



REVISION OF CONSTITUTIONS

WAY OF REVITALIZATION

2

HOSPITALLER
VOCATION



Rome, 2019-2021

Constitutions and vocation

Jesus Christ calls us with a personal, gratuitous and irrevocable vocation. He unites us more closely to Himself and he gives us the special gift of Hospitaller charity for the benefit of mankind in the Church; to her life and holiness religious life belongs.

(Const. 10)

As we proceed along our **spiritual path**, today we shall be meditating on the theme of the **Hospitaller vocation**. Our Constitutions address this in the chapter entitled "Consecration", from numbers 10 to 15. We will take as the basic text for our reflection numbers 2 and 4 of the Fundamental Constitution and numbers 10, 11, 13, 15 and 69. The articles that refer directly to "consecration" will be dealt with in another fact sheet that we shall be studying after this.

We will be considering the vocation from the various theological perspectives that Church teaching offers us: the vocation is a universal call to holiness, it is manifested through different fruits or charisms of the Spirit, it is expressed in different forms or states of life, and in all things, it seeks the perfection of charity. "The vocation consecrated according to the evangelical counsels gives and must give in the world an outstanding witness and example of this same holiness"¹.

It is interesting to deep into the specific dimension of our vocation identifying the features that characterise us as Sisters Hospitallers, so that we can grow in our identify with and in our sense of belonging to the Congregation.

Proposed method for the 1st Week:

1. Make an overall presentation of the fact sheet.
2. Propose the work for the 1st Week, which is enlightenment.
3. Set aside some time every day for personal reflection.
3. Set the date for the community meeting to share our reflections.
4. At the meeting, sum up the 2 or 3 aspects which most move us to embark on renewal.

Week I: Enlightenment

➤ In the light of the Word

Our vocation as Sisters Hospitallers is "a personal, gratuitous and irrevocable vocation"²; it results from the free initiative of God who has called us together to live with Jesus, and

¹ LG 39.

² Const. 10.

like Him, to perform His command of hospitality. We are inspired in this reflection by the story of the calling of Abraham (Gen 12,1-4), Moses (Ex 3,1-10) and the disciples of Jesus (Mt 4,18-25).

Go from your country: God called Abraham by his own name, and needed him for his mission; he asked him to leave everything familiar and secure, to go out towards new things which he could not yet even glimpse: he promised blessings and grace. The joy he experienced thanks to God's work within him produced his response: *"So Abram went, as the Lord had told him"* (Gn 12,1-3). This reveals his unconditional readiness to respond to his calling. Abraham's hospitality is the open door which enables God to fulfil the promise he had made (Gen 18,1-10): I will make you a great people. He changed his name, because henceforth his life had reached a new horizon, and his existence now had a new meaning.

I will send you: God does not call for Himself: his mercy listens to the cries of his sons and daughters and he bends over them to free them from their suffering and pain. He called Moses and sent him to rescue the people enslaved in Egypt (Ex 3,1-10). Moses did not feel capable of doing it, and saw that the mission was beyond his capabilities and he found plenty of reasons for avoiding putting his life in jeopardy. His heart was not yet inhabited by the mercy and compassion of God. And yet when God calls someone to cooperate with Him he never gives up calling: *"I will send you... I will be with you"* (3,10.12) is the certitude that the Lord gives to all those who decide to respond to His call.

I will make you fishers of men: Jesus called his disciples in Galilee (Mt 4,18-25). And as he did with Abraham and Moses, he reached out to them as they were about their daily work: some were casting their fishing nets; others were mending them to get them ready for work. And that is where Jesus told them: *"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. Immediately they left their nets and followed him."* (4,19). It is only possible to respond to our calling if we have a personal and intimate relationship with the Lord who is calling. The disciples already knew Jesus, they had accompanied him to the synagogue and around the towns and villages, they had heard him announcing the Kingdom and they had seen him healing the sick (4,23-24). But now his call to them makes them understand that their lives have another purpose: to announce the Kingdom of God through hospitality.

Called by our own name: Jesus calls those whom he loves, to be with Him and to send them out in His name. He called the Twelve individually by name (Mt 10,1-4) appreciating the personal value of the differences between them, and he created an apostolic community with them. In this way, the personal vocation is a matter of calling people together to embark on a community mission, together. It is the cries of the most vulnerable people which lead to Jesus's call; faced with this reality, his heart is moved to pity and love and... he calls. In a way, it is the sick, the poor, the marginalised who call us to follow Jesus in his ministry of healing.

In the light of our spiritual heritage

Experiencing God's call is always a personal and unique event. Some are called by God to undertake a special mission, as we read in the Bible. In them, we may find enlightening

examples by which to discern our own vocation and to be able to respond faithfully to our calling.

It is always useful to examine the Scriptures to find some of the most relevant vocational stories for us, reading them through the eyes of hospitality and bearing in mind the influence of these the biblical characters on the vocation and mission of our Founders, and also the similarity between them and our hospitaller charism.

Father Menni was deeply moved by the love of God in the spiritual exercises he attended in the Carthusian monastery in Pavia; he was as equally moved in his innermost self by the pain of the wounded soldiers arriving at Milan station.

Our Foundresses were attracted to Jesus from their earliest years and the desire to give their whole lives to him; they felt it when they experienced the joy and the fullness they sensed by cultivating the spiritual life and helping others, particularly the poorest people, using the alms donated by the wealthy.

Some model saints, in both the Old and the New Testaments, aroused special admiration in our Founders and encouraged them to follow Christ: Abraham, Moses and the disciples on the Sea of Galilee.

"... he spoke very gentle words and made promises that assured us of his word as a King; he declared the reward awaiting his faithful servants in a wonderful way. "I will be your greatest reward" he said to his servant Abraham; prophetic words that remind us of the mercy that has been prepared for us if, having heard His voice, and taken note of his call to us, we follow in his footsteps"³.

Abraham is the prototype of faith. God enters Abraham's settled life and urges him to go forth, and calls him to establish a friendly relationship with Him, while not knowing where this would take him. Abraham's immediate reaction was to leave, placing his life and mission in God's hands; this is evidence of the faith and trust that Abraham placed in the One who was calling him, who promised that he would bless him and that his blessing would be for the whole people.

Our Foundresses recognised that same dynamic of a merciful and good God in their vocational pathway, of a God who was present in the lives which were already settled in both their cases, and who had invited them to go forth to embark on an adventure with Jesus, without any idea of where it would lead them. This call attracted them and involved them in such a way that it felt that they, their lives, and their plans had been removed and transported towards the will of God: *"In spite of our littleness I think our faith was somewhat like that of holy Abraham"⁴*

María Angustias also referred to Abraham in her process of going forth, searching and trusting in Jesus, and when faced with the vagueness of the plan for the foundation. In the calling of Abraham and the experience of the Foundresses it was their loving involvement with this God who was calling and inviting them to go with Him, that formed the basis of everything; without this, it was not possible to go forth, walk, give up everything and continue hoping.

³ MANUEL MARTÍN, *Biografía Documentada*, Tomo I, Toledo, 1919, p. 216.

⁴ RMA 170.

God called and committed Moses to Himself and with his project of love as part of a merciful movement on behalf of the oppressed and enslaved Israelites in Egypt (Ex 3,10). God had compassion, he felt mercy for those who were suffering, and he called on Moses to liberate them.

Our Father Founder also heard God's call when faced with the reality of human suffering and welcomed God's invitation to become His never-ending mercy, seeing the suffering of the sick, and with a heart animated by the love of Christ, and he decided to involve himself in the Lord's Mission, to offer love, liberation and salvation⁵. We can see that God's theophany, this meeting with the living God, preceded and accompanied this process of liberation, and this mission (Ex 3,2-10).

"See my daughters, what our adorable Saviour did to establish the Church. You know whom He used for such a sublime, divine task: some poor, rough fishermen, which to human eyes seemed absurd. Before raising them to the dignity of apostles he chose these who were so poor that the only thing they knew was to cast their nets and draw them in full of fish. And at the head of that illustrious family he appointed Peter, who being an ordinary man, lacked any kind of knowledge. But he was the foundation stone of the universal Church. Daughters, faith is what is most pleasing to God"⁶.

Jesus called a number of simple fishermen⁷ (cf. Lc 5,1-11). Commenting on this biblical text, Father Menni invites us to look at the procedure that Jesus had adopted and the criteria he used to select the men who would become his friends and create his community, and on whom he would build his Church. They are the same criteria that appeared in the call that led to the birth of our Congregation.

That first group of women with whom our consecrated life began, and who undertook to radically follow Jesus in hospitality, were conscious of having been freely chosen in all their poverty and simplicity, a state which in the eyes of the world might have seemed foolishness, but not in the eyes of God.

Both the disciples and the sisters relied only on the person of Jesus, His call, ready to stay with Him, and to let Him take them wherever He willed.

Father Menni wished to elevate the sisters to the dignity of apostles and wanted them to be as poor as them, knowing only how to cast their nets and haul them in full of fish. And to head this illustrious family, He appointed Peter who was totally unlettered, rough and ready, to become the cornerstone of His Church, notwithstanding. *"He wants to work wonders of mercy with us"⁸.*

➤ **In the light of the Church's Magisterium**

According to the teaching of the Church, the religious vocation is ordered to the life and the mission of the Church. God calls us with a special vocation, consecrates us, and sends us out to serve the poorest in the Church.

⁵ Cfr. BENITO MENNI, *Constitutions of 1882*, prologo.

⁶ RMA 207.

⁷ RMA 207.

⁸ Letter 434.

Some Christians are called by God to enjoy this particular gift in the life of the Church and thus each in one's own way, may be of some advantage to the salvific mission of the Church. 'Each of the faithful who have been called to the profession of the evangelical counsels must therefore carefully see to it that he persevere and ever grow in that vocation God has given him. Let him do this for the increased holiness of the Church, for the greater glory of the one and undivided Trinity, which in and through Christ is the fount and the source of all, Holiness'⁹.

The Second Vatican Council powerfully emphasised the essential basis of the religious vocation in the Decree *Perfectae Caritatis*:

"Since the ultimate norm of the religious life is the following of Christ set forth in the Gospels, let this be held by all Institutes as the highest rule"¹⁰.

Every vocation starts with God taking the initiative, calling us to follow his Son, through the Spirit; the vocation is the experience of Trinitarian God in our life.

"It is an initiative coming wholly from the Father (cf. Jn 15, 16) who asks those whom he has chosen to respond with complete and exclusive devotion. The experience of this gracious love of God is so deep and so powerful that the person called senses the need to respond by unconditionally dedicating his or her life to God, consecrating to him all things present and future, and placing them in his hands"¹¹.

The vocation creates a personal relationship between Jesus Christ and the person chosen, which involves the whole person and commits that person to undertake a personal growth process to become configured with the mind of Christ.

"The Son, who is the way which leads to the Father (cf. Jn 14, 6), calls all those whom the Father has given to him (cf. Jn 17, 9) to make the following of himself the whole purpose of their lives. But of some, those called to the consecrated life, he asks a total commitment, one which involves leaving everything behind (cf. Mt 19, 27) in order to live at this side and to follow him wherever He goes"¹².

The Holy Spirit is the protagonist in bringing about a transformation that gradually takes place within us, as his chosen ones.

"The call to the consecrated life is closely linked to the working of the Holy Spirit. In every age, the Spirit enables new men and women to recognize the appeal of such a demanding choice... By allowing themselves to be guided by the Spirit on an endless journey of purification, they become, day after day, conformed to Christ", the prolongation in history of a special presence of the Risen Lord... The same Spirit, far from removing from the life of humanity those whom the Father has called, puts them at the service of their brothers and sisters in accordance with their particular state of life"¹³.

⁹ LG 43,47.

¹⁰ PC 5.

¹¹ VC 17.

¹² VC 18.

¹³ VC 19.

Being called is a dynamic process which we welcome gratefully and nurture responsibly, to make it grow and to share it with others:

“The daily ability to live the vocation as an ever-new gift, which we have welcomed with a grateful heart. A gift to which we must respond with an increasingly responsible attitude and to which we have to bear witness with greater conviction and with the ability to pass it on to others, so that they can also feel they are called by God for that particular vocation”¹⁴.

In the introduction of his Apostolic Letter *Witness of Joy*, Pope Francis urged us to be thankful for having been chosen by God and to be his followers in this world. This is why we must appreciate the value of the vocation to which we have been called.

“Let us all give thanks to the Father who has called us to follow Jesus, fully committed to His Gospel and to serving the Church, for He has poured the Holy Spirit into our hearts to give us joy and enable us to bear witness to His love and mercy in the world.” He also invites us to ask ourselves ¿is Jesus really our first and only love, as we promised he would be when we professed our vows? Only if he is, will we be empowered to love, in truth and mercy, every person who crosses our path. For we will have learned from Jesus the meaning and practice of love. We will be able to love because we have his own heart”¹⁵.

➤ **Community prayer**

*To listen to God and offer him our insights, desires and concerns, we propose that each Community should organise a community prayer time. They can organise it according to their particular situation but it would be interesting to use this week of **Enlightenment** to enhance the climate of discernment and praise. We could take advantage of some previously scheduled time of celebration and give it an appropriate spiritual motivation.*

Week II: Revision

Methodological Guidance:

1. *Present the purpose of the 2nd 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 our personal and community life**

¹⁴ CIVCSVA, *Working with Christ*, Rome, 2002, n. 16.

¹⁵ FRANCIS, *Witnesses of Joy*, Rome, 2014, n. 2.

Drawing on the reflection already completed, let us dedicate time to contemplating God's mercy, and review our personal and community life. The following questions may help us:

1. What ideas, aspects, lights and desires filled my heart in last week's reflection?
2. Is Jesus really the first and sole love of my life? How do I express it?
3. What challenges do the suggested biblical texts and the experience of our Founders throw down to our community?
4. What contributions can give us more life and enrich the theme of vocation in our Constitutions?

Sharing in community: hold a community meeting to share two or three aspects that will help us to move forward along this path of revitalisation.

➤ **Psalm of discipleship** (Mt 10,1-15)

Father, Jesus is also inviting us to follow him,
and we are happy to receive his call.
Acknowledging our weakness
but trusting in Your word, we have accepted the call,
knowing that You will give us strength we need to respond to it.

To follow You, Jesus, is to believe in You,
it means anchoring our life to a relationship with you,
it means knowing your words by heart,
pondering over them in our hearts, like Mary, Your mother,
and making them the path for our own lives to follow
and the treasure which we will never tire of contemplating.

To follow You, Jesus, it to continue the mission You are entrusting to us;
it means feeling that we have been sent by You.
You have called us to proclaim the Gospel,
servants of our sick brothers and sisters,
proclaiming Your salvation in word and deed,
freely giving what we have been freely given:
Your liberating love and Your saving presence

We pray, Father, through the intercession of Mary,
who heard, and did according to Your word,
that, like her,
we may become true disciples of Your Son and those You have sent to us.
Amen.

Suggested methodology:

1. Present the work of the 3rd 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 forward our charism today
4. Record the changes suggested for each number in the grid.
5. Send the summary to the Province the following week.

The Hospitaller vocation in the Constitutions

Number of the Constitutions	Contributions
<p>2 Identity</p> <p>We are called Sisters Hospitallers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This name portrays our charism because our aim in the Church is the practice of hospitaller charity, lived in a life of religious consecration according to Christ, the model of perfect love, symbolized by His Heart.</p>	
<p>4 Consecrated for the mission</p> <p>Jesus Christ, who reconciles us with the Father and by the baptism makes us children of God and sharers in his divine life, chose the apostles to live with Him and to share in his mission.</p> <p>He still calls those, whom he wishes, and he chooses us too to live with Him and like Him to present ourselves as a complete gift to the Father and to mankind. Through our public profession of the evangelical counsel, God consecrates us with a new title. We surrender ourselves to Him and, living in community, we follow Christ, virgin, poor and obedient, who passed through this earth as a divine Samaritan for all humanity doing good to all and healing the sick.</p>	
<p>10 Vocation, a gratuitous gift</p> <p>Jesus Christ calls us with a personal, gratuitous and irrevocable vocation. He unites more closely</p>	

<p>to Himself and he gives us the special gift of Hospitaller charity for the benefit of mankind in the Church.</p>	
<p>11 Configuration with Christ</p> <p>In a free response to the divine call through our religious consecration, which deepens and expresses more fully our baptismal consecration, we hand ourselves over entirely to God and to the service of mankind following Christ virgin, poor, obedient and merciful, in community life.</p>	
<p>69 Pastoral work for vocations</p> <p>We have received the gift of our vocation, which we live with joy and we have the duty to awaken and consolidate vocations in others.</p> <p>We consider that Jesus' exhortation is addressed to us: «Ask the Lord of the harvest, and we pray individually and in community for an increase of vocations in the Church.</p> <p>In order that our Congregation may show forth the Father's love in the saving mission of his Son and may increase daily, we work to promote vocations using all adequate means, not forgetting that the most effective means is the witness of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the priority of God in everything; - the generous and solicitous self-giving to our mission; - a truly fraternal life; - a simple, joyful life-style. <p>Fidelity to our vocation</p> <p>95 Vocation is a dynamic reality which we accept and nourish with increasing fidelity, in union with God, living out our charism and being open to continual renewal.</p>	

Giving thanks to God and in a spirit of sisterly co-responsibility with those who have received the same gift, we endeavour to the utmost to strengthen our vocation and choice.

Convinced that we are called to persevere in the Congregation, we respond to God's fidelity with our own generous and joyful fidelity.

In difficult moments we repeat: "My Jesus, I do not trust myself, I trust in your Heart and I abandon myself to you».

Week IV: 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 3rd fact sheet.*