



REVISION OF CONSTITUTIONS

WAY OF REVITALIZATION

3

HOPITALLER
CONSECRATION



Rome, 2019-2021

Constitutions and Consecration

"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".

(Const. 11)

Religious "consecration" lies at the very heart of being called and sent to hospitality. This concept, which was present in the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, has since evolved across the years and with the development of the theology of consecrated life, although not sufficiently deepened.

Our Constitutions speak of consecration in n. 4 of the Fundamental Constitutions, and again in the section on the vocation, particularly in numbers 12 and 13, culminating with a proposal of Mary as a model of consecration to our Lord in number 14, and finally in number 95, *Fidelity to our vocation*.

In view of the crucial importance of this whole issue, and drawing on the latest developments in post-Conciliar theological scholarship, particularly in the Magisterium of the Church, we have prepared this Fact Sheet to help us reflect in greater depth about our charism and spirituality.

What follows is a process, in which we shall be reflecting in the light of the Word of God, our own spiritual heritage, and the Magisterium of the Church. At the end of this process, we will ask for contributions to be used as input for enriching this theme in the text of our Constitutions.

Suggested methodology for the First Week:

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

I Week: Enlightenment

In the light of the Word

Jesus Christ is the Consecrated Son of the Father, the Holy One, within the Trinity. All those who follow Him as His disciples are in their turn consecrated by Him and in Him,

for the glory of the Father and for the mission of the Church. Consecration means being totally incorporated into the Mystery of God, who then takes possession of us and transforms us into His daughters, in all things in His likeness. This is why our consecration is totally all-encompassing.

“But now, thus says Yahweh, who created you, Jacob, who formed you, Israel: Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name, you are mine. Should you pass through the sea, I will be with you; or through rivers, they will not swallow you up; Should you walk through fire, you will not be scorched and the flames will not burn you” (Is 43,1-2).

The prophet Isaiah announced God’s relationship with His people in terms of consecration: God the Father creates and recreates us, calling us by our own names, welcoming us into His divine family. Consecration means belonging to the Lord, and His dreams and plans for the world.

Religious consecration takes place between two movements, each performed by the Spirit: God works in us, He consecrates us, and we give ourselves to Him with the whole of our being and all we have, and consecrate ourselves. This merciful and gratuitous initiative is taken by God; it is the experience of being loved, chosen and possessed by the Lord that arouses in our hearts a desire to give ourselves entirely to Him.

“For I am Yahweh, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your saviour. I give Egypt for your ransom, and exchange Cush and Seba for you. Because you are precious in my eyes, because you are honoured and I love you, I give men in Exchange for you, peoples in return for your life. Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will bring your offspring from the east, and gather you from the west” (Is 43,3-5).

We are important to God: our Lord offers Himself as our Saviour, who has redeemed us at a high price simply out of His freely-given love. When presented with this miracle of our Lord’s goodness and gentleness, we feel consecrated by Him and, knowing our personal littleness, we abandon ourselves entirely to His fatherly/motherly heart for anything He needs us to do. We devote ourselves with the whole of our being to our vocation and mission.

Day after day, even in the littlest things, we experience God’s immense love for us: *“See, I have branded you on the palms of my hands; your ramparts are always under my eye me” (Is 49,16).* Our Lord keeps us constantly in his gaze, and can never cease loving us; and we cannot besmirch our image graven on the palms of His hands, without breaking the covenant we entered into by our Religious profession.

“Set me like a seal on your heart, like a seal on your arm. For love is strong as Death, jealousy relentless as Sheol. The flash of it is a flash of fire, a flame of Yahweh himself. Love no flood can quench, no torrents drown. Were a man to offer all the wealth of his house to buy love, contempt is all he would purchase.” (Sg 8,6-7).

The Song of Songs shows us that consecration is timeless, and while existing in time it is projected towards eternity. We are women consecrated by our Lord for eternity, and we give ourselves exclusively to the Lord to build up his Kingdom. Knowing that our Lord has graven us permanently on the palms of His hands, as an indelible brand, gives us joy, peace and happiness; and in turn, it provokes in us a response of total love. Paul

exhorts us to do precisely this. *"I beg you, in a way that is worthy of thinking beings, by offering you living bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God"* (Rm 12,1-2).

➤ In the light of the Spiritual heritage

*"He, being God, has given us all; he has even given us Himself. Let us give him whatever he asks of us poor, unworthy, servants and slaves. Amen"*¹.

This text was written historically just before the arrival of the first patient, on 1 May 1881. What we understand above all from this passage, is that the Sisters viewed their vocation as an undeserved gift from the Lord, as a fully established relationship with the initiative taken by Him, which left them amazed, dumbfounded and deeply grateful. Their experience was one of great joy and enthusiasm.

The only reason why God has chosen us is His infinite love. It has created a life existentially bound up with Him through love, by falling in love with Him, focusing all our affection, desires and interests around Him. His love is what gives rise to our response and our desire to freely devote ourselves to Him entirely. The vows encompass the whole of life: the capacity for loving, possessing and taking decisions; not driven by moral necessity, but as a total response to total love.

Our encounter with this all-loving Jesus forms the foundation and is the sole motivation of a life freely and substantially consecrated, committed and happy. This testimony to real happiness, and not some ephemeral passing sense of pleasure, is a crucial aspect of evangelisation. Wherever there is Christ, there is happiness; and wherever He is not present, there is existential sadness. St Thomas put it this way: "happiness is the first effect of love, and hence of self-giving... conversely, sadness is a vice caused by disordered self-love".

*"My daughters let us love Jesus and serve Him with our whole heart, offering him all our senses and powers both of body and soul. For our happiness it is to be consecrated body and soul to the service of His Divine Majesty"*².

The kind of consecration that God makes our life something that develops dynamically throughout the whole of our existence, transforming it through the power of the Holy Spirit, in the manner of the compassionate and merciful Christ.

*"Loving Jesus is indeed very good. It is for this, my daughter that Our Lord has brought us to religious life and has given us the grace of consecrating ourselves to Him by holy religious profession, which is the greatest grace He gives to a Christian soul"*³.

Consecration is expressed through our Religious profession which enables us and commits us to become configured with the Christ virgin, poor and obedient, who passed through this earth as a divine Samaritan for all humanity⁴. Father Menni stressed

¹ RMA 199.

² Letter 2.

³ Letter 277.

⁴ Const. 4.

the aspect of the gift, of grace, and urges us to nurture this relationship with our Lord and to practise humility and constant intercession.

"I do not want to have in myself anything which is not completely consecrated to the honour and glory of my God; because my happiness, my joy, my all, must always be to sacrifice everything with joy as a holocaust to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; my Delight, my God, my Life, my All"⁵.

In the existential dimension of self-giving and integrating every aspect of our lives we encounter difficulties, inertia and even paralysis. Sometimes this gift does not touch or galvanise what we are, feel, do and open ourselves to; we fail to reach out to our Lord who continues to consecrate us to Him until we are able to say with the Psalmist: "All my springs are in you." (Ps 87,7).

"I invite you to serve and to love our Lord with your whole soul, heart senses and powers, so that not the tiniest part of us is left which is not completely consecrated to the service of Our Lord, King of Heaven and Earth"⁶.

In this particular exhortation, Father Menni begins with an aspect of crucial importance in the dynamic spiritual process, namely, the need to stop placing ourselves at the centre of everything, even when performing good actions, and to truly deny ourselves by reaching out of ourselves and placing Jesus, and His mind, His interests and His mission, at the centre of everything. "We lack joy when we are over self-centred, because joy, and happiness is always missionary"⁷. He also emphasises the sense of totality, and addresses the "reservations" we all have, and which the Lord wants for Himself.

"When our Father saw that his daughters were anxious to dedicate themselves to our Lord in the service of the poor demented women that (...) could not but rejoice and thank God when he saw that his daughters were anxious to dedicate themselves to Our Lord. In his great mercy the Lord gave us his mercy to overcome our weakness, so frail in itself, and our Father encouraged us to be faithful and grateful for the divine favours"⁸.

This text links consecration to the practice of Hospitality. Hospitaller consecration leads us to identify with the compassionate and merciful Christ, and typifies the practice of the evangelical counsels.

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

Through our Religious consecration we respond to God's call, accepting to consecrate and dedicate ourselves wholly at the service of the Church, thereby ratifying, and living to the full, our baptismal consecration.

⁵ Letter 442.

⁶ Letter 701.

⁷ EG 21.

⁸ RMA, p. 201.

“Members of each institute should recall first of all that by professing the evangelical counsels they responded to a divine call so that by being not only dead to sin but also renouncing the world they may live for God alone. They have dedicated their entire lives to His service. This constitutes a special consecration, which is deeply rooted in that of baptism and expresses it more fully... Since the Church has accepted their surrender of self they should realise they are also dedicated to its service”⁹.

Baptismal consecration is the foundation stone underlying our configuration with Christ as a son, and a brother of all. Baptism incorporates us into Christ and into His mystery of death and resurrection, such that the Church considers it to be the first consecration which makes us all sons and daughters of God; it is on the basis of that consecration that we then experience “the special religious consecration”.

“In the Church’s tradition religious profession is considered to be a special and fruitful deepening of the consecration received in Baptism, inasmuch as it is the means by which the close union with Christ already begun in Baptism develops in the gift of a fuller, more explicit and authentic configuration to him through the profession of the evangelical counsels (...) The profession of the evangelical counsels is also a development of the grace of the Sacrament of Confirmation, but it goes beyond the ordinary demands of the consecration received in Confirmation by virtue of a special gift of the Spirit which opens the way to new possibilities and fruits of holiness and apostolic work. This can clearly be seen from the history of the consecrated life”¹⁰.

The document *Walking with Christ* reminds all consecrated people of our common vocation to holiness, together with the whole people of God, and of our special mission to be the living memory of Jesus Christ in this world.

“The call to follow Christ with a special consecration is a gift of the Trinity for God’s Chosen People. Recognising in Baptism the common sacramental origin, consecrated men and women share a common vocation to holiness and to the apostolate with other members of the faithful. By being signs of this universal vocation they manifest the specific mission of consecrated life...

Consecrated women and men have received a call to a “new and special consecration”, for the good of the Church, which impels them to live a life in imitation of Christ, the Virgin and the Apostles”¹¹.

Jesus is the only consecrated One, the consecrated man par excellence, the first to be sent by God the Father to the whole of humanity to bring us salvation. As consecrated men and women, we chose to share His own way of life on earth, learning to lead our lives according to His standards, His interior promptings, and His thoughts and feelings. We express our commitment to Him and to His Kingdom by the way we give ourselves totally to God.

In the light of Jesus’ consecration, we can see in the initiative of the Father, the source of all holiness, the ultimate origin of the consecrated life. Jesus is the One

⁹ *Perfectae Caritatis*, 5.

¹⁰ VC 30.

¹¹ *Starting afresh from Christ*, n. 8.

whom "God anointed ... with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38), the One "whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world" (Jn 10:36). Accepting his consecration by the Father, the Son in turn consecrates himself to the Father for the sake of humanity (cf. Jn 17:19). His life of virginity, obedience and poverty expresses his complete filial acceptance of the Father's plan (cf. Jn 10:30; 14:11). His perfect offering confers an aspect of consecration upon all the events of his earthly existence. (...).The consecrated life truly constitutes a living memorial of Jesus' way of living and acting as the Incarnate Word in relation to the Father and in relation to the brethren. It is a living tradition of the Saviour's life and message"¹².

Let us conclude this section by looking to "Mary, our Mother", who was chosen by our Lord, and who consecrated herself totally to the person and the work of her Son, by cooperating in the salvation of mankind"¹³. She accompanies us in the process of becoming configured with the mind of Jesus in the Hospitaller Religious Life.

"Mary is the one who, from the moment of her Immaculate Conception, most perfectly reflects the divine beauty."All beautiful" is the title with which the Church invokes her. "The relationship with Mary most holy, which for every believer stems from his or her union with Christ, is even more pronounced in the life of consecrated persons (...) Mary in fact is the sublime example of perfect consecration, since she belongs completely to God and is totally devoted to him. Chosen by the Lord, who wished to accomplish in her the mystery of the Incarnation, she reminds consecrated persons of the primacy of God's initiative. At the same time, having given her assent to the divine Word, made flesh in her, Mary is the model of the acceptance of grace by human creatures"¹⁴.

➤ **Community prayer**

*To listen to God and to place our insights, wishes and concerns in His hands, we suggest setting aside a period for community prayer. Each community can organise this according to their particular situations but it would be interesting to use this week of **Enlightenment** to strengthen the climate of discernment and praise. You could use a particular time of celebration you may have planned already and give it the appropriate spiritual motivation.*

II Week: Revision

Suggested methodology:

1. Present the objective of the III week.

¹² VC 22.

¹³ Const. 14.

¹⁴ VC 28.

2. *Motivate the reflection and evaluation of personal and community life.*
3. *Prepare to share in community.*
4. *Set the date for the community meeting.*

➤ **Revision of personal and community life**

Drawing on the fruits of our reflections let us dedicate time to contemplating God's mercy and conduct a revision of our personal and community life. The following questions may be helpful:

1. What ideas, aspects, insights, and desires filled my heart during last week's reflection?
2. Do I feel consecrated by God, engraved in His hands, and constantly present before His eyes?
3. How do people who see us know that our consecration lived in the community is a prophetic sign?
4. What contributions can breathe more life and further enrich the theme of consecration in our Constitutions?

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

➤ **Psalm of consecration** (Based on Psalm 138)

*Lord, in simplicity I consecrate my whole being to you,
who alone knows how to love.*

Lord, your goodness is everlasting.

The Lord will fulfil His plan for me.
Do not abandon the work of Your hands.
I know that You have a plan for me,
I know that You began this work within me
And that You always complete everything You have begun.

I know, Lord, that You have a plan for me

I am in peace, for I am in good hands.
I shall not break off my path halfway,
For I am sure that you, Lord,
Will take me forward to the end.

Thank you, Lord.

Lord, You give me desires
 You invite me to undertake commitments,
 You give me strength to honour them,
 You give me the perseverance I need to continue to the end.

The Lord will complete his plan for me.

You give me hope when my strength is failing
 And You embolden me when my faith is wavering.
 I may fall short and stumble, but You, Lord, never fail.
 You are committed to me
 and You will honour Your commitment to the end.

Lord, do not abandon the work of Your hands.

*Lord, in simplicity I consecrated my whole being to You,
 who alone knows how to love.*

III Week: Input

Methodological Guidance:

1. Present the work of the Third Week.
2. Motivate responsibility for revising the texts of the Constitutions.
3. Share and take up the aspects of change which are driving our charism today.
4. Record the situations for changes to each number in the grid.
5. Forward the summary to the Province the following week.

Hospitaller consecration in the Constitutions

Number of Constitutions	Contributions
<p>4 Consecrated to the mission Jesus Christ, who reconciles us with the Father and by baptism makes us children of God and shares in his divine life, chose the apostles to live with Him and to share in his mission. 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.</p>	

<p>Through our public profession of the evangelical counsels, 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>11 In the likeness of Christ In 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>12 Consecration By public profession of the evangelical counsels, we express and ratify the total, direct gift of ourselves to God, who takes complete possession of us and brings us into a new relationship with Him. The Church accepts our vows and associates our oblation to the Eucharistic sacrifice of Christ. By that same profession we are incorporated into the Congregation and dedicated in a special way to the service of the Church. The Spirit of the Lord, poured into our hearts, guarantees our fidelity to our call and apostolic strength. On our part we respond each day to the option we have made for Christ.</p>	
<p>13 Testimony of our consecrated life By our consecrated life we show forth the love which God has for all people; we are a message of hope and we witness that the world cannot be transformed without the spirit of the beatitudes.</p>	
<p>14 Mary, model of consecration Mary, "our Mother", chosen by our Lord, who consecrated herself totally to the person and the work of her Son, by co-operating in the salvation of mankind, is a model for all who promise to follow Christ in the religious life.</p>	

<p>15 The religious habit</p> <p>We wear the habit of the Institute as an external sign of consecration and a witness to poverty. In special circumstances, and for as long as these last, the Major Superior may permit the use of a different dress.</p>	
<p>95 Fidelity to our vocation</p> <p>Vocation is a dynamic reality which we accept and nourish with increasing fidelity, in union with God, living out our charism and open to continual renewal.</p> <p>Giving thanks to God and in a spirit of sisterly co-responsibility with those in a spirit of sisterly-co-responsibility with those who have received the same gift, we endeavour to the same gift, we endeavour to the utmost to strengthen our vocation and choice</p> <p>Convinced that we are called to persevere in the Congregation, we respond to God's fidelity with our own generous and joyful fidelity.</p> <p>In difficult moments we repeat: "My Jesus, I do not trust myself, I trust in your Heart and I abandon myself to you".</p>	

IV Week: Celebration

Methodology:

1. *It is very important to celebrate the steps along the path.*
2. *Organise a celebration for prayer, and another one for celebrating.*
3. *We end up giving the 4th fact sheet.*