

Constitutions



***Sisters, Servants of
the Immaculate Heart of Mary
Monroe, Michigan***

CONSTITUTIONS

SISTERS, SERVANTS OF THE
IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

MONROE, MICHIGAN



Approved by the 1988 General Chapter

A HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE CONSTITUTIONS

In the fall of 1845 a new religious community was born. The Redemptorist founder, Louis Florent Gillet, urged by the pressing need of Christian instruction in the pioneer settlement of Monroe, Michigan, brought together the founding Community: Marie Therese Maxis and Charlotte Schaaf, former Oblates of Providence from Baltimore, Maryland, and Theresa Renauld of Grosse Pointe, Michigan.

After the celebration of the Eucharist on November 10, 1845, Father Gillet laid his stole on the shoulder of each Sister and that day they began a life together in community.

Originally entitled Sisters of Providence, the name of the Congregation was changed in 1847 to its present title: Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Poverty, sickness, and misunderstanding with the bishop of Detroit characterized much of the early years of their history. Yet the Community slowly grew in numbers and expanded its educational works.

For over a century, the IHM Sisters served Catholic communities in and near the dioceses of southern Michigan, especially in the Archdiocese of Detroit, by providing Catholic education at all levels in both parochial schools and in their own private schools and college. In the late 1940s, the Congregation spread out geographically when IHM Sisters began staffing schools in Puerto Rico and in several western and southern states. All across the years, competence, creativity, and dedication marked their service in education.

In response to the pastoral needs which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, and in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, IHM Sisters moved into a variety of ministries. Although the majority of the Community continued to serve educational needs in the schools, some Sisters committed themselves to religious education, parish ministry, health care, social action, and other forms of service. During these same years, our ministries among the poor expanded to include Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia.

In 1980 and again in 1987, the members of the Congregation gathered in General Assembly to formulate goals for ministry and to set Congregational directions. These

experiences made explicit their corporate and individual commitment to action on behalf of justice as intrinsic to their vocations as baptized Christians and as women religious. The directions of Assembly '87 also recognized their growing consciousness of a holistic spirituality and of the feminist perspective. The General Chapter of 1988 called the members to planetary consciousness and to awareness of the interconnectedness of all peoples of the world.

The Constitutions of the Congregation reflect the historical development of the Congregation. At the time of the founding of the Community, Father Gillet wrote a brief rule based on that of the Redemptorists. After he left Monroe, Mother Theresa Maxis worked tirelessly to foster the spirit of Saint Alphonsus Liguori in the Congregation and to complete the Rule with the help of the Redemptorist Fathers. The inspiration of Louis Florent Gillet and the tenacity of Marie Theresa Maxis laid the foundation for the Alphonsian heritage which is essential to the charism and spirit of the Congregation.

The original Constitutions (or Rule, as it was called) were revised in 1861, principally by the addition of greater detail. In the early 1900s, the revision of the Constitutions based on the guidelines sent from Rome (Normae of 1901) led to the Congregation's becoming a pontifical institute. In 1913, the Congregation was approved and the Constitutions received approbation for seven years. On July 26, 1920, the Constitutions were given final approval by Rome.

From 1920 to 1960, the General Chapters made minor revisions in the Constitutions through rescripts from Rome, but by 1960, rapid changes in society and the Church, in theology and psychology, and in the experience of the Community itself necessitated a major revision of the Constitutions. Documents and theology which came out of the

Second Vatican Council, the spirituality of Saint Alphonsus Liguori and the history of the Congregation, the experience and opinions of the members of the Community-- all these called for the revision of 1966. This revision of the Constitutions expressed well the renewal of the Congregation in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Retreats, study, and interaction of the members of the Community during Assembly 72 helped to further the internalization of the spirit of these Constitutions.

The 1966 Constitutions were updated in 1969 and again in 1973. After eight months of study and consultation, the committee which was appointed in 1979 to do another updating came to the conclusion that the experience of the Community in present global and ecclesial realities called for a major revision. Through a process of input, recommendations, and approval from the members of the Congregation (1980-1982), the committee completed proposed Constitutions and submitted them to the General Chapter of 1982 for approval.

Over the next six years (1982-1988), dialogue with the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes included two CRIS critiques of the text of the Constitutions (1983 and 1987). The Constitutions Committee directed a process of interaction with the members of the Congregation which dealt with the substantive issues of the CRIS critiques of 1983 and 1987. The consensus-building process around the Constitutions was sensitive both to the experience of the IHM Community and to the recommendations of CRIS. The process and the Corporate Renewal Retreats of 1985, based on the Constitutions, resulted in a deepening commitment of the members of the Congregation to the Constitutions "as a faithful articulation of our experience and understanding of religious life" (Direction 5 of Assembly '87).

The approval of these Constitutions by the General Chapter of 1988 was, in fact, a celebration of the Congregation's active commitment to live this word. After minor amendments, the Church gave approbation to these Constitutions on Founder's Day, November 10, 1989.

Even as the Congregation was applying for approval in 1988, changes in the governance structures were on the horizon. At the conclusion of a multi-year congregational process (1991-1993), the governance structure in these Constitutions of 1993 was determined. The Congregational Governing Board approved the governance structure and sent it to the Chapter of 1993-94 which approved the document on August 29, 1993. The Church issued Protocol # D 7-1/93 on December 13, 1993, formally accepting the document.

June 26, 1994

Certain revisions in the text were approved by the Chapter of 2017-2018 and were formally accepted by the Church with a Decree dated September 28, 2017 (Prot. n. D 7-1/2017).

CHAPTER OF 1988 STATEMENT OF BELIEF

We, the delegates of Chapter of 1988, have chosen:

- to approve these Constitutions as our word at this time;
- to recognize the disparity between an emerging world view and that of certain aspects and structures of the church as an institution;
- to dedicate our time and energies to the areas of transformation articulated in our Assembly '87 Directions. In so doing, we believe we will be participating most faithfully in the stirring towards unity and wholeness evident in so many ways on our planet, stirrings which we see as the groaning of the Spirit among us, and through which ultimately our church, too, will be transformed.

WE BELIEVE that the Constitutions are an authentic expression of our roots, our shared faith and our life together. As such they are highly motivating and call us to a way of life that is risking, demanding, compassionate and committed to the transformation of society--at the heart of which is a commitment to the poor.

We commit ourselves to continue to reflect on, pray over, and hold ourselves accountable to one another for living what we have written and struggled over so painfully.

WE BELIEVE that we are in a process of moving towards non-patriarchal structures which must be modeled and communicated within a patriarchal society.

We recognize that the struggles and challenges of the world and its peoples have more claim on us than the struggle with those aspects of an institutional church which at this time cannot hear us or reverence our lived experience.

We will continue to seek ways in which to dialogue genuinely in a church which we love and in which we have committed our lives.

We are challenged, therefore, to live more deeply in the spirit of the Beatitudes--to be peacemakers while hungering after justice in our own lives, to make present in our world the reconciliation which so marked the life of Jesus Christ.

WE BELIEVE that no written word can capture our lived experience, and that our times call us to continual reinterpretation of our worldview...a worldview that challenges us to live our Constitutions in light of ever expanding horizons.

We recognize the need for the church to consider its relationship to the wider world. Our experience of living out the Gospel has moved us beyond our words, and new theological understandings, which many of us have come to live by, are not yet articulated in our documents.

We are becoming increasingly aware of the truth that revelation is present in the non-Christian world as well as the Christian world.

Further, we have begun to recognize that what is good in different cultural traditions should be encouraged and developed, as should efforts toward unity, harmony, peace and justice that are operative in organizations and/or groups that do not specifically articulate Christian goals.

WE BELIEVE that the long process of coming together to the statement of our shared values in our Constitutions has been one which has deepened the understandings of our tradition, our aspirations, and our mutual commitment. It has built community among us. Thus, we can say that the process and the text have strengthened our faith in each other and have led us to sense that...

Affairs are now soul size.

The enterprise

Is exploration into God.

Christopher Fry, *A Sleep of Prisoners*.

June 23, 1988

When the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him, Jesus unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it is written:

*"The Spirit of God is upon me;
therefore God has anointed me.
God has sent me
to bring glad tidings to the poor;
to proclaim liberty to captives,
recovery of sight to the blind,
and release to prisoners;
to announce a year of favor
from our God."*

Then he began by saying to them,
"Today this Scripture passage
is fulfilled in your hearing."

Luke 4:17-19, 21

Note: Some articles of the Constitutions and Supplement are preceded by an asterisk 11. This indicates a reference to the article in the Appendix--usually a reference to Canon Law.

CONSTITUTIONS - Part One

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CHAPTER 1



COMMITMENT TO JESUS CHRIST AND HIS REDEEMING MISSION

1. The love of Jesus Christ unites us in community and impels us to proclaim the good news of salvation. *Jn 13:34-35*
Col 1:29
2. Urged by the love of God, Revealed in Christ Jesus and “poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us,” we share in Christ’s own redeeming mission in the reality of our times through a variety of ministries. *Rom 5:5*
Eph 4:11-12
3. We are drawn together in community by Jesus Christ whom we love and in whom we believe, and we rely on the Holy Spirit to preserve the bond of our unity and to empower us to serve God's people. *1 Jn 4:7-12*
1 Pet 1:8
Eph 4:3
Acts 1:8
Phil 3:10

4. Nourished and strengthened by prayer,
by reflection on the word of God,
by ministry and life in community, and
by sharing in the life of Jesus Christ in the
Eucharist;

we desire to be filled
with the spirit of Jesus Christ,
the Redeemer,
who in unbounded love
sacrificed himself completely
for the redemption of each person
and of the whole human family
in fulfillment of his Father's will.

*Jn 6:34-35:
51-53
Lk 24:31-35
Acts 2:44-47
Jn 17:1-6*

5. Animated by this same spirit
of sacrificial love,
we express our total life-long
commitment
to Jesus Christ
and his redeeming mission
through public profession
in the Church
of consecrated celibacy, obedience,
and poverty.

*Lk 9:23-26
Jn 15:13
Phil 3:7-16*

6. As Jesus' disciples,
we are inspired by Mary, his mother,
the perfect servant of God,
who by her life teaches us how
to hear the word of God and act on it.

*Lk 1:38
Lk 8:21*

7. We cherish and are inspired
by the lives
of those who founded our
Congregation,
 Louis Florent Gillet,
 Marie Therese Maxis,
 our pioneer Sisters,
 and
by the lives
of all our Sisters
who have gone before us.

We are united with them
and with one another
in our common history
and our Alphonsian heritage.

Phil 3:17
Heb 11:1-40;
12:1-2

8. Like them, we pray that
humility, simplicity, and zeal
will mark us servants of Jesus Christ, and of his
people.
In serving others,
we hope to give and to receive,
to enrich and to be enriched,
to share and to grow together.

Lk 18:16-17
Jn 2:17
Mt 10:8-11
Gal 6:6-10

CHAPTER 2



COMMITMENT THROUGH MINISTRY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST

9. Jesus announced his own redeeming mission in the words of the prophet Isaiah:
-words often used by Saint Alphonsus Liguori-

"The Spirit of God is upon me;
therefore God has anointed me.
God has sent me
to bring glad tidings to the poor;
to proclaim liberty to captives,
recovery of sight to the blind,
and release to prisoners;
to announce a year of favor
from our God."

As members of the Church
and of this community,
we continue Jesus' liberating mission.

Lk 4:17-21
Lk 7: 18-28
Mk 16:15-20

10. With Jesus,
we share the joys and hopes,
the griefs and anguish
of all our sisters and brothers
in the human family.

With him,
we hear the cry of all God's people,
especially of the poor and abandoned,
and, with the power of his Spirit,
we respond to their cry
through a variety of ministries.

Therefore, we encourage one another
to use in the service of God's people
the many and unique gifts
God has given us
both personally and communally.

Gaudium et Spes, 1
Ex 3:7-10
1 Cor 12:4-7

11. In our struggle to live the gospel
today,
we recognize our call
to serve the needs of God's people
not only through the traditional works
of mercy,
but also by working with others
to eradicate the causes of injustice
and oppression and
to help create structures that will
promote justice and peace
and bring unity among all peoples.

In a special way,
we are committed to the work of
education,
a ministry in which our
community has been engaged
for over a century.

Mt 25:31-46
Justice in the World
(Synod of Bishops,
1971)
Dn 12:3
Mt 5:19

12. While many of us experience
the desire of Louis Florent Gillet
to be everywhere when we see
so many needs,
we realize that we cannot respond
to every need.

Therefore, we commit ourselves
to prayerful discernment
in our choices of ministry.

Louis Florent Gillet,
April 13, 1845
Acts 6:1-6

13. In that discernment,
we urge one another
to be conscious of the poverty,
hunger, and injustice suffered
by the great majority of the
human family and
to make choices which clearly reflect
that, with Mary of the Magnificat,
we stand with and for the poor.

1 Jn 3:16-18
Lk 1:46-55

* 14. We reverence the work of the Spirit I
in each Sister
as she discerns her ministry
in the light of

- her individual gifts,
- congregationally established goals
and priorities,

and

- the current needs of the
Congregation,
the Church, and society

and
in consultation with

- the people she hopes to serve,
- her co-ministers,
- her local community, and
- our community leaders.

As a community,
we affirm each Sister
who is sent in ministry
by our elected community leaders.

Rom 12:6-8
Lk 9:1-2
Jn 20:21
Acts 13:3

15. Striving to be attentive to
the signs of the times
and sensitive to
the needs of particular groups of people,

the community itself
may undertake corporate works
and
call members of the community
to ministry in these works.

Acts 6:1-6
Acts 13:2-3

16. In all we do to respond
to the needs of God's people
and to proclaim the reign of God,
we rely on the strength and inspiration
of the Holy Spirit.

For this reason, we dare
to speak God's word with boldness
and

to risk deeds our own hearts
could never dream,
so that, whatever the outcome,
we may say

in the spirit of Louis Florent Gillet:

I began without thinking of the future
of the work, leaving it to God alone
to bless and make it prosper,
if it were pleasing to God
and useful for the good of others.

2 Cor 4:5-10
1 Cor 2:2-5
Col 4:3-4
Eph 3:14-21
Acts 4:29
Louis Florent Gillet,
May 4, 1891

17. Finally, we commit ourselves to
mutuality in ministry,
desiring that our love, reverence,
and support of one another
be reflected in the way
we affirm, encourage, and work
with our co-ministers and
with each of the persons
among whom we serve.

Phlm 1:4-7
1 Thess 1:1-8

CHAPTER 3



COMMITMENT TO BE A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

18. We are drawn together in community
by Jesus' call to each of us:
"Come, follow me!"

Jesus is the center and meaning
of our life together
and his Spirit is the bond
of our unity.

Mk 1:16-20
Jn 1:35-51
Eph 4:3

19. Jesus loved his disciples
and formed them into a community
- calling each by name,
 - recognizing each one as unique,
 - forgiving each one's weakness and sin,
 - teaching them that the greatest
should be the least and servant of all,
 - praying that they might be one,
even as his Father and he are one, and
 - sending them to proclaim the good
news of salvation.

In Jesus' Spirit, we struggle
to love one another with a genuine love,
to accept, affirm, and forgive one
another and
to encourage and challenge one another
to live the gospel of Jesus Christ,
to proclaim the reign of God, and
to be faithful to the discipleship
we have publicly vowed.

Mk 3:13-19
Jn 1:43-47
Lk 22:24-27
Jn 17:21-27
Mt 28:16-20
Col 3:12-17
Rom 12:9-10

20. Together, we know Jesus Christ
in the breaking of the bread
and
in sharing the cup of salvation.
We believe that
where two or three are gathered
in his name
Jesus is in our midst,
and that whatever we ask
in his name
he will give us.

Lk 24:30-35
Mt 18:19-20
Jn 14:13-14

21. Sharing a common commitment
to participate in Christ's redeeming
mission,
we encourage one another
in our diverse ministries,
recognizing that a variety of gifts
enriches the community
and furthers the reign of God
in multiple ways.

Mt 28:18-20
1 Cor 12:4-11
1 Pet 4:10-11
2 Tm 1:6-8

22. As in the early Christian community
we hold all things in common.
From this community of goods
each one's needs are met,
and
to this community of goods
each one contributes
according to her ability.

More than this,
as a community, we commit ourselves
to live a simple life style,
to share what we have with those in
need, and
to use our resources in action
on behalf of justice.

In this way,
we express our interdependence
with one another and with all peoples
and, recognizing our human weakness, give
thanks for God's mercy and
saving power.

Acts 4:32-37
Acts 4:32-37
1 Cor 16:1-4
2 Cor 9:1-15

23. Through co-responsibility and service
in community
we strive to grow in our understanding
of love.
For, just as Jesus laid down his life
for us,
we are called to lay down our lives
for one another.

We affirm that all members
are mutually responsible for
the life, mission, and common good
of the community.

There are varieties of gifts,
and each Sister contributes to
the formation of community
and
the direction of its mission
in one Spirit.

We urge one another
to participate in community meetings,
to enter into processes of
decision-making,
and to implement community decisions.

24. We recognize the service of authority
in community,
a service which Jesus exemplified
- by washing the feet of his disciples,
 - by praying for and with his followers,
 - by instructing, encouraging, and
admonishing his companions, and
 - by laying down his life for all
as friend.

We ask our Sisters called to this service
through election or appointment,

- to respect, affirm, and support
individual members and local
communities,
- to express our unity in charity,
- to focus our communal purpose and
efforts,
 - to exercise authority and make
decisions in accordance with these
Constitutions,
- to coordinate the implementation
of community decisions, and
- to speak in our name.

We, in turn, promise
to our Sisters in community leadership
our respect, affirmation, support,
and collaboration.

Jn 13:1-15

Jn 17:11-19

Lk 11:1-4

Lk 6:20-26

Lk 12:31-32

Jn 15:13

Mk 9:35

Lk 22:24-27

1 Jn 3:16

Acts 15:5-29

1 Thess 5:12-24

25. We believe that community governance,
founded on Jesus' presence in our
midst and on our love and respect for
one another,
enables us more fully
to live the gospel and
to proclaim the reign of God.

We are committed, therefore,
to governance which expresses

- faith in Jesus Christ,
- love of one another,
- respect for the individual,
- participation and collaboration,
- corporate decisions and actions.

Mt 28:16-20
Mt 18:15-20
1 Thess 5:12-24
Acts 15:5-29

* 26. We recognize that
the highest authority
in the Congregation
is the General Chapter
when it is in session,
and at all other times
is the President
who works with and is assisted
by a council.

Acts 15:1-35
Acts 6:5
Jn 21:15-17

27. In our life together,
we call one another
to mutual accountability

- member to member,
- leaders to members,
- individual members and
local communities to leaders.

1 Thess 5:12-22
Mt 18:15-18

28. We acknowledge
our continual need
for conversion, healing,
and growth in holiness.

We accept responsibility,
both as individuals and as a community,
for our on-going formation, learning,
and development.

Mt 5:48
Mk 14:38
Acts 22:10
Lk 9:11

29. To new members, called to share
our life and mission,
we offer our love, our support, and
all that we are and have.
We are grateful for the unique
enrichment
we receive from each of them.

They will best understand who we are
by entering into our life

- a life of faith and prayer
- of zeal for the extension of God's
reign,
- of true love for one another.

Jn 13:34-35
Acts 2:42-47
Acts 4:32-35
Rom 13:8
Col 3:12-17

30. New members are integrated into the
community through a process centered in

- personal love of Jesus Christ,
- commitment to his redeeming mission
in the reality of our times, and
- the gospel values emphasized
in our community tradition
and expressed in these Constitutions.

Jn 21:15-17

A Sister is fully incorporated
into the life and mission
of the Congregation
when she makes profession
of perpetual vows.

Jn 15:9
Lk 4:18
Lk 9:46-48
Jn 13:34-35
Acts 2:42-47

31. As a community,
we desire above all
to be known as Jesus' disciples
by our love for one another
and for all whom our lives touch,
particularly our associates and
co-laborers.

We unite in a special way
with our sisters and brothers
in the community of the Church,
and, still more,
we endeavor to create
with all peoples everywhere
a global community of justice, love,
and peace.

Jn 13:34-35
Gal 6:10
Phil 2:25
Acts 18:1, 18
Mt 28:16-20
Rom 10:12-15

CHAPTER 4

COMMITMENT TO PRAYER, REFLECTION AND THE CELEBRATION OF EUCHARIST

32. We ask Jesus to teach us to pray,
even as he taught his disciples,
and to help us to pray always
even as he urged his followers to do.

Like Jesus, who prayed

- in solitude,
- in the midst of action, and
- in public gatherings of his people, we
promise to be faithful

to personal and communal prayer.

Lk 11:1-4

Lk 18:1

Mk 1:35

Jn 71:41-42

Lk 4:16

33. Following the example of Jesus, who,
early in the morning and during the
night, went in search of deserted places
so that he might pray alone
to his Father,
we promise to be faithful
to daily personal prayer
and
to regular times of solitude and silence.

Mk 1:35

Lk 5:16

Lk 6:12

34. We continually strive
to hear the Spirit who prays in us
and
to make our whole life a prayer,
so that whatever we do,
in word or act,
all will be done in the name of Jesus
and by the power of his Spirit.
- Rom 8:26-27*
Col 3:17
Phil 3:10
Eph 3:20-21
35. We believe that when we come
together in his name,
Jesus is in our very midst.
Our communal prayer
bonds us in love, forgiveness, and
reconciliation and
strengthens us to respond to the cry
of God's people.
- Mt 18:19-22*
2 Tim 1:6-7
Gal 3:27-29
36. In our struggle to integrate
prayer and service,
reflection and action,
we look to Mary, the mother of Jesus,
a woman of faith who
- questioned the words of the
messenger,
 - went in haste to visit her cousin,
 - pondered in her heart the words
and events she did not understand,
 - acted to provide wine for the
wedding,
 - searched out Jesus in his public
ministry,
 - stood beneath the cross, and
 - prayed in the midst of the
resurrection community.
- Lk 1:26-45*
Lk 2:19, 51
Jn 2:1-11
Lk 8:19-21
Jn 19:25-27
Acts 1:14

37. In the celebration of Eucharist,
we unite with communities of
Christians all over the world to
give thanks
and
to remember, enter into, and
proclaim Christ's total self-giving
in his life, death, and resurrection.

Through Christ's saving action,
we are formed into a community
and are missioned to proclaim
the reign of God in our midst.

Lk 22:14-20
1 Cor 11:23-26
Jn 17:18-23
Lk 24:13-35

CHAPTER 5



COMMITMENT THROUGH PROFESSION OF CELEBACY, OBEDIANCE AND POVERTY

38. We express a total lifelong commitment to Jesus Christ and his redeeming mission through public profession in the Church of the vows of consecrated celibacy, obedience and poverty.
- Lk 5:1-11, 27-28*
Rom 8:35-39
Phil 3:7-11
39. In responding to the love of Jesus Christ who calls us to follow him, and in order to devote ourselves more fully to the service of others with an all-embracing and chaste love, we vow lifelong celibacy.
- To be faithful to his gift and call to celibacy in community, we trust in God's fidelity to us and we recognize our need for
- a deep personal love of God,
 - the love, support and example of one another in community,
 - friendship, self-denial, and prayer.
- Jn 1:35-51*
Mt 19:12
Eph 3:16-21
Jn 21:15-17
Gal 2:19-21
2 Cor 4:5-11

40. In union with Jesus' obedience
to his call and mission,
an obedience which led to his death
on the cross,
we vow obedience.

By this vow,
we commit ourselves
to be attentive to God's call and
inspiration, revealed in many ways;
to be co-responsible, participative, and
accountable in community life;
to implement community decisions; and
to obey the legitimate requests
of elected community leaders.

*Jn 8:27-28,
31-32,42
Jn 12:49-50
Phil 2:6-11
Lk 11:28
Heb 5:7-9*

41. Inspired by the invitation of Jesus
to sell all, give to the poor,
and follow him,
we vow poverty.

By this commitment,
we promise
to hold all things in common,
contributing our earnings and gifts
to the community, and
meeting our personal needs
from community resources:
to steward community resources
with care and accountability;
to live a simple life style;
and
to share what we have with those in
need.

*Mk 10:21
Lk 6:20-26
Lk 9:1-4
Lk 12:22-31
Lk 16:2
Lk18:18-27*

In our efforts to be faithful
to this call,
we wish to be identified with Jesus
who lived out his teaching of total
reliance on God's provident care,
and
we express our solidarity with the
poor of this world
with whom we struggle for justice
and for a more equitable distribution
of goods.

Lk 21:1-4
Mt 25:34-40
Acts 2:44-45
Acts 4:32-35
2 Cor 6:2-10
2Cor 8:14-15
20-21
Jas 1:27
Jas 2:1-9, 14-17
1 Jn 2:15-17
1 Jn 3:16-21

Text of Profession

42. Most gracious and loving God,
I, N.N.,
in a free and deliberate act,
desire to consecrate myself
entirely to Jesus Christ,
whom I love and in whom I believe.
I intend by this profession
to be united in community
with the Sisters of this Congregation
and with them to share in
the redeeming mission of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, in union with Mary,
the mother of Jesus,
I vow to God,
in your presence, Sister N.N.,
(President or her delegate)
celibacy, obedience, and poverty
for the rest of my life,
according to the Constitutions of the
Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate
Heart of Mary.

43. In our continuing efforts
to follow Jesus and
to proclaim the gospel
 with our lives and our service,
we act in the hope that
Gods tender and faithful love
for every person and
for the whole human family
be made visible and effective.

For we believe
that God uses the weak
to effect great things and
that God's "power now at work in us
can do immeasurably more
 than we can ask or imagine."

1 Cor 1:17-31
Louis Florent Gillet
May 4, 1891
2 Cor 12:9-10
Eph 3:14-21

CONSTITUTIONS - Part Two

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CHAPTER 6



THE HERITAGE OF THE CONGREGATION

44. The Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, with its Motherhouse at Monroe, Michigan, is an apostolic religious institute of pontifical right. As an institute and as individuals dedicated to service in the Church, we are bound in a special way to its supreme authority, according to the norms of law.
45. Since the time of our foundation by Louis Florent Gillet, a Redemptorist missionary, our Congregation has been apostolic in nature and Alphonsian in spiritual tradition.
46. The Eucharist is central in our lives.
 - Daily participation in the Paschal Mystery is essential to our personal and communal growth in Christ.
 - As frequently as circumstances of our life and ministry allow, we gather for the celebration of the Eucharist.
 - Whenever possible, we continue our Alphonsian tradition of having the Blessed Sacrament reserved in each local house.
47. Through a life of prayer, we experience the Spirit's continual call to conversion. Open to this call, we frequently celebrate our conversion/ reconciliation within our communities and in the Church's sacrament of Reconciliation.
48. The life of prayer taught by Jesus is our inheritance from Saint Alphonsus Liguori, who also gave us, as a model, Saint Teresa of Avila, a woman of contemplation and action.

In our personal lives, we develop patterns which regularly allow for more extended times of prayer and for an annual retreat.

49. Love of the Scriptures and the spirit of the liturgical seasons inform and characterize our morning and evening communal prayer. This is especially evident in our celebrations of:
- Advent, Christmas, Epiphany; and
 - Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost.

50. In keeping with our Redemptorist heritage, the patrons of the Congregation are:
- Mary, under the title of the Immaculate Conception;
 - Saint Joseph;
 - Saint Alphonsus Liguori;
 - Saint Teresa of Avila.

Traditionally, therefore, we celebrate in a special way:

- The feast of the Immaculate Conception, our patronal feast (December 8);
 - The feast of Saint Joseph (March 19);
 - The feast of Saint Alphonsus Liguori, from whom we have received our spirituality and orientation in mission (August 1);
 - The feast of Saint Teresa of Avila, woman of prayer and doctor of the Church (October 15);
 - Founder's Day, honoring the day of our official beginning as a Community (November 10);
 - Marian feasts according to the current liturgical calendar.
 - We commemorate in a special way the lives of the deceased members of our Congregation, both in the actual celebration of their funeral liturgies and each year on the anniversaries of their deaths.
51. Continuing the long-standing tradition of our congregation, whenever possible we renew our vows publicly on December 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

For this devotional renewal of vows, and wherever such renewal is made communally, the following formula is suggested:

Most gracious and loving God,
I, N.N.,
united in community with my Sisters,
renew my vows of celibacy, obedience,
and poverty
which I made on the day of my profession,
intending by this renovation
to devote myself anew to Jesus Christ,
whom I love and in whom I believe,
and
to re-commit myself
with the members of this Congregation
to participation in the redeeming mission
of Jesus Christ.

52. Also following our community tradition, each Sister receives a gold ring on the day of her first profession.

CHAPTER 7



LOCAL COMMUNITY AND GOVERNANCE

53. Our life in common calls us to the sharing of our faith, our sisterly love, our prayer, our commitment in ministry, our material goods, and our diverse gifts, talents and experience.
- * 54. Life in community strengthens and supports us in ministry; ministry, in turn, enriches and revitalizes our community life. For this reason, serious consideration is given to whether or not the chosen ministry allows for meaningful life in community.
55. Our governmental structures exist to promote vital communities in mission. It is first in our personal and local reality that the Congregation exists as a community in mission. In keeping with the principle of subsidiarity, responsibility for the Congregation's shared life rests with the local community.
56. Each local community is served by a coordinator or relates directly to the Mission Councilor designated by the Leadership Council. Internal organizational structures vary according to the size of the local community.
57. Small communities relate directly to the Mission Councilor designated by the Leadership Council. In larger communities, one member is designated coordinator and one is designated as local treasurer in accordance with congregational norms.
58. The local coordinator is a Sister in perpetual vows. It is her role to facilitate local decision-making and to maintain contact with the Mission Councilor

designated by the Leadership Council. She is available to assist members of the community in times of particular need.

The local coordinator normally acts in consultation with the other members of the local community. However, in very large houses, she may be assisted by consultors designated by the local community. In matters which require immediate response, she has authority to make needed decisions.

59. Since the strength and vitality of the various spheres of governance depend greatly on their effective interaction, the Mission Councilor designated by the Leadership Council, in a spirit of mutual responsibility and accountability, approves the form of government used by the local community.
60. Each plan of local organization must provide effective means for communication, consultation, and participation in the larger reality of congregational life and governance.
61. In the local sphere, we are each accountable for our shared life and mission:
 - praying together and sharing our faith-life,
 - taking personal leadership,
 - joining in dialogue,
 - participating in making and implementing decisions,
 - accepting responsibility for individual and group tasks.
62. Gathering on a regular basis as a community group is important in fostering such shared life. We strive in and through our community meetings:
 - to create a climate for the operation of the Spirit;
 - to help each other grow in faith and prayer and in awareness of the needs of those we serve and with whom we share life in community;
 - to contribute actively to the development and implementation of congregational goals and objectives;

- to establish, to implement, and to evaluate our local community goals;
- to prepare a house budget which reflects our commitment to the common life and to a simple life-style;
- to collaborate in the corporate action of the Congregation and in its plan for responsible stewardship;
- to respect each person's need for privacy and reflection by reserving certain parts of the house for community.

63. The basic communities within which we live and minister on a day-to-day basis are extended in ever broadening networks of community within the Congregation, the Church, and society.

CHAPTER 8



CONGREGATIONAL GOVERNANCE

64. Our governmental structures exist to enable us as a community in mission. The structures and processes of governance promote personal and communal growth, support ministry, and facilitate congregational interaction. These structures are exercised according to the spirit and norms articulated in Part I of these Constitutions, with particular reference to Articles 23-31 and in accordance with canon law.

General Chapter

The statutes and structures which pertain to the General Chapter are found in the Supplement Articles S-5 through S-11.

Purpose

65. The General Chapter belongs to the entire Congregation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the point of integration of the many structures and processes by which all participate in governance at the local and congregational levels. Acting collegially, the General Chapter has the role of:
1. preserving the unique nature and charism of the Congregation and fostering renewal according to its particular spirit;
 2. dealing with affairs of major importance which touch upon the life and mission of the Congregation as a whole;
 3. filling the elective offices of the Congregation's Leadership Council.

Convening

66. Ordinarily, the General Chapter is convened at the conclusion of the term of office of the President. She convokes the Chapter no less than six months prior to the date set for it to convene. In order to ensure sufficient time for wide congregational involvement in preparation for Chapter, planning may precede this convocation, but the election of delegates does not take place until after convocation. The agenda of the Chapter is determined in consultation with the members of the Congregation.

67. In the event that the office of President becomes vacant before the end of the term, it is the responsibility of the Vice President to convoke the General Chapter as soon as possible so that the convening of the Chapter will not be postponed beyond a year after the vacancy.

This Chapter of Elections chooses a Sister to complete the term of the President. The other members of the Leadership Council complete their own terms. The new president is eligible for re-election for one six-year term subject to the restrictions of Article 84.

68. In other extraordinary circumstances, the President, in consultation with the Coordinating Council, may convoke a special General Chapter.

Composition

69. The General Chapter, representative of the total Congregation, is composed of ex-officio members and elected delegates. The ex-officio members shall not exceed one-fifth of the body.
70. Ex-officio members are the President, other members of the Leadership Council, and the immediate past President.
71. According to the principle of equitable representation, the process for determining the number of General Chapter delegates and alternates and the method of their election is determined by the Coordinating Council prior to the convocation of Chapter (cf. Articles 69, S-6, 5-29.3).
72. To be elected to General Chapter, a Sister must have made perpetual vows.
73. The President, and the other members of the Leadership Council, continue As members of the Chapter, even if they are not re-elected. If newly elected congregational officers are not already members of the Chapter, they become members after the elections have been completed.

Procedural - General

74. The President presides at all sessions of the General Chapter.
75. In dealing with major affairs of the Congregation, members of the Chapter seek to reach a high degree of consensus. However, decisions require at least an absolute majority of those present, except where stated otherwise in the Constitutions.
76. It is the responsibility of the President to publish the enactments of the Chapter and to communicate with the Apostolic See on constitutional matters which require approval. The enactments of the Chapter remain in effect unless they are changed or completely replaced by an act of a subsequent Chapter.
77. All the records of elections and of matters brought before the Chapter of Affairs shall be preserved in the General Archives.

Election Process for Leadership Council

78. The norms of canon law for elections in collegial bodies are observed with regard to such matters as the notification of members, the necessary quorum, uprightness of intent, and the freedom of Chapter members.
79. Prior to formal balloting, the members of the General Chapter enter into prayerful discernment in order to seek guidance, individually and communally, in selecting the person who is, they believe before God, best suited for each office. The final decision is determined by secret ballot.
80. To be elected, a Sister must have an absolute majority of the valid ballots cast. In the event that after three ballots no one has been elected, a fourth ballot is used, retaining only the names of the two who have received the highest number of votes. Should this ballot end in a tie, the older in profession is elected; if both were professed the same day, the older in age is elected.

81. After the election of all Mission Councilors and consultation with the President-Elect, the General Chapter elects one Mission Councilor to serve as Vice President.
82. The Congregational Treasurer is appointed from among the Mission Councilors by the President, acting collegially with the Mission Councilors

Eligibility for Office

83. To be elected validly, the President and other members of the Leadership Council must be perpetually professed members of the Congregation for at least five years.
84. A Sister may not serve more than twelve years consecutively in any major office or combination of major offices: President or Mission Councilor.

Community Circles

Supplement references S-15 through S-18

85. Each sister belongs to a Community Circle through which she participates in congregational affairs. The size and organization of these Community Circles is described in the Supplement to these *Constitutions*.
86. A Mission Circle and Wisdom Circle exercise their responsibility for the life, mission, and common good of the community as expressed in the *Constitutions* and our current congregational documents. The Mission Circles and the Wisdom Circle:
 1. Reflect together on their experience of life and mission;
 2. Discern, respond to, and make recommendations regarding congregational issues and polices;
 3. Deepen our understanding of and commitment to directions from the chapter grounded in contemplation;
 4. Implement Chapter enactments and congregational directions and policies as appropriate;
 5. Encourage and challenge one another to more fully live the Gospel and to further the reign of God;
 6. Exercise accountability by reflecting on their experience and responsibilities as a group with each other, with the Mission Councilor, and with the Coordinating Council.

The Blessing Circle exercises responsibility for the life, mission and common good of the community as expressed in the Constitutions and our current congregational documents in the following ways:

1. Hold the life, mission and common good of the community in their daily prayer, and
2. Bear witness by their lives to our communal contemplative response to the needs of the Earth community and to the call for transformative change and growth.

87. Community Circles communicate and consult with the Leadership Council and other Mission Units primarily through the Coordinating Council.

The President

Supplement reference S-19

Role of the President

- * 88. To lead and serve the entire Congregation, the President, assisted by and in collaboration with the other members of the Leadership Council, exercises the authority inherent in her office, according to the leadership roles and functions assigned her in canon law and in these Constitutions.
89. In canonical and administrative matters, the President is assisted by the Mission Councilors.
90. The President serves in the Congregation's highest office of leadership, fostering the spiritual and temporal well-being of the Congregation, in fidelity to its charism, heritage, and mission in the Church. In fulfilling this role, it is her responsibility:
1. to unify in charity, always respecting the dignity of the individual;
 2. to urge fidelity to the Gospel and the Constitutions;
 3. to focus the corporate nature of our life and mission;
 4. to enunciate goals and priorities as a community in mission;
 5. to stay abreast of movements in the Church and society;
 6. to be knowledgeable of the members and to encourage vibrant life and mission among them;
 7. to mission each Sister annually in the name of the Congregation, after hearing the recommendation of the responsible Mission Councilor;
 8. to call individuals and groups to co-responsibility and mutual accountability;
 9. to serve as President of the General Chapter, the Coordinating Council, the Leadership Council, and the legal corporation.

91. The President is the official representative of the Congregation to the Apostolic See and to local, national, and international ecclesial and civic groups.

92. The President has authority, within the norms of canon law:

1. to admit and dismiss candidates and novices;
2. to extend the time of novitiate for an individual;
3. to provide for the temporary transferral of the novitiate community;
4. to permit the anticipation of first profession;
5. to receive vows in the name of the Church and of the Congregation, or to designate a delegate to do so;
6. to authorize changes in wills and cession papers;
7. to permit a Sister to renounce her patrimony.

93. The President, after consultation with the Mission Councilors, may act in the following matters, observing the norms of canon law:

1. the extension of the time of temporary vows;
2. the exclusion of a Sister from further vows;
3. the admission of a Sister to perpetual vows;
4. the petition to the Apostolic See of a Sister in perpetual vows for an indult to leave the Congregation.

* 94. After receiving the consent of the Mission Councilors, the President may act in the following matters, observing the norms of canon law:

- *1. approving action toward the alienation of properties or other financial transactions requiring a vote;
2. approving the accounts of the Congregational Treasurer;
3. appointing formation personnel;
4. permitting an individual to make her novitiate outside the novitiate house;
5. erecting, transferring, or suppressing a novitiate house;
6. admitting to first vows;
7. granting to a Sister under temporary vows an indult to leave the Congregation;
8. allowing re-entrance into the Congregation of one who completed the novitiate or made temporary or perpetual vows in the Congregation;
9. granting approval for a Sister to transfer into or out of the Congregation;

10. granting a Sister in perpetual vows an indult of exclaustation for up to three years, or petitioning enforced exclaustation;
11. permitting a Sister to live outside a religious community.

*95. In cases of dismissal, the President acts collegially with members of the Leadership Council according to the norms of canon law.

Term Length and Succession

96. The President is elected for a term of six years. She may be re-elected for a second term of six years, subject to the restrictions of Article 84.
97. Should the President resign, be incapacitated, or die, the Vice President functions in that role until a General Chapter is convened. If it should ever seem necessary to remove the President from office, the Leadership Council members submit the matter to the Apostolic See. If the President thinks it is her duty to resign her office, she shall make the reason known, in writing, to the Apostolic See.

Mission Councilors

Supplement references S-20 through S-28

Role - General

98. The Mission Councilors serve as the deliberative and consultative body for the President, as members of the Leadership Council, as ex-officio members of the Coordinating Council, and as ex-officio members of the Chapter.

Additionally, Mission Councilors serve in one or more of the following areas:

1. They coordinate planning, research and services in key areas of congregational life;
2. with Community Circles and local communities, they encourage vibrant life, ministry, and relationships among the members, supporting each group's internal growth and development, and affirming each group's active participation in congregational affairs;

3. with individuals they exercise a role of pastoral care. They come to know individual Sisters in their experience of everyday life and mission. Correspondingly, they are the congregational representatives with whom individuals are accountable for their discernment in ministry and other major life decisions. In light of this, guided by congregational directions and policies, they make recommendations to the President regarding the annual missioning of the Sisters.
99. The distribution of responsibilities among the Mission Councilors is determined by the Leadership Council

Vice President

100. The Vice President represents the President in her absence and in an official capacity when so designated. She assists the President, giving her counsel and support, and performing other designated functions.

Congregational Treasurer

101. The Congregational Treasurer coordinates the planning, budgeting, and audits for the Congregation. She is responsible to administer the goods of the Congregation, its properties, monies, and investments, in a safe and responsible manner. She gives regular reports to the Leadership Council and the membership (*Cf. Articles S-22, 142, S-47*).

Number, Terms and Succession

102. There is a minimum of four Mission Councilors.
103. The term of office of the Mission Councilors is for six years. They are eligible for re-election, subject to the restrictions of Article 84.
104. Should a Mission Councilor resign, be incapacitated, or die, the Coordinating Council selects a Sister to fill the vacated office. She functions in that role until the next General Chapter. In the case of the Congregational Treasurer, the President, acting collegially with the Mission Councilors, appoints a member of the Leadership Council to complete the term. An additional Councilor is selected in accord with this article if more than one half of the term remains.

Leadership Council

Supplement references S-26 through S-28

Role

105. The President, assisted by and in collaboration with the Mission Councilors, unifies and directs the life, mission, and common good of the Congregation as an ecclesial and corporate entity. Together they function as the Leadership Council chaired by the President. The Leadership Council:

1. reflects on emerging congregational, ecclesial, and global realities, discerning their implications for future directions and taking action accordingly;
2. articulates positions on urgent ecclesial and societal matters (*cf. Article 24*);
3. focuses and assists the congregation's implementation of Chapter decisions;
4. integrates congregational planning, research, and services;
5. stewards the resources of the Congregation;
6. in consultation with each Community Circle, designates which Mission Councilor will be linked to each Community Circle;
7. appoints the General Secretary upon the recommendation of the President;
8. makes operational policies and administrative decisions.

106. The Leadership Council provides a vehicle for communication, consultation, integration, and mutual accountability among Leadership Council members in carrying out their responsibilities.

* 107. In order to conduct the official business of the Leadership Council, more than half the members must be present, one of whom is the President, as chair.

Coordinating Council

Supplement references S-29 through S-35

108. The purpose of the Coordinating Council is to enable communication, faith sharing, consultation, and deliberation between and among members of the Leadership Council and Community Circles, thereby fostering a sense of the whole regarding the life, mission, and common good of the Congregation. Further, the Coordinating Council reviews and establishes major congregational policies between General Chapters.

109. The membership and procedures of the Coordinating Council are described in the Supplement to these Constitutions.

110. The Coordinating Council meets at least once a year and is chaired by the President.



CHAPTER 9

FORMATION

Supplement references 5-40 through 5-43

Initial Formation

111. Initial formation is a time of mutual discernment during which the Individual and the Congregation seek to determine a person's desire and capacity for life in this Congregation. The formation period should lead toward a free, conscious, and well-informed decision regarding the individual's vocation.
112. This period of formation emphasizes personal development of an apostolic spirituality rooted within our heritage. Such a spirituality challenges each individual to nurture and integrate the following:
 - a commitment to Jesus Christ and his redeeming mission;
 - a commitment to participate in that mission through ministry;
 - a commitment to communal living and the vowed life;
 - a commitment to prayer, worship, and on-going reflection.
113. The formation program has four distinct but interrelated phases: Pre-Admission, Candidacy, Novitiate, Temporary Profession.

Candidacy

114. Following completion of the Pre-Admission process, an applicant may be admitted to candidacy by the President, receiving the recommendation of the Admissions Board.

115. Candidacy is a period of introduction into all aspects of the Congregation's life and mission. Its focus, however, is the transition into community living and the gradual learning of those attitudes and skills appropriate to common life: common prayer, faith-sharing, interdependence, participation in decision-making, and mutual accountability.
116. Candidacy is ordinarily from one to two years. During candidacy, the individual is free to leave the Congregation at any time after informing the director. The President has the authority to dismiss a candidate.
117. Candidates who freely request it may be admitted to the Novitiate after completing their candidacy. The President, having received the recommendations of the formation personnel, has the authority to admit them.

Novitiate

118. The Novitiate is a time of deepening one's participation in the life of the Congregation. It provides time for intense prayer and study and is devoted to discerning whether the individual has the various gifts of the Spirit required for living religious life in this particular Congregation.
119. The length of the novitiate in the Congregation is two years. Novices are free to leave at any time after informing the director. They may be dismissed by the President.
- * 120. Canonical norms for the valid completion of the Novitiate in a religious Congregation are observed.

Formation Personnel

121. Formation personnel are appointed by the President, with the consent of the Mission Councilors, and are accountable to her.
122. In order to be appointed Director of Novices, a Sister must be at least five years in perpetual vows in the Congregation.

On-going Formation

123. Since formation is a life-long process, the Congregation continues to make available opportunities for the spiritual, intellectual, and ministerial enrichment of Sisters after initial formation.
124. By responding to such opportunities, the members continue to strive for mature development, integration, and the generous use of their individual gifts.

CHAPTER 10



PROFESSION

125. Through the profession of public vows, each Sister effects her total consecration to God and dedication in the service of God's people and is incorporated into the Congregation. By this act she expresses her commitment to live consecrated celibacy, obedience, and poverty according to the Constitutions.
126. A Novice who freely requests it may be admitted to temporary vows at the completion of the Novitiate. The President, with the consent of the Mission Councilors, admits her to temporary profession. The recommendations of the formation personnel are of vital importance in making this decision.
127. The period of Temporary Profession is a time of transition into the mainstream of congregational life. Its focus is the integration of prayer, ministry, and community living.
- * 128. The length of time in temporary vows is three years, with the possibility of renewal for another three years. Canonical norms for valid temporary profession are observed.
129. By first profession, Sisters obtain both active voice (the right to vote) and passive voice (the right to be voted for), except in cases specifically limited by canon law or the Congregation's Constitutions.
130. After a minimum of three years of temporary profession, a Sister may be admitted to perpetual vows by the President in consultation with the Mission Councilors. Other canonical norms for valid religious profession are observed.
131. The vow formula of the Congregation (Article 42) is used for both temporary and perpetual profession. When temporary vows are being pronounced the formula is adjusted to read: "for n. years," in place of "for the rest of my life."

132. The President or her delegate receives the vows in the name of the Church and of the Congregation.

Transfer Process

133. Persons who enter the Congregation through a transfer process participate in the life and mission of the Congregation for a formative period of at least three years before making profession in this Congregation.

CHAPTER 11



THE VOWS OF OBEDIANCE AND POVERTY

134. By the vow of obedience, we have committed ourselves to faithful fulfillment of the obligations of the religious life as expressed in these *Constitutions* and the law of the Church. The President may call us to that fidelity in particular matters. In a grave matter, a command in virtue of the vow must be given in writing or in the presence of two witnesses.
135. The members of the Congregation express concretely a spirit of poverty through the simplicity of their local life style, their clothing, their personal expenditures, and their communal celebrations.
- * 136. As religious, the clothing of the members of the Congregation ought to witness to consecration of life and to a willingness to live poorly. Such dress is simple, modest, and becoming.
137. In the spirit of evangelical poverty and the common life, all earnings, gifts, pensions, grants, and subsidies received by a person under vow belong to the Congregation.
138. Personal property owned at the time of profession or inheritance received after profession, that is, patrimony, remains the property of the individual. By vow she gives up the right to administer her property and its income. She cedes administration of her property and makes disposition for its use and revenues at the time of first profession and at the time of the receipt of any inheritance thereafter. She can change these arrangements only with the authorization of the President of the Congregation.
139. Prior to perpetual profession, each Sister makes a will by which she designates the disposition of her patrimony after her death. This will, valid also in the civil law, may be changed only with the authorization

the President of the Congregation.

140. After at least five years of perpetual profession, a Sister, with the authorization of the President, may renounce her patrimony totally or in part. Such a renunciation does not limit her capacity to acquire additional personal property through future inheritance.



CHAPTER 12

MATERIAL GOODS AND PROPERTY

Supplement references S-44 through S-47

141. As a juridic person in the Church and as a corporation recognized by civil law, the Congregation has the capacity to acquire, own, administer, and alienate temporal goods, observing the Church's law of temporalities.
- *142. For the ordinary administration of financial affairs, there is a Congregational Treasurer for the Congregation, and a local treasurer in each residence. They function according to canon law and the Constitutions and under the direction of the properly elected congregational leader.
143. In extraordinary transactions, such as the alienation of congregational properties, the President must have the consent of the Mission Councilors in order to act validly.

CHAPTER 13



SEPERATION FROM THE CONGREGATION

144. When a member of the Congregation is involved in a process of separation from the Congregation--by transfer, exclaustration, departure, or dismissal—the procedures outlined in canon law are closely followed in order to protect the rights of both the individual and the Congregation. So that both justice and charity may be insured, the steps of the appropriate process and the resultant effects on the individual's rights and obligations are carefully explained.

CHAPTER 14



AMENDMENT AND INTERPRETATION OF THE CONSTITUTIONS

145. These Constitutions are the fundamental Code of the Congregation's proper law, expressing the way of life and the duties and rights proper to all members. The Constitutions may be revised and amended by a two-thirds vote of a General Chapter and the consent of the Apostolic See.

146. The interpretation of doubtful matters is made by the President in consultation with the Coordinating Council. If the matter cannot be resolved in this way, authentic interpretation may be sought from the Apostolic See.

SUPPLEMENT TO THE CONSTITUTIONS



The Supplement, a document separate from the Constitutions, contains statutes and structures which complement and enable the living out of the Constitutions. The Supplement forms part of the proper law of the Congregation and may be changed by the General Chapter.

Assembly

S-1. Assembly is a means to facilitate the participation of the total membership in directing the life of the Congregation. Assembly is ordinarily scheduled annually.

S-2. An Assembly assists participative governance by

- celebrating our communal reality and share mission rooted in the IHM charism and history:
- participating in transformative learning experiences;
- setting a focus for the coming year based on Chapter directions;
- exploring congregational attitudes and opinions; and
- providing for an exchange of views, experiences, and information; - to celebrate our corporateness.

S-3. The Coordinating Council calls for an Assembly and determines its focus.

S-4. Professed sisters are voting members of the Assembly. Associates are invited and encouraged to participate. According to the particular purpose of the Assembly, the Coordinating Council may determine whether to invite others, such as co-workers, to participate.

General Chapter

Purpose

S-5. Affairs of major importance for Chapter consideration may include:

- legislating constitutional changes;
- reviewing and making major policy;
- reviewing leadership reports; and
- reflecting upon the meaning and implications of Assembly directions for the life of the Congregation.

Composition

S-6. The Coordinating Council, after consultation with the membership, decides the number of delegates and the method of their election at least one year prior to the date set for Chapter (*Cf. Articles 69, 77, 5-29.3*).

Procedural - General

S-7. Proposals may be submitted to the Chapter by any member of the Congregation or by any group of members, according to guidelines published during the time of Chapter preparation.

S-8. The ordering of the agenda of the General Chapter is determined by the Chapter delegates.

S-9. In general, sessions of the Chapter of Affairs are open to observers.

Election Process for Leadership Council

S-10. For the elections, the two delegates youngest by profession serve as tellers, counting and tallying the ballots in the presence of the Chapter President, and seeing to their destruction when the balloting has been completed.

S-11. A sister from within the Chapter is designated by the President of the Chapter and confirmed by the members to serve as secretary for the Chapter of Elections. She keeps an accurate record of each ballot and the outcome of the elections. This report is signed by the President, the secretary, and the tellers.

Individuals

S-12. Individuals exercise their responsibility for the life, mission, and common good of the community as expressed in the *Constitutions* and our current congregational documents in the following ways:

1. by everyday living: ministry, relationships, community life, prayer, etc.;
2. by discerning ministry decisions and other significant life decisions (*Cf. Article 14*);
3. by membership in a Community Circle; and
4. by participating, as they are able, in decision-making processes: particularly in the General Assembly and General Chapter; by membership on committees, boards, task forces, etc.; and by participation in congregational events and celebrations.

S-13. Individuals are ordinarily linked to the Mission Councilor by the Leadership Council with attention given to each individual's Circle membership.

S-14. Individuals are accountable to their Mission Councilor for discernment of their choices regarding ministry, finances, residence, retirement, transitions, etc.

Community Circles

S-15. Organizationally, Mission Circles:

1. are composed of at least 10 sisters.
2. organize themselves to carry out their responsibilities;
3. meet regularly; and
4. choose a Mission Circle Representative to serve on the Coordinating Council for a three year term. The Mission Circle Representative may serve a second term, but not a third consecutive term.

Organizationally, the Wisdom Circle:

1. meets as a whole before or after each Coordinating Council meeting;
2. is organized into stable subgroups of sisters.

Organizationally, the Blessing Circle is composed of sisters whose participation will be more appropriate and engaged in the Blessing Circle and who have discerned this choice with a Mission Councilor.

S-16. Associates are invited and encouraged to join a Community Circle. :

S-17. As a member of the Coordinating Council, the Community Circle Representative fosters a flow of faith-sharing, communication, consultation, and deliberation within her Community Circle, with other Community Circles, and with elected leadership.

S-18. As a member of the Coordinating Council, the Community Circle Representative concerns herself with the general welfare of the Congregation and represents the membership of her Community Circle. She participates in the discussions and decisions of the Coordinating Council, voicing the needs, concerns, and perspectives of the members of her Community Circle and making decisions for the common good of the total Congregation based on fidelity to its purpose and charism.

The President

S-19. As president of the legal corporation established under civil law, the President presides over meetings of its Board of Directors, acting in accordance with the Corporation By-Laws.

Mission Councilors

S-20. As elected officers of the Congregation, the Mission Councilors represent the Congregation officially in the areas of their responsibility and as delegated by the President.

S-21. Mission Councilors work together in carrying out their various responsibilities. They are assisted by staff and committees appointed by the Leadership Council.

S-22. Key areas of congregational life in which Mission Councilors coordinate planning, research and services may include mission and ministry; IHM sponsored institutions and ministries; initial and on-going formation and education; health care and retirement; material resources.

S-23. Mission Councilors are the congregational representatives with whom Community Circles reflect on their experience and responsibilities as a group (*cf. Article 86*).

S-24. Guided by congregational policies, Mission Councilors:

- a. assist individuals in making significant choices regarding ministry, residence, health, ministerial preparation, sabbatical or renewal, and retirement.
- b. authorize ordinary and extraordinary individual expenditures.
- c. are particularly attentive to individuals in times of crisis and major life transitions.

*S-25. In carrying out their responsibilities, the Mission Councilors are mutually accountable to each other in the Leadership Council which is led by the President.

Leadership Council

S-26. The Leadership Council is composed of the President and not more than seven Mission Councilors. The Leadership Council:

1. meets at least monthly;
2. is part of the Coordinating Council;
3. is assisted by staff and committees whom it appoints. These staff positions and committee memberships expire at the end of the term of the administration in which they are appointed or when their task is completed;
4. is accountable to the General Chapter and to the membership through the Coordinating Council.

S-27. The members of the Leadership Council comprise the board of directors of the legal corporation. The Leadership Council chooses from among its members the officers of the legal corporation other than President.

S-28. The Leadership Council appoints members of governing boards of congregationally sponsored institutions (e.g. Marygrove College) in accord with the provisions of the Articles and By-Laws of these institutions.

Coordinating Council

S-29. In addition to enabling communication, faith-sharing, consultation, and deliberation between and among its members, and carrying out its policy-making function, the Coordinating Council:

1. articulates congregational positions on ecclesial and societal issues;
2. determines the focus for the Assembly (*cf. Article S-3*);
3. at least six months prior to the end of the term and after consultation with the Mission Circles and Wisdom Circle, determines the number of Coordinating council representatives for the next term and the manner of their election.
4. determines the number of General Chapter delegates and alternates and the method of their election. This is done at least one year prior to the date set for Chapter (*cf. Article 71*).
5. prepares a recommendation for the General Chapter regarding the number of Mission Councilors to be elected and the needed focus and balance of pastoral and administrative responsibilities within the Leadership Council for the next six year term. This is done at least one year prior to the date set for Chapter.
6. elects a member of the Congregation to fill any vacancy in the Leadership Council, except that of the offices of President and Treasurer (*cf. Article 104*).

S-30. Organizationally, the Coordinating Council is

1. composed of members of the Leadership Council, Mission Circle Representatives, Wisdom Circle Representative(s) and two Associate Representatives;
2. has more Community circle Representatives than the number of Leadership Council members, and
3. determines, after consultation with Mission and Wisdom Circles, the number of Coordinating Council Representatives for the next term and the manner of their election at least six months prior to the end of their term.

S-31. The term of the Community Circle Representative is three years. The representative may be re-elected, but not for a third consecutive term.

S-32. The Coordinating Council ordinarily meets twice a year.

S-33. In making decisions, the members of the Coordinating Council seek to reach a high degree of consensus. Decisions require at least an absolute majority.

S-34. The Coordinating Council grounds its deliberations in contemplation and in the context of social analysis and theological reflection.

S-35. The Coordinating Council is accountable to the membership through Community Circle representatives and through published minutes.

General Secretary

S-36. The General Secretary is responsible for the official minutes, correspondence, and records of the Leadership Council, the Coordinating Council, and the legal corporation.

Archives

S-37. All the official records of the Congregation (including minutes, documents, correspondence) shall be preserved in the archives of the Congregation.

Associate Program

S-38. An Associate Program within the Congregation provides the opportunity for friends and co-workers, who so desire, to formalize their relationship with us in a form other than permanent vowed commitment.

S-39. The terms of the individual Associate's agreement, initially and in the periodic evaluation, are worked out according to congregational policies which are in effect at the time.

Formation

S-40. Pre-admission is a process of clarifying with an individual: her motivations for seeking religious life, a realistic awareness of contemporary life, and the degree of her personal maturity and openness to growth.

S-41. Sisters under temporary vows relate to formation personnel in the manner described in current policy.

S-42. The Admission Board is composed of: one at-large member of the Congregation (appointed yearly by the Leadership Council); one Mission Councilor (on a rotating basis); one Mission Councilor as representative of the President; and two members of the formation personnel.

S-43. Expertise in theology, spirituality, and psychology should exist among formation personnel as a group. Within this group there must also be an understanding of and commitment to societal needs and social justice. Sound interpersonal and group level relational skills are essential.

Temporalities

S-44. Following the tradition which has been ours from the beginning, we will take a part of whatever we have to contribute to charity, to respond to emergencies, and, in various ways, to share with others who are experiencing need.

S-45. In the handling of our corporate investments, we will seek to reflect consistently the justice concerns which we express as a congregation, and to consider where responsible shareowner activity can be taken by us and/or in collaboration with other groups.

S-46. The local treasurer administers the affairs of the house according to a budget approved annually according to published congregational guidelines. Transactions not provided for in the local budget are handled according to current published congregational guidelines for approval and/or assistance. The disposition of furnishings from closed residences is arranged according to current policy.

S-47. The Congregational Treasurer administers the financial affairs of the Congregation according to a budget approved annually by the Leadership Council and according to congregational guidelines, under the direction of the President.

Amendment and Interpretation of the Supplement

S-48. As a part of the proper law of the Congregation, the provisions of this Supplement oblige all members. The Supplement may be revised or amended by a two-thirds vote of a General Chapter, provided such revision or amendment is not contrary to the Constitutions or canon law.

S-49. The interpretation of doubtful matter is made by the President in consultation with the members of the Coordinating Council.

APPENDIX
TO THE CONSTITUTIONS



PART ONE

The following comments and references pertain to articles which were marked with an asterisk in the text of the *Constitutions*. The full text of the canons referred to can be found in Part Two of the Appendix.

- Art. 14 Cf. canon 678.1
- The phrase “elected community leaders” in the *Constitutions* and Supplement designates those persons canonically spoken of as superiors.
- Art. 26 The president, formerly called General Superior in our Congregation, holds that office described canonically in canon 622.
- Art. 54 Cf. canon 665.1
- Art. 88 Cf. canon 622
- Art. 94 Cf. canon 638.3
- Art. 95 Cf. canon 699.1
- Art. 107 Cf. canon 127
- Art. 120 Cf. canon 643, 647, 648, 649, 652.1-3, 653.2
- Art. 128 Cf. canon 655
- Art. 136 Cf. canon 669.1
- Art. 142 Cf. canon 636

PART TWO

The following translation of the canons is taken from the English text approved by the N.C.C.B. for American usage, and published in the Latin-English Edition of the *Code of Canon Law* under the auspices of the Canon Law Society of America, 1983.

- Can. 127.1** When the law determines that in order to place certain acts a superior requires the consent or counsel of a college or group of persons, the college or group must be convoked according to can. 166, unless particular or proper law provides otherwise when counsel only is to be sought; however, for such acts to be valid it is required that the consent of an absolute majority of those present be obtained or that the counsel of all who are present be sought.
- Can. 127.3** All whose consent or counsel is required are obliged to offer their opinion sincerely and, if the seriousness of the matter requires it, to observe secrecy sedulously, and this obligation can be insisted upon by the superior.
- Can. 618** Superiors are to exercise their power, received from God through the ministry of the Church, in a spirit of service. Therefore, docile to the will of God in carrying out their duty, they are to govern their subjects as children of God and promoting their voluntary obedience with reverence for the human person, they are to listen to them willingly and foster their working together for the good of the institute and of the Church, but with the superiors' authority to decide and prescribe what must be done remaining intact.
- Can. 619** Superiors are to devote themselves to their office assiduously and, together with the members entrusted to them, they should be eager to build a community of brothers or sisters in Christ in which God is sought after and loved before all else. Therefore, they are to nourish the members frequently with the food of the word of God and lead them to the celebration of the sacred liturgy. They are to be an example to the members in cultivating virtues and in observance of the laws and traditions of the particular institute; they are to meet the personal needs of the members in an appropriate fashion, look after solicitously and visit the sick, admonish the restless, console the faint of heart, and be patient toward all.
- Can. 622** The supreme moderator holds power over all provinces, houses and members of the institute, which is to be exercised according to proper law; other superiors enjoy power within the limits of their office.

Can. 636.1 In each institute and likewise in each province which is governed by a major superior there is to be a finance officer, distinct from the major superior and constituted according to the norm of proper law, who carries out the administration of goods under the direction of the respective superior. Even in local communities there is to be a finance officer distinct from the local superior to the extent that it is possible.

Can. 636.2 At the time and in the manner determined by proper law finance officers and other administrators are to render an account of their administrative actions to the competent authority.

Can. 638.3 For the validity of alienation and any other business transaction in which the patrimonial condition of a juridic person can be affected adversely, there is required the written permission of the competent superior with the consent of the council. If, moreover, it concerns a business transaction which exceeds the highest amount defined for a given region by the Holy See, or items given to the Church in virtue of a vow, or items of precious art or of historical value, the permission of the Holy See is also required.

Can. 643.1 One is invalidly admitted to the novitiate:

- 1) who has not yet completed the seventeenth year of age;
- 2) who is a spouse, during a marriage;
- 3) who is presently held by a sacred bond with any institute of consecrated life or who is incorporated in any society of apostolic life, with due regard for the prescription of can. 684;
- 4) who enters the institute as a result of force, grave fear or fraud, or whom the superior receives induced in the same way;
- 5) who has concealed his or her incorporation in any institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life.

Can. 647.1 The erection, transfer and suppression of a novitiate house are to take place through a written decree of the supreme moderator of the institute with the consent of his or her council.

Can. 647.2 In order to be valid a novitiate must be made in a house properly designed for this purpose. In particular cases and as an exception, by concession of the supreme moderator with the consent of the council, a candidate can make the novitiate in another house of the institute under the guidance of an approved religious who assumes the role of director of novices.

- Can. 647.3** A major superior can permit a group of novices to live for a stated period of time in another house of the Institute, designated by the major superior.
- Can. 648.1** In order that the novitiate be valid, it must include twelve months spent in the community of the novitiate itself, with due regard for the prescription of can. 647.3.
- Can. 648.2** To complete the formation of the novices, in addition to the time mentioned in paragraph 1, the constitutions can determine one or several periods of apostolic exercises to be spent outside the novitiate community.
- Can. 648.3** The novitiate is not to extend beyond two years.
- Can. 649.1** With due regard for the prescriptions of can. 647.3 and 648.2, absence from the novitiate house which lasts more than three months, either continuous or interrupted, renders the novitiate invalid. An absence of more than fifteen days must be made up.
- Can. 649.2** With the permission of the competent major superior first profession can be anticipated, but not by more than fifteen days.
- Can. 652.1** It is for the director and assistants to discern and test the vocation of the novices and to form them gradually to lead correctly the life of perfection proper to the Institute.
- Can. 652.2** The novices are to be led to cultivate human and Christian virtues; they are to be introduced to a fuller way of perfection by prayer and self-denial; they are to be instructed to contemplate the mystery of salvation and to read and meditate on the Sacred Scriptures; they are to be prepared to cultivate the worship of God in the sacred liturgy; they are to be trained in a way of life consecrated by the evangelical counsels to God and humankind in Christ; they are to be educated about the character and spirit, purpose and discipline, history and life of their institute; and they are to be imbued with a love for the Church and its sacred pastors.
- Can. 652.3** Conscious of their own responsibility, the novices are to collaborate actively with their director so that they may faithfully respond to the grace of a divine vocation.
- Can. 652.4** Members of the institute are to take care that on their part they cooperate in the work of training novices by the example of their life and by prayer.

Can. 652.5 The time of novitiate mentioned in can. 648.1 is to be employed in the work of formation and therefore the novices are not to be occupied with studies and duties which do not directly serve this formation.

Can. 653.2 When the novitiate is completed, a novice, if judged suitable, is to be admitted to temporary profession; otherwise the novice is to be dismissed. If there is a doubt about the novice's suitability, the time of probation can be extended by the major superior according to the norm of proper law, but not more than six months.

Can. 655 Temporary profession is made for the time defined in proper law, which may not be less than three years and no longer than six.

Can. 665.1 Observing a common life, religious are to live in their own religious house and not be absent from it without the permission of their superior. However, if it is a question of a lengthy absence from the house, the major superior for a just cause and with the consent of the council can permit the member to live outside a house of the Institute, but not for more than a year, except for the purpose of caring for poor health, for the purpose of studies or of undertaking an apostolate in the name of the institute.

Can. 669.1 Religious are to wear the habit of the institute made according to the norm of proper law as a sign of their consecration and as a testimony of poverty.

Can. 678.1 Religious are subject to the authority of bishops, whom they are obliged to follow with devoted humility and respect, in those matters which involve the care of souls, the public exercise of divine worship and other works of the apostolate.

Can. 699.1 With the council, which must have at least four members for validity, the supreme moderator is to proceed collegially to the careful weighing of the proofs, arguments and defenses; if it has been so decided by a secret ballot, the supreme moderator is to issue the decree of dismissal, with the motives in law and in fact expressed at least in summary fashion for validity.



CONGREGATIO
PRO INSTITUTIS VITAE CONSECRATAE
ET SOCIETATIBUS VITAE APOSTOLICAE

Prot. n. D. 7-1/89

D E C R E E

This Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life by virtue of its authority to erect, guide and promote institutes of consecrated life, after careful consideration of the constitutions presented by the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Monroe, Michigan, acceding to the request of the Superior General and her Council, herewith approves, within the limits of canon law, these same constitutions as amended according to the observations of this Congregation. May the generous living of these constitutions encourage all the Sisters of the Institute to an ever deeper commitment to their consecrated life in accordance with the spirit of Jesus Christ the Redeemer, and under the constant protection of Mary Immaculate.

Given at Rome, November 10, 1989

Founder's Day

J. Terence Casp. Thomas. S.J.
Pres.

+ Vincentius Fagisla
sec.

