



REVISION OF CONSTITUTIONS

WAY OF REVITALIZATION

9

EVANGELISING COMMUNITY



Rome, 2019-2021

Constitutions and evangelising-hospitaller Community

*We reveal the salvation of God in this world
through the holy ministry of charity
in union with and following the example of Jesus.*
(Const. 48)

Along our **spiritual pathway** of revitalisation, today have reached Factsheet No. 9. The section in Part II of the Constitutions, dedicated to "Our Hospitaller Community in the Church", covers articles 60 to 68, to which this Factsheet is dedicated

Since the mission forms an essential aspect of our consecrated vocation, we need to deepen, expand and clarify its substance and significance, because over time we have been hammering out, renewing, superimposing and replacing concepts referring to this matter, which are fundamental for an understanding and the experience of the mission in theological and charismatic terms.

The substance and language are gradually becoming fleshed out, as is the difficulty of defining our mission of hospitality as participating in the one Mission, which is the Mission of the Triune God. This Factsheet offers food for thought and reflection, in order to be able to live and truly animate the mission as it develops through the Congregation's Apostolic Project.

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

The mission is first and foremost an attribute of the Triune God; it is not something that has been created by the Church, nor is it something that we have chosen. God the father-mother wishes everyone to be saved and live in freedom and happiness. At the sight of people suffering, God was moved by compassion and tenderness and decided to intervene on their behalf:

« I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt. I have heard their appeal to be free of their slave-drivers. Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings. I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that land to a land rich and broad, a land where milk and honey flow...And now the cry of the sons of Israel has come to me, and I have witnessed the way in which the Egyptians oppress them, so come, I send you to Pharaoh to bring the sons of Israel, my people, out of Egypt» (Ex 3,7-10).

God took the initiative to liberate the people and lead them to Himself, for He is mercy and compassion. God's mission therefore coincides with our history of salvation. John the Evangelist makes this clear: *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. 'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.' (Jn 3:16-17).* Here is the whole purpose of the mission, salvation, that is to say, the total salvation of all and every person.

As He began His public life, Jesus defined the mission the Father had committed to Him to perform under the impulse of the Spirit:

«The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour"... All the eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him» (Lk 4,18-19).

This is the object of the mission, or of the Kingdom of God: that all creatures may live in fullness the grace of being the children of the Father. When the disciples of John the Baptist asked Jesus if He was the one to come or should they wait for another, the Master points out to them the works of mercy, deliverance, and healing performed in the lives of the poor and sick. Although they were extraordinary works, they were not the mission, but they showed that the mission was being fulfilled in the poor and sick who experienced God loving them and caring for them with love.

Jesus was fully aware that was performing the Father's mission in various ways: by teaching, forgiving, healing, guiding, praying, and changing people's hearts. He would later say, *"I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10).* The mission consists of helping everyone to have the highest quality of life and walk into the future full of hope.

Knowing that his time was limited while the mission was endless, the Son of God-Messiah called disciples to him, to continue his evangelising work, giving them guidelines: the mission had to be performed in community; it required a humble attitude and personal poverty; it demanded a sense of fraternal responsibility for others; it needed to go out to all the places to which he had to go; it entailed spreading peace, healing, and proclaiming that the Kingdom was present (Lk 10:1-9). Missionaries were also sent out to make disciples of all peoples teaching them to live the message of Jesus (Mt 28:19).

It was not the Church that created the mission. It was the Spirit who created the Church so that it could continue carrying out Jesus' mission. The early Christians heard from Peter's

mouth the words: *"You know how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him."* (Acts 10:38).

The Spirit is the real protagonist of the Church's mission and equally of the mission in the consecrated life. The meaning and the vigour of the mission depends neither on the age or health of the disciple, nor on what she knows or the tasks she performs, but on "being with God", as we see it in Jesus. The mission is manifested by the concrete commitment to the creating the Kingdom of God on earth.

God appeals to all people to build the Kingdom, by virtue of universal fraternity, and not based on their religious convictions or practices. Christians and people of good will, called to perform the mission of hospitality, draw on their knowledge and experience, mindful of the fact that only by working together, can they carry through the mission entrusted to them.

The consecrated vocation entails being sent out as a missionary. Vocation and mission are the two sides of religious consecration. One cannot exist, live without the other. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, who was the model hospitaller in action, Jesus does not depict the man who showed such solidarity as a health professional, but someone who obeys the commandment of love freely and fully. The account ends with the missionary mandate: *"Go and do likewise"* (Lk 10:37). The mission gives form and substance to the discipleship of Jesus, the divine Samaritan of humanity.

➤ **In the light of our Spiritual Heritage**

Christ wishes His Church, and in her, the consecrated life, to express in a special way the saving and liberating Mission of God; to be, by the power of his Spirit, the sacrament of God's unconditional and gratuitous love of every human being and all creation; and wishes his preferential love to be felt by the most vulnerable and marginalised people. The Spirit therefore continually creates and recreates charisms for God's mission. Our Congregation is a fruit of this dynamism of the Spirit.

Let us examine a few texts to delve into the contribution made by this "little mystical body"¹ to the great mission of the God of mercy. It is a personal and community gift, and a commitment that is neither ambiguous nor able to be transferred to others. No one replaces anyone in this gift and commitment.

In letter 587 from P. Menni sent to the entire Congregation from Vienna in 1903, we find a number of points, which we shall now read, because they shed light on the Mission:

"This supernatural love sprang from the Heart of Jesus and was communicated by the Holy Spirit to my poor heart and to the heart of all my daughters, as the Holy See itself has declared. And the fruit of this Divine Spirit was the foundation of your Congregation".

Fr Menni speaks about the origin and nature of the Congregation, with the vocation and mission it entails. There is no dualism here, but a vocation with a mission. In his letter he

¹ RMA p. 149.

clearly specifies its divine origin: its source is the Divine Heart of Christ, in which the love of the Father is revealed, and the Holy Spirit places it in our hearts.

His reference to the living person of Jesus Christ is of fundamental importance to our mission as Sisters Hospitallers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Love is the most fundamental of all, which gives unity to the whole person and to the work of Jesus Christ. Love is also the most fundamental thing in our lives and work, because between Jesus Christ and ourselves there exists a common spirit which makes us exclaim, as He did: *Abba, Father!*

Love, therefore, understood in all its depth and breadth sums up the whole of Jesus' life and it must also sum up the whole of our hospitaller life. The heart of Christ is the natural symbol that represents and inspires our spirituality and our cooperation with God's mission. A radical relationship with Christ and welcoming His merciful love become part and parcel of the dynamism of our mission in the Church.

"The foundation of your Congregation has been the fruit of this Divine Spirit". This love of charity has its source in the Trinity, not in us. We do not own the mission, and neither are we the main players. It is the Spirit of God who gives the Church the charism of hospitality through the Founders of the Congregation.

"It is not an Institute founded by the spirit of man", but by God. We are called to listen, understand and live obediently to God's continuous inspiration to discern the pathways we have to follow, for it is God who steers the Congregation's life and mission.

"This love is unbounded, and can never say enough is enough; this love would like to fly far and wide and to light this Divine Fire to let it burn in every corner of the Earth." Father Menni offers a faith-driven interpretation of the Congregation's growth, and expresses his amazement at the work of the Holy Spirit which carries him "above and beyond" anything he had ever thought possible. The fire we kindle by announcing the Gospel of God's love and infinite mercy is unbounded, and never say "enough is enough". For it is a message that resounds throughout the universe.

"My daughters, it is this love that has moved your poor and loving Father to come to countries so far from home, to spread your Institute and the experience of its beneficial effects". The mission performed at such a depth produces a social impact, and it evangelises, and is a spiritual pathway to holiness. It has divine effects, which spread God's mission throughout the world through the medium of weak and poor human actions, as our Foundresses never tired of repeating.

The Preamble to the Congregation's first Constitutions also helps us to more thoroughly understand this. Let us re-read it, step by step.

"Seeing the increasing numbers of mentally ill people causes hearts animated by Christ's love to feel the need to establish....". This is a reference to the way God's loving mercy continues to work in history. The movement that gives rise to the apostolic mission of the Congregation reflects God's missionary movement: *"I have seen the misery of my people (...) I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering, So I have come down to rescue them (...) So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."* (Ex 3,7-8.10).

Seeing human life and suffering, allowing your hearts to be touched by Christ Himself, gives rise to the decision to act in the right way to enable suffering people to experience God's closeness to them.

The mission of the Congregation belongs to a Church that continues to perform the mission of Christ by responding to the cries of men and women in every moment of history, transmitting to them God's infinite and merciful love. Consecration forms part of this mission. We are sisters consecrated in hospitality. It is not just a well-run health service: it is a mission of faith, forming part of consecrated life itself, with an ecclesial sense and a spirituality of its own, which is practised on that same mission.

The attitude that such a choice for the mission engenders in us is admiration, gratitude and thanksgiving: "*Where have we deserved our Lord's grace that uses us in his service and to bring relief of his living images?*".² God chose a group of simple and humble women and has sent us, in His name, to express His tender mercy. He empowers us with a woman's intuition and tenderness of a mother who does her utmost to serve in her daily life.

Our Founder set the Congregation's mission within the mission of salvation: "*They thereby participate, albeit humbly and in so far as it falls to them, in the great work of our Divine Saviour, which Holy Mother Church always pursues, namely, the Glory of God, the Salvation of souls, and the good of humanity.*"³ The mission is personal and non-transferable. No-one deputises for anyone else, but together we contribute to the project of Jesus by practising hospitality.

➤ In the light of the Magisterium of the Church

The Church confirms the different charisms and ministries that constitute, in history, God's mission manifested in Jesus. Consecrated life is very closely bound up with the mission, to the point of making them inseparable. We are consecrated for the mission. The Magisterium of the Church also makes this clear:

«In the image of Jesus, the beloved Son "whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world (Jn 10:36), those whom God calls to follow him are also consecrated and sent into the world to imitate his example and to continue his mission. Fundamentally, this is true of every disciple. In a special way, however, it is true of those who, in the manner that characterizes the consecrated life, are called to follow Christ "more closely", and to make him the "all" of their lives. The task of devoting themselves wholly to "mission" is therefore included in their call; indeed, by the action of the Holy Spirit who is at the origin of every vocation and charism, consecrated life itself is a mission, as was the whole of Jesus' life. The profession of the evangelical counsels, which makes a person totally free for the service of the Gospel, is important also from this point of view»⁴.

² Letter 406.

³ Const. 1882, n. 5.

⁴ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, Rome, 1996, n.72.

Consecrated life itself demonstrates the fact that we are on mission. Our own lives participate in God's mission: wherever we are, whatever we do, Christ's mission shapes us totally. The current organisational complexity of our Institution may make us lose sight of the theological and charismatic meaning of the mission as such, reducing it merely to doing a job, to no transcendental purpose. The Church's Magisterium warns us against this:

"It can therefore be said that consecrated persons are "in mission" by virtue of their very consecration, to which they bear witness in accordance with the ideal of their Institute. When founding charism provides for pastoral activities, it is obvious that the witness of life and the witness of works of the apostolate and human development are equally necessary: both mirror Christ who is at one and the same time consecrated to the glory of the Father and sent into the world for the salvation of his brothers and sisters"⁵.

The Church expects us, as consecrated women, to be the "living memory" of Jesus' historical presence in the world, with our own lives and with our Samaritan acts of hospitality.

"Indeed, more than in external works, the mission consists in making Christ present to the world through personal witness. This is the challenge; this is the primary task of the consecrated life! The more consecrated persons allow themselves to be conformed to Christ, the more Christ is made present and active in the world for the salvation of all"⁶.

Another particular element of this participation in the mission of Christ is *"the fraternal life in community for the sake of the mission. Thus, men and women religious will be more committed to the apostolate the more personal their dedication to the Lord Jesus is, the more fraternal their community life, and the more ardent their involvement in the Institute's specific mission"7.*

Like Jesus, who had an intense intimate relationship with God, whom he called *Abba*, Father, we are also called to discover him present and acting in our own lives and in the life of the world, until we discover that, without Him, nothing we experience and do has any sense or meaning. In this regard, Pope Francis reminds us:

"It is impossible to persevere in a fervent evangelization unless we are convinced from personal experience that it is not the same thing to have known Jesus as not to have known him, not the same thing to walk with him as to walk blindly (...) No the same thing to contemplate him, to worship him, to find our peace in him, as not to. It is not the same thing to try to build the world with his Gospel as to try to do so by our own lights. We know well that with Jesus life becomes richer and that with him it is easier to find meaning in everything"⁸.

The Holy Father urges all the People of God to take on the Church's missionary dynamism, and recalls that the poor, the sick and those living the side-lines of society are the special recipients of the Good News of salvation. Mission means going out to meet them, passing on to them God's mercy and compassion.

"If the whole Church takes up this missionary impulse, she has to go forth to everyone without exception (...): not so much to our friends and wealthy neighbour, but above all the poor and

⁵ *Ibidem.*

⁶ *Ibidem.*

⁷ *Ibidem,*

⁸ Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii gaudium*, Rome, 2013. N.266

the sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked, "those who cannot repay you"(Lk14:14). (...) Today and always, "the poor are the privileged recipients of the Gospel, and the fact that it is freely preached to them is a sign of the kingdom that Jesus came to establish"⁹.

Today, we are more mindful of the fact that the mission is not the prerogative of just a few people. God summons everyone for his mission, regardless of our cultures, beliefs or any other feature, expecting every one of us to contribute our gifts according to the vocation we have been given.

➤ **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**

Drawing on these reflections, let us review our personal and community life. The following questions may be helpful:

1. What ideas, aspects, enlightenment, desires, filled my heart in last week's reflection?
2. What does it mean to me to be sent on the hospitaller mission? What fruits flow from my commitment in the mission?
3. What facts confirm that in my community we are ensuring that Jesus' mission continues?
4. What contributions to the Constitutions may give more life and enrich the evangelising mission?

⁹ EG 48.

Sharing in the community: convene a community meeting to share two or three aspects which will help us to make further progress along this path of revitalisation.

➤ **Prayer of the community**

Watchful Sentinel

Today, Lord, I come before you
with all I am, and all I possess.
I come to you, hungry and thirsty, and in need...
for I know that I will find an answer in You.
I know you have called me and sent me on a mission,
and have chosen me to practise hospitality in the world.

I come before you with a simple heart, like Mary's,
with my eyes fixed on you, waiting to be fed by Your Word.
I come before you like Abraham,
with my heart full of Your hope for the future,
committing my life into your hands.
I come before you like Samuel,
with my heart ready to do Your will.

I come before you, like Benedict Menni,
who knows how to respond to his calling
to free people with mental illness.
I come before you, like María Josefa and María Angustias,
who brought female intuition and motherly tenderness
to the hospitaller mission.
I come before you, like so many of our sisters,
who have devoted their lives "drop by drop" to "serve and love".

Here I am, Lord,
with a sincere desire to carry out Your own Mission.
Send me whatever you wish and give me Your Spirit
to learn the paths of charismatic fidelity
that You are reserving for me in these times of revitalisation.
You send me to be a witness to Your mission:
Make me a vigilant and committed sentinel
out of love for my brothers and sisters.

Thank you, Lord, for counting on me
To manifest Your Kingdom of salvation.
Amen.

Missionary Prayer (Pope Francis, 2019)

Heavenly Father,
when Your only begotten Son Jesus Christ
rose from the dead,
he commissioned his followers
to "go and make disciples of all nations"
and you remind us that through our Baptism
we are made sharers in the mission of the Church.

Empower us by the gifts of the Holy Spirit
to be courageous and zealous
in bearing witness to the Gospel,
so that the mission entrusted to the Church,
which is still very far from completion,
may find new and efficacious expressions
that bring life and light to the world.

Help us make it possible for all peoples
to experience the saving love
and mercy of Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
One God, forever and ever.
Amen.

III Week: Inputs

Suggested methodology:

1. *Present the work for the 3rd Week.*
2. *Motivate the responsibility to revise the text of Constitutions.*
3. *Share and take note of the aspects and that can be sources of motivation for our charism today.*
4. *Record the situations for changes to each number in the grid.*
5. *Forward the summary to the Province the following week.*

Evangelising-hospitaller community in Constitutions

Numbers of Constitutions	Inputs
<p>Sent by the Spirit</p> <p>60 Gathered together by the Spirit, in the Church we are an apostolic community which has received the charism of hospitality and we continue in our age the redeeming work of Christ.</p> <p>Sent by the same Spirit, we reveal the salvation of God in this world through the holy ministry of charity, in union with and following the example of Jesus, who reached down to suffering humanity to cure its infirmities.</p>	
<p>For whom is our mission</p> <p>61 Our apostolic and charitable work belongs to the very nature of our religious life.</p> <p>Through this work we make present God's love for his people: In the first place we work for those who are mentally ill and for people with physical and learning disabilities. We also work for other people who are sick, according to the needs of the times and places, giving preference to the poorest.</p> <p>Following the Christian concept of man, we receive all as our brothers and sisters, without distinction of race, religion, ideology or social class, and we offer them every assistance.</p>	
<p>Demands of our charism</p> <p>62 To live our charism faithfully requires:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an intimate union with God; - a vision of faith to discern in the sick person Christ, who accepts as done to himself whatever we do to the person in need; - meekness and love, so that the sick person may see in us the Christ who comforts and cares for him; - an attitude of disinterested joyful service; - a respect for the person and a defence of their rights; - a true mother's attentiveness; - a special dedication to those who suffer most, the most disabled and the least attractive; - an availability in any service even at the risk of 	

<p>one's own life;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a professional training and up-dating; - centres, where we have them, adapted to the needs of all people, times and places. 	
<p>Diverse task and one sole mission</p> <p>63 Each community carries out the mission entrusted to it by the Congregation, and the latter, through the community, accompanies and supports each sister in her daily tasks.</p> <p>We all share in the one mission, although our tasks may be diverse, and we try to attain a harmonious integration between our fraternal, spiritual and apostolic lives.</p>	
<p>Evangelists within our mission</p> <p>64 Evangelisation is essential to our vocation. The specific way of proclaiming the Gospel for us, is our very life as hospitallers.</p> <p>Open to the Spirit, who is the principal worker in evangelisation; we take Christ to the sick and transmit the love of his Heart to them, in our corporal and spiritual help. We offer them spiritual care in accord with their beliefs and capabilities. We pray with them, for them and in their name, we help them to encounter Christ in their life of pain, in their prayers and in sharing the sacraments. We accompany them in a special way during their last illness, helping them to accept death with faith and hope.</p> <p>As religious hospitallers we are part of the local Church bringing her evangelising action into the world of suffering.</p>	
<p>Mission</p> <p>65 The Church, sent by God to all people, is missionary by her very nature. Her aim is the evangelisation of all nations.</p> <p>Just as Christ went through the cities curing sickness and infirmity as a sign that the Kingdom was at hand, so we do the same in the exercise of our Hospitaller mission.</p> <p>We cultivate apostolic availability and we accept with joy being sent to any part of the world, according to the needs of the Church and the project of the Institute.</p>	
<p>Fidelity to our charism</p> <p>66 True fidelity to our charism requires us to preserve the identity of our Congregation, as well as</p>	

<p>being open to new forms of hospitaller apostolate according to different circumstances of time and place.</p> <p>Available for any work or service which may be entrusted to us in any part of the world, we place the interest of the Kingdom above our own personal interest.</p>	
<p>Co-workers in mission</p> <p>67 In some way we share our Hospitaller mission with other people. We fully accept them as co-workers, we respect their rights, we encourage their life of faith and we try to share the spirit of our Congregation with them as a help to a better Hospitaller service.</p> <p>We should also associate the families of our patients in this task welcoming them and giving them help in the spirit of our Congregation.</p>	
<p>Mary, model of the hospitaller</p> <p>68 Mary, who protects and looks with pleasure on our Congregation, is the first Hospitaller. She received Jesus in her womb and accompanied him even to the cross.</p> <p>She leads us to the source of living water which springs up in the Heart of Christ, and clothes us with sincere compassion, so that we can take her maternal love to those who are suffering.</p> <p>She teaches us to discover the needs of others, even when they themselves do not disclose them, and to deal with them effectively.</p> <p>From her fortitude and perseverance at the foot of the cross we learn to stay close to the sick person until the end.</p>	

IV Week: Celebration

Metodología:

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 10th fact sheet*