us that austerity actually multiplies goods that will be changed into seeds of charity. This entails avoiding the luxurious and the superfluous<sup>13</sup>, always taking into account social justice, compliance with legal obligations, forecasting expenditures, the communication of goods and comprehensive sustainability over time.

Father Menni always linked mercy to poverty. In this sense, the communication of goods and international cooperation became particularly important, in the tradition of the Congregation, to allow the mission to be performed in places and situations of greatest need and the least financial possibilities, as well as solidarity with other congregations and Church institutions.

By the vow of poverty we profess, we do our work with a hospitaller spirit, responsibility and efficiency, and we are willing to put our talents at the service of the mission, without sparing any effort or sacrifice. We need to question the hedonistic and materialistic mind-set that can attack us at the personal and community level, and increasingly focus on the treasure of the Heart of Jesus so that we can "*rejoice when we are short of something*»<sup>14</sup>.

Our Founding Father clearly saw that the mission would have a social impact and make a contribution to society and humanity<sup>15</sup>. Today we are more aware of the impact that the mission can have in the field of ecology, the responsible use of natural goods and energies, the attention given to recycling, the commitment to preventive mental health care. Hospitality opens us to responsibility for nature because it is the home of everyone.

Care and effective responsibility for the administration of temporary goods has been addressed in practical terms in various documents in which the Congregation has been setting out its principles and criteria, and the officials. In 1995, the Administration Handbook was published for Bursars, providing guidance to ensure efficient administrative practice.

In view of the increasing complexity of the mission and the huge changes taking place in the socio-economic, political, legislative and technological fields and, in order to second the

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<sup>10</sup> Letter 797 y 803.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Análisis del Perfil Directivo...*, p. 55.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Const. 1882*, Prólogo.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Const. 1983*, n. 22; cf. *Perfil juandediano*, Letter 44,9.

<sup>14</sup> *Const. 1983*, n, 22.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Const. 1882*, nn. 5 y 77.

Church's guidelines calling for the revision and updating of provisions governing the administration of goods, in 2018 the General Statute of Administration was published for all of us who work in the hospitaller centres. This updates and responds to new demands in this area, based on our proper legislation and the rules laid down by all the public administrations.

### ➤ In the light of the Church's magisterium

Pope Francis constantly invites us to experience the novelty of the Gospel, that is to say, a *«living in a way that reflects the poverty of Christ, whose whole life was focused on doing the will of the Father and serving others»*<sup>16</sup>.

In God's salvific plan for the salvation of humanity, the Church is..... From this perspective, we are called to *«as the faithful and prudent administrator has a vocation to care attentively for those goods that have been entrusted to him, so the Church is conscious of her call to safeguard and carefully administer her goods in the light of her mission of evangelization, with special care for the needy»*<sup>17</sup>. In this context we are called to *«be good stewards of the charisms received from the Spirit through the management and administration of their assets»*<sup>18</sup>.

The advancement of the human person, the sound administration of earthly goods, as well as their equitable distribution lie at the heart of the Church's concerns, is the responsibility of everyone and at every level of human organisation. The Church declares:

*«God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples. Thus, under the leadership of justice and in the company of charity, created goods should be in abundance for all in like manner. Whatever the forms of property may be, as adapter to the legitimate institutions of peoples, according to diverse and changeable circumstances, attention must always be paid to this universal destination of earthly goods»*<sup>19</sup>.

In the economic and social life *«the dignity and complete vocation of the human person and the welfare of society as a whole are to be respected and promoted. For man is the source, the centre, and the purpose of all economic and social life»*<sup>20</sup>.

The Church helps Religious institutes to responsibly manage and administer the goods that God has entrusted to them, and which are always *«means to an end»*.<sup>21</sup> It further states that the goods of Institutes are goods of the Church:

*They «are to be used in a manner corresponding to the mission of the Church to fulfil the proper function entrusted to them in view of the public good in the name of the Church. The assets of the institutes contribute to the same evangelical goals for promoting the human person, for mission, for charitable sharing, and for solidarity with the people of*

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<sup>16</sup> CIVCSVA, *Economy to the service of the Charism and Mission*, 2018, n. 5.

<sup>17</sup> Francis, *Fidelis dispensator et prudens*, 2014, int.

<sup>18</sup> *Economy...*, n. 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, Vat II, n. 69.

<sup>20</sup> GS n. 63.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Economy in the service of charism and mission*, n. 15.

*God: in particular a common lived commitment to care and to have concern for the poor»<sup>22</sup>.*

Sound administration is an integral part of our choice for consecrated poverty, so it is necessary to overcome the false spiritualism that considers it foreign to the Religious life: «*Thinking about economy means being part of the humanizing process, which makes us, to put it in Latin terms, "humanissimi", a person in the fullest sense of the word, aware of oneself and of one's relationship-mission in the world»<sup>23</sup>.*

This humanisation process incorporates the responsibility to care for our common home; however, we realise that we have not yet matured the awareness that the deterioration of the environment affects all human beings, especially the poorest.

We cannot act as owners and dominators by irresponsibly using earthly goods, our common heritage. In this connection, the Church states that on all private property there is a social mortgage:

*«Every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged. The principle of the subordination of private property to the universal destination of goods, and thus the right of everyone to their use, is a "Golden rule" of social conduct and the first principle of the whole ethical and social order»<sup>24</sup>*

Today there is an urgent need for environmental protection: «*The natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all Humanity and the responsibility of everyone. If we make something our own, it is only to administer it for the good of all. If we do not, we burden our consciences with the weight of having denied the existence of others»<sup>25</sup>.* The current duty of caring for the earth rests on today's generations, having as a sustainable future.

In this connection, the Magisterium of the Church says that «*the ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion»<sup>26</sup>,* which entails generous care, gratitude and gratuitousness, by those who know that the world is a gift received by the love of the Father; avoiding unnecessary expenses, and with a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion<sup>27</sup>.

What we can contribute to the construction of a more just, fraternal and hospitable world, as the Church dreams of it, is above all this personal conversion and the search for a new way of viewing the economy and progress: «*Fraternity, solidarity, the rejection of indifference, gratuity are the most basic remedies for conflicts, including economic ones, and the starting point for building a just and equitable society»<sup>28</sup>.*

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<sup>22</sup> *Idem*, n. 15.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, n. 14.

<sup>24</sup> Francis, *Laudato Si*, n. 93.

<sup>25</sup> *LS*, n. 95.

<sup>26</sup> *LS*, n. 219.

<sup>27</sup> *LS*, n. 220.

<sup>28</sup> *Economy...*, n. 16.

## ➤ **Community Prayer**

*To listen to God and to lay our insights, desires and concerns before Him, we propose setting aside a time for community prayer which each Community can organise according to their circumstances, but it will be interesting to make good use of this week of **Enlightenment** to strengthen the climate of discernment and praise. Perhaps a time of celebration already planned might be used, giving it the appropriate spiritual motivation.*

## **II Week: Revision**

### **Orientación metodológica:**

1. *Present the purpose of the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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**

In the light of the reflection carried out, let us devote time to reflecting on the administration of goods in our Congregation and review our personal and community life, especially in this area. These questions may help us:

1. What ideas, aspects, lights, desires filled my heart in my reflections in the past week?
2. What does our hospitaller consecration have to do with our lifestyle and the environment in which we live?
3. Within the community how do we experience the relationship between our own needs, sharing gifts, and the expenses for the community?
4. ¿Qué aportaciones nos podrán dar más vida y enriquecer una formulación adecuada de la administración de los bienes en Constituciones?

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

## ➤ **Community prayer**

### **Psalm of trust and abandonment**

I wish to be moulded, Lord, in your great hands,  
like soft clay,  
let me abandon myself in love.  
Make me, Lord, feel today  
feel that you are my strength,  
my refuge in times of danger.

I wish to live like a child in her mother's arms.  
Sheltered like the chick  
under his mother's wings.  
Let me, Lord, truly believe  
that you are my Father,  
that you take care of me more than the bird and the rose.  
Let me snuggle up at night  
in the tenderness of your immense love.  
Now that everything looks like a maze,  
Show me that you are my way out,  
my one-way journey,  
the best thing that's ever happened to me.

I wish to stay in the dusk,  
feeling as free as the bird  
that returns to its nest.  
I want to entrust myself to your hands,  
Freed of all worries,  
with the joy that you are sustaining me,  
eating your bread at your table.

I want to abandon myself, because I know you never fail,  
you are faithful to your word,  
joy in the midst of weeping,  
peace when the bombs are falling,  
the joy that no one can take from me.  
You are my trust, for I know that whatever happens to me  
Has been weighed in the balance of love. Amen

### **Prayer for our earth**

All-powerful God,  
you are present in the whole universe  
and in the smallest of your creatures.  
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists,

Pour out upon us the power of your love,  
that we may protect life and beauty.  
Fill us with peace, that we may live  
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor,  
helps us to rescue the abandoned and  
forgotten of this earth,  
so precious in your eyes.  
Bring healing to our lives,  
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,  
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts  
of those who look only for gain  
at the expense of the poor and the earth.  
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,  
to be filled with awe and contemplation,  
to recognize that we are profoundly united  
with every creature  
as we journey towards your infinite light.  
We thank you for being with us each day.  
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle  
for justice, love and peace. Amen

*Pope Francis*

### III Week: Inputs

#### **Suggested methodology:**

1. Present the work of the 3<sup>rd</sup> week.
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.

#### **Administration of goods in the Constitutions**

Numbers of Constitutions	Inputs
<p><b>General principles</b>  <b>150</b> The economic-administrative activity of our Congregation is subordinated to the supernatural end of religious life, to our hospitaller mission and the laws of the Church.  The sisters in charge of administration, with their eyes fixed on the demands of charity and justice, as well as on the spirit of poverty, should keep far from any undue preoccupation as they carry out their careful management, and abandon themselves confidently to the providence of our heavenly Father.</p>	
<p><b>Legal entities</b>  <b>151</b> The Congregation, provinces, vice provinces, houses and other organizations duly constituted according to universal or our own law, are legal entities with the right to</p>	

<p>possess, alienate and administer possessions, both movable and landed property, to contract debts and receive legacies in accord with universal and our own particular law.</p> <p>This property has to be used to cover the needs of the sisters and for the service of the Hospitaller mission of the Congregation.</p>	
<p><b>Faculty of administration</b></p> <p><b>152</b> The right and duty of administering the temporal goods is the duty of the superiors, according to the provisions of the Universal Law, our own law and the laws of the country.</p> <p>Under their authority, the general, provincial, local bursars and others administrators have charge of the immediate administration, at the service of the community and of the work.</p> <p>The General Superior as well as the provincial, vice provincial and the local superiors have authority to carry out, validly and illicitly the expenditure and legal acts of administration, in the ordinary administration attributed to their charge.</p> <p>For extraordinary expenses they must apply to the immediate superior, in accord with Universal Law and as specified in the Directory.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of the General Chapter to limit the amount that the Provincial Superior, with the consent of her councillors, can use as extraordinary expenses.</p>	
<p><b>Sharing possessions</b></p> <p><b>153</b> The use of possessions and material resources of the Congregation shall be regulated by the principle of charity, which requires an equitable distribution between the various houses and organs of the Institute.</p>	
<p><b>Contribution to the Church and to the poor</b></p> <p><b>154</b> In order to live to evangelical requirements in the administration and use of our material goods, we must be detached from them and contribute gladly from our resources to remedy the needs of the Church and the poor. Thus we shall take part in promoting justice, and give a personal and community witness of poverty and charity.</p>	
<p><b>EPILOGUE</b></p> <p>The faithful fulfilment of these Constitutions, as required by the profession we have made, is our way of sanctification and of becoming like Christ. It manifests our union with the Church and is a necessary means for keeping our charism ever alive.</p> <p>Therefore, conscious of the promise we made at our religious consecration, we strive to know them, to pray</p>	

and reflect upon them, as our Father Founder advised us to do.

*«Read them, my daughters, study them, ponder upon them, make them the matter of your examen and the object of your petitions before Our Lord, begging the grace to practice them exactly and with a docile heart, as is pleasing to the Holy Spirit».*

*«And thus, I assure you, you will become great saints».*

## IV Week: Celebration

### **Methodology:**

- *It is very important to celebrate the steps of the journey we have undertaken, especially now that we have completed the first stage of becoming more thoroughly familiar with our charism and of our spiritual revitalisation.*
- *This prayerful and festive celebration should enable us to experience the joy of the journey we have embarked upon, both personally and as a community*
- *At some point during the celebration, it is suggested that the "Epilogue to the Constitutions", with which we have ended this Factsheet, should be recited aloud to strengthen our inner joy of belonging to the "little mystical body" of our Congregation within the Church, as María Angustias called it.*