

FUNDAMENTAL CONSTITUTION

Act of Foundation

1. We, the Hospitaller Brothers of saint John of God, give thanks to the Lord for the gift he has bestowed on his Church in Saint John of God.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and inwardly transformed by the merciful love of the Father, he lived love for God and neighbour in perfect unity.

He dedicated himself completely to the salvation of his brethren and faithfully imitated the Saviour in his attitudes and actions of mercy.

Despite many debts, worries and cares, he trusted wholly in Jesus Christ and devoted himself totally to serving the poor and the sick in Spain, in the city of Granada, whence he returned to the Father in the year 1550.

Our Hospitaller Order was thus born of the gospel of mercy as lived in its fullness by Saint John of God, and it is precisely because of this characteristic that we justifiably claim him as our Founder.

He indeed understood that the clearest sign of the passage from death to life is love of one's brethren, not only expressed in words but manifested in deeds and in truth.

Following the request of our early Brothers, the religious family to which we belong was approved by Pope Saint Pius V on 1st January 1572 and is known in the Church by the name of THE HOSPITALLER ORDER OF SAINT JOHN OF GOD.

This name expresses our identity, since the reason for our existence in the Church is to live and manifest the charism of hospitality in the spirit of Saint John of God.

Consecrated to the Father by the Spirit, we follow more closely the chaste, poor, obedient and merciful Christ. In this way we assist in building up the Church, serving God in suffering mankind.

Our Order is a lay institute; however, right from the time it received approval permission was given for some Brothers to be ordained to the priesthood so as to provide for the exercise of the sacred ministry among the sick and in our communities and hospitaller works.

The charism of Our Order

2. Our charism within the Church is a gift of the Spirit, which leads us to conform ourselves to the compassionate and merciful Christ of the Gospel, who sent about doing good to all "and healing every kind of disease and infirmity".

In virtue of this gift, we are consecrated by the action of the Holy Spirit which makes us participate in a special way in the Father's merciful love.

This experience communicates to us attitudes of

lovingkindness and self-giving, enables us to carry out the mission of proclaiming and bringing about the Kingdom among the poor and the sick, transform our existence, and results in our lives manifesting the father's special love for the weakest, whom we try to save after the example of Jesus.

Through this charism we keep the merciful presence of Jesus of Nazareth alive within time: accepting the will of his Father, by his incarnation he makes himself like unto, and brother of, all mankind, takes on the role of a servant, identifies himself to their service, and gives his life as a ransom for all.

Our Special Spirituality

3. As Hospitaller Brothers of saint John of God, we strive to incarnate in ever greater depth the sentiments of Christ towards the sick and those in need and to manifest these sentiments with actions of mercy: we make ourselves weak with the weak and help them as the favoured ones of the Kingdom; we proclaim to them the Father's love and the mystery of their complete salvation; we defend their rights; and we offer our lives for them.

We dedicate ourselves with joy to helping those who suffer, with those attitudes and actions which characterise the Brother of saint John of God: humble, patient and responsible service; respect for and faithfulness to, the person; understanding, lovingkindness and self denial; sharing in the anxieties and hopes of those who suffer.

For them our life is a sign and proclamation of the coming of the kingdom of God.

4. We renew our awareness of our vocation in the celebration and contemplation of the mystery of Christ.

The Word of God and the Eucharist hold a central place in our life; we contemplate Jesus in his way of dealing with the sick and above all in his passion and death, which are the supreme manifestation of his love for mankind.

This strengthens us in charity and encourages us to carry out our mission in imitation of the life of our Saviour.

Following and serving our Lord Jesus Christ is the main concern of our lives; we want to love him above all the things of this world and for the love of him and his goodness we want to do good and offer loving assistance to the poor and those in need.

We accept and carry out the will of God, imitating the simplicity, availability to others, self-giving and faithfulness of Our Lady, the ever-virgin Mary; we try to reflect her maternal love in our apostolate to those who suffer.

We give her thanks for her special patronage over us and over those to whom we give our assistance; we rejoice in the position she holds in the Church and venerate her with the affection of filial devotion.

Our Mission in the Church

5. Encouraged by the gift we have received, we consecrate ourselves to God and dedicate ourselves to serving the Church in the assistance for the sick and those in need, with a preference for the poorest.

In this way we show that the compassionate and merciful Christ of the Gospel is still alive among men and we work with him for their salvation.

When he called us to be Hospitaller Brothers of Saint John of God chose us to form a community of apostolic life, and so it is our desire to live out in communion with each other the love of God and our neighbour.

We feel that we are brothers of all mankind and we dedicate ourselves chiefly to the service of the weak and the sick: their needs and sufferings touch our hearts, and lead us to alleviate those needs and sufferings and to work for the personal development and advancement of such people.

As living members of the church, we seek to manifest the supremacy of God's love **[P. 18]** and we wish to attain the perfection of love for God and our neighbour, through the unceasing exercise of all the virtues, the public profession of the vows of chastity, poverty, obedience and hospitality, fidelity to the spirit of the Rule of Saint Augustine, and observance of the Constitutions of the Order.

Our charism as Expressed in Practice

6. We feel that we are the responsible custodians of the gift of hospitality, which gives our Order its characteristic identity. This binds us to live our charism with fidelity, preserving, deepening and constantly developing it within the Church.

Our openness to the Spirit, to the signs of the times, and to people's needs, will show us how we are to incarnate it creatively in any given time or situation.

The very richness of the charism we have received presupposes that it can be expressed in different forms according to specific circumstances of time and place.

And this is why we live in an attitude of discernment and conversion, so that our mission in the Church may always correspond to God's will for us and express our sense of unity.

Those Brothers who carry out the service of governing have a special responsibility for the guardianship and development of our charism; it is their task, in communion with the other Brothers, to decide which works truly fall within the mission of the Order and which are the most urgent or suitable charitable activities in which we can or should express the gift of hospitality.

In putting our charism into practice we feel particularly united with those institutes, associations and movements which have a mission similar to ours. A special spiritual communion unites us to those which have in some way originated from our Order and thus manifest the vitality of our hospitaller charism.

CHAPTER TWO

OUR CONSECRATION IN THE ORDER

Total Self-Giving to God

7. The father loved us and chose us "before the foundation of the world", predestining us to be "conformed to the image of his Son".

in baptism, Christ has associated us with his death and resurrection and has marked us with the Holy Spirit to be a hymn to his glory and to bear fruit for God in serving and building up the Body of Christ.

The Spirit whom we received in baptism and in whom we were confirmed in the sacrament of confirmation invites us to live our divine sonship in community.

Thus we have been consecrated again, with a special gift, in order to live in chastity, poverty, obedience and hospitality, so as to represent within the Church the type of life which Christ chose for himself during his earthly life.

Thus, offering our existence as a living, consecrated sacrifice, we unite ourselves to the true worship offered by Christ in the Church and share in his priestly office in carrying out our hospitaller mission.

8. With our free and total self-giving to God, we accept being sent out to the world as signs of his merciful love. The simplicity of our life proclaims that only with the spirit of the beatitudes can human circumstances and conditions be transformed.

We are witnesses that Christ is the Lord of history; we proclaim the greatness of God's love and show all mankind that he continues to concern himself with their lives and needs.

9. Through the vows of chastity, poverty, obedience and hospitality, we publicly show our total self-giving to God. The church receives our offering and links it to Christ's paschal mystery; the Order binds us to itself and provides us with the means of living out our vocation; we undertake to respond faithfully to God's call, always striving to be lively and creative members of the Church and the Order.

Solemn profession, with which we consecrate ourselves definitively to God, the church and the Order, in the service of the sick and those in need, must be preceded by temporary profession made for a period of one year and renewed annually for a minimum of five and a maximum of six consecutive years.

At the request of the Provincial with the agreement of his Council, in special cases the General may dispense from the minimum period required in temporary vows, provided that it lasts for not less than three consecutive years.

In certain cases the General may permit the renewal of temporary vows for a maximum period of nine consecutive years.

Admission to first profession and to solemn profession is granted by the Provincial with the consent of his Council and the permission of the General.

Permission for the renewal of temporary vows is given by the Provincial with the consent of his Council.

Both solemn profession and temporary profession are made in accordance with the universal law of the Church and with our own law according to the following formula:

"in the name of Our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

"I,.....,
born on,
in the parish of.....,
in the diocese of...,
to the greater glory of god,
moved by a firm will
to consecrate myself more intimately to him
and follow more closely in the footsteps of Christ, today.....,

at.....,
before the Brothers here present,
into your hands,
do hereby make profession
of solemn (simple) vows
of chastity, poverty, obedience and hospitality in the service of the poor and the sick, for all my
life (for one year), according to the Rule of Saint Augustine and the Constitutions of our Order,
giving myself wholeheartedly to this religious family, in order that, through the grace of the
Holy Spirit, the help of the blessed Virgin Mary and the intercession of our Fathers Saint
Augustine and Saint John of god, I may attain perfect charity in the service of God and the
Church.

"In faith of which I sign with my own hand....."

Chastity for the Kingdom of Heaven

- 10.** Consecrated chastity is an outstanding gift of grace. god's love, "poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been give to us", inspires us, following the example and words of Jesus, to consecrate our whole person and our capacity to love to the father.

With the vow of chastity we undertake to live perfect continence in celibacy; in this way we directly reflect the union of love between Christ and the church and experience a greater freedom and capacity to love all people.

The following of the virgin Christ in his total, loving self- giving to the father and his brethren is the source and sustenance of our community, which is born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of the love of God.

Through chastity, lived our as Hospitaller brothers of Saint John of God, we experience and manifest the fruitfulness of our life in the apostolate of charity, because in this apostolate we carry out the mission of serving, protecting and encouraging life and affirm the dignity and value of the body.

- 11.** Chastity for the kingdom of heaven is not only a call and a gift of God, but is also a free response which we can give and in which we can persevere only with the support and strength of the Spirit.

This calls on us to nurture the gift we have received, through our close personal relationship with Christ in prayer and in the celebration of the sacraments, and to live our brotherhood with simplicity and joy, giving importance to the relations of friendship which the Lord has established between us.

Moreover, we hold that it is important to make use of those natural and ascetical means which are confirmed by experience and knowledge of the human realities in order to advance constantly towards the balance and maturity which are the foundation of fidelity to this vow.

Evangelical Poverty

- 12.** Trusting wholly in Jesus Christ, we undertake to follow him and imitate him in evangelical poverty.

We make his salvific self-emptying visible in the Church; with him we confess our full trust in the father; we proclaim the transitory nature of the things of this world and announce those things which are unchanging.

With the profession of poverty, we detach ourselves from earthly goods in order to be more open in the following Jesus who, though he was rich, for our sake became poor.

Through his incarnation, he shared in our nature, experiencing our weakness and hardships. In this way he taught us the path of true freedom.

Like Jesus, we dedicate ourselves to proclaiming the Kingdom to the poor; on the basis of our poverty, we can enter into communion with the weak and understand their situation existentially; we work for their development and advancement, with an evangelical commitment against every form of injustice and the manipulation of people; and we help carry out the duty of awakening consciences in the face of the drama of suffering and misery.

- 13.** Our special vocation calls us to carry out our mission in places where people are suffering through sickness and other types of emargination, and thus we feel the need to live and clearly show the poverty we have professed.

This entails: ensuring that there is no profit motive in our works; scrupulously measuring up to the principles of social justice deriving from the Gospel, the doctrine of the Church and the just laws of each country; organising administrative structures in function of our mission, so that our possessions are used not as instruments of power but as means of service; living our condition of poverty, accepting in freedom of spirit, the common obligations to work as a means of supporting ourselves and of carrying out the apostolate.

- 14.** Like the early Christian community, we place our personal possessions in common.

We share what we are and what we have with our Brothers in the community: the fruit of our work helps to meet common needs; we live in a spirit of openness, availability to others, and service, as testimony to the spiritual communion which unites us and to the dependency implicit in poverty. All this enables us to accept what we receive from others with simplicity and gratitude.

We show our poverty through a simple life-style and by looking after the possessions of the community, resisting the consumer mentality in our personal and community life.

In solidarity with our Brothers, we overcome the desire to amass things and we practise the sharing of possessions with the different communities and provinces of the Order. Likewise, in order to avoid the danger of shutting ourselves off in our works and structures, we make sure that we remain sensitive to the needs of those amongst whom we live and that we help them to meet these needs.

- 15.** In this way we remind men of the true purpose of worldly goods and give meaning to our vow of poverty, in virtue of which we commit ourselves to using them in dependence, on our legitimate superiors, in accordance with the universal law of the church and our own specific laws.

Although those in temporary vows retain ownership of their property and have the capacity to acquire more, before their first profession they must cede the administration of their goods to whomsoever they wish and freely make dispositions concerning the use and enjoyment of these goods.

Those in solemn vows renounce all rights to ownership and therefore cannot acquire or possess anything whatsoever as their own.

Whatever a Brother acquires by personal labour or on behalf of the institute, and whatever comes to him through pension, grant or insurance, passes to the order, in accordance with our own laws.

In the practice of poverty, we do not stop at simply being obedient to our superiors in the use and disposition of possessions, but strive also to live poverty truly and inwardly with personal and community commitment.

Obedience in the Freedom of Sons of God

- 16.** Our obedience is based on the desire to identify ourselves with Christ, brought about our redemption: he came into the world to do the will of the Father and fulfilled this in the service of mankind; he offered himself unreservedly to the Father's will and "although he was God's Son, he learned through his sufferings to be obedient", obedient unto death.

Through obedience we offer our whole will to God as a sacrifice of ourselves.

In this way we unite ourselves more closely to God's salvific will, which is shown to us through his word, the magisterium of the Church, the Rule, the Constitutions and the special laws of the Order, the decisions of superiors, dialogue with our conferes, and interpretation of the sign of the times.

In this way we proclaim that the freedom won for us by Christ, to which we feel ourselves called, enables us to live in the service of others, without submitting to the yoke of slavery, and avoiding tyranny, egoism, the lack of identification with the community and all those situations in which human dignity is compromised.

- 17.** Our obedience is a personal act, rooted in faith and love, and it helps us to move towards the freedom of sons of God, and assists us in our progress towards overall maturity, since both authority and obedience are at service of the person, the community and the mission.

We express our obedience in the first place with fidelity to our charism and with the sincere common search for God's will for the Order, our community and each individual Brother. Our openness and availability is the source of the spirit which keeps us free to respond readily to the needs of those who suffer, to whose service we consecrate our lives being willing to be sent anywhere at all and to carry out whatever mission the order entrusts to us.

- 18.** With the vow of obedience we freely and unconditionally accept God's will for us, pledging ourselves to carry out whatever our legitimate superiors decide in accordance with the Constitutions of the Order.

Since we share in a special way in the life and mission of the Church because of our charism and apostolate, in virtue of this vow we are also obedient to the Pope as our supreme superior. It is he who is the head of the universal community of charity, and hence the love and obedience we offer him unite us in a special way to the mystery of the Church.

Our presence in the local church also requires that we faithfully follow the directions and decisions of its diocesan bishops.

In imitation of Jesus, some Brothers perform the service of governing: encouraging our personal and community growth, by helping us to discern the Lord's will; ensuring unity in

pluralism through fidelity to our charism; encouraging active and responsible obedience; and taking any decisions necessary.

19. Illuminated and strengthened by faith, obedience leads us, through open and fraternal dialogue, to discover in the community and its members the apostolic charisma with which the Holy Spirit helps the Order to carry out its mission.

The same atmosphere of dialogue and mutual understanding enables us to develop, in community, that sense of co-responsibility which helps bring about mutual union in the service of God and of our poor and suffering brethren.

Hospitality in the Spirit of our Founder

20. Our hospitality has its source in the life of Jesus of Nazareth: anointed and sent by the Spirit to bring the Good News to the poor and to heal the sick, he performs and presents his acts of healing as a messianic sign of the coming of the Kingdom of God.

In his message he reveals to us the heavenly Father's merciful love, faithfulness, trust and lovingkindness towards his children; he announces that he has been sent by him to bring life; aware of his mission, he dedicates himself with preference for the weak, the sick and sinners, whom he receive and welcomes with words and gestures of deep understanding and humanity; he suffers with those who suffer; he identifies himself with the poor, the sick and those in need, raising them to the status of living signs of his presence, so that anything we do to one of them he takes as being done to him.

21. Attracted by the person of Jesus, especially in his attitudes towards those who are weakest, and anointed with the same Spirit, we consecrate ourselves to hospitality in order to carry out Christ's instruction to care for the sick.

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Having given our lives to the love of God in serving the poor and those in need, we announce the Kingdom as Jesus did. He has not eliminated suffering; nor has he wished to reveal its mystery fully; however, illuminated by faith and united with the suffering Christ, the person who suffers knows that, with his or her pain, he or she can contribute to the salvation of the world.

Thus we render our assistance to the sick and our service to those in need as a proclamation and sign of the new and eternal life won by Christ's redemption.

22. With the vow of hospitality we dedicate ourselves, under obedience to our superiors, to helping the sick and those in need, undertaking to provide them with all those services they need, even the most humble and the most dangerous to our own lives, in imitation of Christ, who loved us even to the extent of dying for our salvation.

Our greatest joy lies in living in contact with those to whom our mission is directed, we welcome them and serve them with the lovingkindness, understanding and spirit of faith which they deserve as persons and as children of God, and we place all our energy, talents and skills at their disposition in the various tasks entrusted to us.

23. The hospitality we have professed means that we must defend and keep watch over the rights of the individual to be born, to live in a decent manner, to be helped in sickness, and to die with dignity.

We strive to make sure in our hospitaller apostolate that it is always clear that our concern is the sick or needy person, and we are so imbued with our mission that those who work with us feel inspired to behave in the same way.

We show our hospitaller spirit not only in the institutions in which we work, but extend it also to all those who lack food and drink, clothing, housing and medicine, or who are afflicted with trials and tribulations or ill-health. Our hearts suffer because we are not able to help and welcome them all; thus they have a special place in our prayers and we are conscious of a special link with all those who work to bring about a more human and more Christian world.

24. Our consecration to God in the service of those in need is the most precious fruit of our following of the Lord in the path of the evangelical counsels, since chastity, poverty and obedience strengthen our capacity to love and make us more open and ready to serve the sick and the poor in the hospitaller apostolate.

The Virgin Mary, Model of Our Consecration

25. For us, the Virgin Mary is the special model of consecration: accepting the word of God, she consecrated herself wholly to the person and work of Jesus.

In the same way, it is Mary, the ever virginal, humble and poor handmaid of the Lord, who, with her example, encourages us to be faithful to the designs of the Holy Spirit.

It is, moreover, the "Mother of Mercy" and "Health of the Sick" who teaches us to have compassion for human pain and to try to relieve the affliction and distress of those who suffer.

CHAPTER THREE

OUR HOSPITALLER COMMUNITY

26. Our hospitaller community has its source and nourishment in the love which the Holy Spirit pours into our hearts; its centre is the risen Lord, in whose name we unite ourselves in order to walk together towards the Father and communicate the good news of salvation to mankind.

Following the example of the early Church, in which "the company of those who believed were of one heart and mind" and placed everything they had in common, our life shows the world the viability of living and practising the values of the Kingdom in common; it is a sign of the presence of the Lord and calls people to have faith in Christ.

Our sharing of the same charism makes us into one family, in which we celebrate the faith, feel that we are brothers and live as such, and carry out the common mission of serving the sick and those in need.

I. Community of Faith and Prayer

27. As a family gathered together in the name of the Lord, our community is, because of its nature, the specially favoured place where the experience of God should be able to reach its fullness and be communicated to others.

In our community we live our faith as a personal response of love to God, who has loved us first, and we express this by accepting with simplicity his salvation, which gradually transforms our lives and calls on us to show this in our behaviour.

Our life as believers, open as it is to Father's revelation and to communion with him through Christ in the Holy Spirit, enables us to share in the trinitarian mystery in faith, hope and love.

This participation is the source of the contemplative attitude of our life.

- 28.** The prime source of our charitable mission is the Father's merciful love.

This means that on both the personal and community levels we must, in the dialogue of prayer, work towards the integration of interior life and apostolic activity, so that we may be capable of living love of God in harmony with service of our brethren.

Every day, therefore, we dedicate at least one hour to mental prayer and spiritual reading.

The basic orientation of our community towards God is expressed in reading of and meditation on the Sacred Scriptures; in participation in the divine life which is transmitted to us by the sacraments; in community and personal prayer; and in the desire and constant search for God, whose presence we recognise and humbly adore in our neighbour, and particularly in our conferes and in the sick.

- 29.** The word of God, which, for us, is the daily meeting with the "surpassing knowledge of Christ Jesus", illuminates our life: it is the source of inspiration for our prayer, provides the orientation for our personal and community renewal, and guides our reflection on the mystery of God and the Church and on the actual situations of mankind and society.

- 30.** Because our hospitaller community receives its life from Eucharist:

We celebrate it and participate actively in it each day. As source and culmination of the whole Christian life, it forms the irreplaceable and life-giving centre of the contemplative dimension of our life. In it we exercise our hospitaller priesthood in a special way, renewing the offering of our being to the Father and, with ourselves, presenting the pain and hope of the people whom we serve and to whom we dedicate our existence.

Sharing together at the table of the word and of the body and blood of the Lord gives new life to our communion with Christ and union with our conferes; the example of our Saviour, who sacrifices himself to give us life, renews our hospitaller spirit and helps us to imitate him in serving the sick and those in need.

We show clearly that our life is centred on the place in our dwelling where the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist expresses and sustains our mission as a hospitaller family; we contemplate, adore and bless the Lord for his love to us; his unceasing openness and readiness to be the refuge, consolation and comfort of the sick is an incentive to us to persevere alongside the person who suffers, keeping him company in his pain and solitude.

- 31.** We are aware that we are sinners and that our orientation towards God and true brotherhood cannot be maintained without a constant attitude of conversion, of both the personal and community levels.

We therefore carry out a daily examination of conscience and we approach the sacrament of penance with frequency. In this way we give new life within ourselves to the grace of baptism, we are reconciled with our Brothers and we celebrate the joy of salvation in forgiveness.

- 32.** Every day we celebrate in common the liturgy of Lauds and vespers, in which we extend the thanksgiving of the Eucharist and sanctify the daily round, our work and our every action.

In this way we unite ourselves with Christ and the Church in worshipping the Father, strengthening communion with our brothers and with all mankind, and with special concern bringing to the Lord the anxieties and hopes of those afflicted by sickness or any other form of need.

33. Our mission brings us in constant contact with the suffering of mankind; hence contemplation of the Passion of Christ, the "man of sorrows", holds a most important place in our spirituality:

in it we discover the salvific significance of pain; from it we receive strength and consolation in trials and weakness; and, lastly, with it we learn the way of presenting the Lord as the sign of hope and life to those who suffer.

34. Mary, faithful, prayerful and virginal, offers herself to us as the pre-eminent model of the Church in the order of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ.

Standing at the foot of the Lord's cross, she teaches us to join ourselves to her Son's sacrifice which is continued in the suffering of mankind.

Our Lady, under the title "Health of the Sick", has always had a special place in the life of our hospitaller community. We show her our love above all by imitating her in her virtues; we celebrate her feast days, especially that of her patronage over us, and honour her with our prayers, particularly the Rosary.

35. Among the saints, we especially venerate our Father Saint John of God and those Brothers of the Order whom the Church proposes to us as examples of our life and apostolate, so that we strive to follow in their steps and imitate them.

II. Community of Brotherly Love

36. We are called by Jesus to live with him as friends, and thus we encourage one another to fulfil the Lord's command to love one another as he loves us and strive to maintain the unity which the Spirit creates in the bond of peace.

Hospitality, which we have received as a gift, means that we must live our brotherhood with simplicity: we therefore help one another and forgive each other's weaknesses; we vie with one another in mutual respect, we are grateful to one another; and we identify ourselves with our brothers in their needs, afflictions and joys.

37. On the basis of the above-mentioned attitudes, and notwithstanding the diversity of the persons of which it is composed, our community:

accepts and respects the young people who have only recently embraced our hospitaller life, enriching us by their enthusiasm and creativity;

cares for and loves our sick and elderly brothers who, with their experience, sacrifice and prayer, are fruitful members of both the Church and the Order,

remembers our deceased Brothers who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith, and prays for them, offering the required Masses and prayers for them.

38. Our community is formed and grows when:

each of us strives to attain that personal integration which enables us to have balanced relationships and to dedicate our capacities and skills to the common good;

we live in awareness of the joy and responsibility of being a community, and share in the manifestations of this.

there are times set aside for dialogue, review and evaluation, in which we place Christ at the centre and allow the Spirit to guide us in order to discern the will of the Father for the community and for each individual;

the Brother

who performs the service of governing is a sign of union and bond of charity, animates the spiritual life, helps us to live the community "project of life", co-ordinates and harmonises the personal plans of the individual Brothers with those of the community, dedicates time to each Brother, and knows how to seek advice before taking decisions concerning community life,

in our community life and mission we accept the diversity of gifts with which the Holy Spirit enriches each Brother,

we create an atmosphere in which prayer, study and personal relaxation are possible;

we exercise due prudence in our use of the media of social communication, avoiding anything which might hinder the spiritual life, community relations and the apostolate, we adopt the spirit of the Constitutions, seeing them as a programme for our whole life, and living in a constant attitude of conversion.

39. We are welcoming to those who come to our houses, and we practise hospitality by receiving them with kindness and simplicity.

However, we always set aside one part of the house for ourselves in order to encourage and ensure the family life of the religious community.

40. Our integration in the environment of the poor, the sick and those in need, and our living with them, is a sign of salvation and of new life.

Even so, their existential situation is a challenge to us and means that we must constantly examine our life-style in order to make sure that it truly corresponds to the charism and mission we have received.

III. Community of Apostolic Service

41. Our community attains its full significance in the mission for which the Holy Spirit has brought it into being in the Church. Being itself the continuation of the salvific mystery of Christ, the Church entrusts us with the task of making Christ present in our apostolate of charity.

Our hospitaller life within the Church is based in the person and actions of Jesus who, in the course of his earthly life, showed a special preference for the sick, the poor and the humble.

In his deeds of kindness and words of comfort and hope we discover the sentiments we must have in order to make God's love shine forth in our hospitaller apostolate, his identification with the weak and needy is a call on us to devote our lives to the evangelisation of the poor and the sick.

42. We increase the fruitfulness of our apostolic service:

in deep interior union with Christ, who makes us partakers in the Father's merciful love so that we show it in loving actions towards the sick and those in need;

with our integration in the Church which places us in communion with all those who have been sent by Jesus to proclaim the Kingdom, caring for the sick; we thus unite ourselves in a special way with the Virgin Mary, who is the pre-eminent member of the Church and who was deeply hospitable during her life, as can be seen in her visit to Elizabeth, at the marriage-feast of Cana, and above all in her intimate and faithful love for her Son from Nazareth to Calvary;

in communion with those who suffer, in awareness that our merciful love for them is never a one-sided action, for when we serve the sick we too always benefit; the fruitfulness of our apostolate is increased in the measure in which we try to establish a relationship of mutual love with the people we help.

43. In our hospitaller mission we realise and develop the best of our being, and we feel the need to live our identify in a consistent manner.

This presupposes:

a deep faith-life which we must constantly nourish in the intimacy of prayer, so that there may be harmony in our lives between love of God and love of neighbour, offering the sick and those in need the loving presence of Christ who, through our service, communicates hope and salvation to them;

the sense of membership of the community which sends us out and which we represent;

the community supports our apostolate and is the special place in which we can share the joys and burdens of our work; this experience of brotherly love renews us interiorly and encourages us to persevere in freely given love;

human, theological and professional training, which is an indispensable prerequisite for us to be able to offer the sick and any person in need the efficient service they deserve and have a right to expect from us.

Significance of Our Apostolate

44. In the technologically-oriented and consumeristic environment of modern society, in which new forms of alienation and suffering come to light every day, our hospitaller apostolate has great contemporary relevance.

In this situation, we are called:

to carry out our mission with humanising attitudes and means; like Jesus, to proclaim that we are drawn especially to the weak and those who are emarginated;

to live our service as an expression of the eschatological value of human life.

Those to Whom Our Mission Is Directed

45. As Hospitaller Brothers of Saint John of God, we are called to carry out, within the Church, the mission of announcing the Gospel to the sick and the poor, caring for their sufferings and helping them in every way. We see every person as a brother or sister; we welcome and serve anyone in need, without any type of discrimination.

Our fidelity to the Church, to those who suffer and to the spirit of the Order means that we must examine our works and place them under review whenever necessary, so that they always correspond to our charism and mission.

We pay constant attention to the signs of the times, always interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, so that our hospitaller apostolate may always be in harmony with the values and requirements of the Kingdom.

The attitudes of service and openness which are feature of our mission lead us to collaborate with other organisations in the Church or society in the field of our specific apostolate.

Style and Forms of Apostolate

46. Our presence among the sick and those who suffer fulfils the requirements of our charism when:

we are like brothers and friends to them, rejoicing with those who rejoice and suffering with those who suffer, helping in any way that will contribute to their recovery and overall well-being;

we are aware of our limitations and thus seek and accept the assistance of other people, whether trained or untrained, voluntary or paid, and strive to communicate to them our spirit in the performance of our mission;

we live our consecration with evangelical simplicity in fidelity to the gift we have received.

- 47.** The requirements of our apostolate lead us to involve ourselves in concrete forms of action to help those who suffer, as an expression of the Father's merciful love.

Therefore:

we work in our own hospitals, co-operating with the health-care plans of individual countries and providing their citizens with the services they need;

we accept centres which are entrusted to us, when they are in harmony with our charism and we can exercise the hospitaller apostolate in them in accordance with the principles of our identity;

either as individuals or as a community, we become part of centres, structures or institutions belonging to the Church or State in order to perform a mission of evangelisation and service in the field of health-care;

we create centres, structures and institutions to help the emarginated and outcast who are not catered for by legislation;

we enter and become part of environments where poverty and social emargination are clear, for example, slums and rural areas, seeking to alleviate needs with the field of our charism.

- 48.** The mission of proclaiming the Gospel to all people, which the Church has received from its Lord, is ours, too, as Brothers of Saint John of God.

We are conscious of our duty to spread the Good News, and hence we keep the missionary spirit constantly alive.

We carry out the hospitaller apostolate by constantly increasing the effectiveness of our presence in mission areas, particularly in less favoured countries, where we try to distinguish ourselves:

through the apostolic spirit which urges us not only to prepare people's minds, through the witness of our charity, to accept the Gospel message, but also to co-operate actively whenever the opportunity presents itself in making the mystery of Christ known to those who do not know it;

through willingness to co-operate with Church and lay institutions which are working for the development of a more human and dignified type of life and to play a part, above all, in the improvement of overall public health;

through our recognition of the value of indigenous traditions and our acceptance of these traditions, thus helping our integration in the cultures of different countries.

- 49.** The Sacred Scriptures exhort those who possess the goods of this world to share them with the poor in order to alleviate their needs.

In faithfulness to our spirit, we encourage the practice of almsgiving as a form of apostolate.

We view it not only as a work of mercy which can provide us with the means necessary for helping those in need, but also as an act which benefits the person who performs it; it is also

seen as a proclamation of justice and charity, which helps to break down the barriers which exist between different social classes.

Pastoral Care

- 50.** The gift of hospitality which we have received commits us in a special way to pastoral care of the sick and needy. We practise it above all:

with our evangelical witness among the sick and those in need;

by announcing the word which gives meaning to the believer's life,

with the celebration of the sacraments which free man from sin and strengthen him in faith.

- 51.** All the faithful whose work is with the sick and needy are called upon to collaborate with one another in pastoral care.

Therefore:

our presence among the sick and those in need is marked by our pastoral commitment and by the zeal with which we emphasise the values of Christian and professional ethics;

we act with the greatest respect for the convictions and beliefs of other people; however, bearing in mind that people worn out with suffering and sickness feel their own limitations more deeply and experience the need for greater support, we help them to discover the Lord's goodness and the true significance of human life, principally through the witness of our charity;

we also exercise our pastoral care in the case of the families of the sick, encouraging them to appreciate the Christian mystery of pain and collaborate in a positive manner in the course of the illness of their loved ones;

we develop the consciousness of our helpers so that in the exercise of their human and professional skills they may always behave with the utmost respect for the rights of the sick; we invite those who feel motivated by faith to play a direct role in our pastoral work;

we co-operate in providing religious help to those who profess other beliefs;

in accordance with our charism, we are committed to active promotion of pastoral care of the sick and needy in the local Church.

Brothers Who Are Priests

- 52.** In virtue of their ordination under the title of hospitality, our Brothers who are priests are called principally to the exercise of the sacred ministry within the Order and to the encouragement and animation of pastoral care.

They are expected, above all:

to proclaim the word of God, and celebrate the Eucharist and the sacraments of reconciliation and the anointing of the sick;

with their presence, teaching and prayer, to comfort the sick, especially those in danger of death or in agony, offering them the comfort of Christian faith and hope;

to encourage and help develop the spiritual and pastoral life of our communities and apostolic works;

to work with the local Church in accordance with their identity as Hospitaller Brothers.

FORMATION FOR OUR HOSPITALLER LIFE

The Hospitaller Vocation

53. The hospitaller vocation we have received is a gift which develops within us in proportion to how we respond day by day to the invitation of God, who calls us to identify ourselves with Christ in his love for mankind and especially in the service of the sick and those in need.

The joy we experience in faithfully following Jesus motivates us to offer others the possibility of sharing our life.

We are aware that God chooses human means to show each person his or her special vocation, and thus we feel the duty to co-operate with him so that those who have received the same gift as us may have the possibility of discovering it and listening to the voice of the Lord.

When we see so many people, who are our brothers and sisters, overwhelmed by pain and need, and when we realise our inability to make our help reach them all, we raise our personal and community prayer to the Lord of the harvest that he may send his Church new workers who are willing to imitate Christ in his salvific mission through the apostolate of hospitality.

In accordance with the directives of The Church, we have Brothers who organise and co-ordinate the pastoral ministry of promoting vocations in order to show the people of God the charitable mission of our Order.

54. Our communities are open to receive those who want to see how we live; we offer them the opportunity of sharing in some way in the actual conditions of our mission and experiencing the happiness of giving oneself to God in the service of one's neighbour.

Elements Involved in Formation in the Order

General Principles

55. Fidelity to our hospitaller identity requires that each Brother should have an overall, solid and ongoing formation, in accordance with the aptitudes of the individual and varying circumstances of time and place, so that he can meet the requirements of his own vocation.

The Aim of Formation in our Order

56. The whole formation process is aimed at the harmonious and integrated development of the person, so that he may be capable of absorbing our charism and living it with a deeply evangelical spirit.

Formation must encourage, foster and develop human, Christian and religious values in keeping with our identity as Hospitaller Brothers.

Those in Charge of Formation

- 57.** The principal agent of formation is the Holy Spirit, who progressively leads us to full knowledge of Christ; the foremost person responsible for helping this action is the candidate himself.

As regards formation, major superiors are responsible for: arranging for the training, appointment and updating of those in charge of formation, since the religious vitality and development of the Order depend to a large extent on their competence and activity;

ensuring that formation programmes and the co-ordination necessary between the various centres are always in keeping with orientations of the Church and the Order and the specific circumstances of time and place;

arranging for those concerned to have the time and means necessary for formation to attain its objectives.

Discernment and Orientation of Vocation

- 58.** The best way of providing orientation for vocations is to offer our witness of faith, brotherhood and apostolic service.

Discernment as to the capacities and determination of the candidate to answer God's call will take place in an atmosphere of prayer and dialogue, making sure that he also possesses: good physical and psychological health;

intellectual, moral and spiritual suitability;

the aptitude for community life;

attitudes of openness and service in the face of the sufferings and needs of his neighbour;

the capacity to take balanced and logical decisions; an adequate level of education in the faith and of openness to God's action in his life.

- 59.** Formation fosters and develops the aptitudes of the candidate and helps him integrate them harmoniously in his life.

Formation has the task of bringing about the following: on the human level: the capacity to reflect and discriminate;

a sense of responsibility in freedom;

the capacity to have authentic interpersonal relations;

on the supernatural level:

growth in faith, which is shown as acceptance of God in one's own existence and as a commitment to live in harmony with the Gospel values;

growth in hope, lived out in the individual's; day-to-day way of being and behaving, while looking for the coming of the Lord;

growth in charity which is expressed in a spirit of filial piety towards God and the Virgin Mary, in an attitude of communion with the Church, and in spirit of brotherhood, which is the fruit of God's love for us;

on the level of the consecrated life:

the following of Christ, which entails the commitment to conform ourselves progressively to him in the essential dimensions of his life, that is, virginity, poverty, obedience and merciful love for the sick;

those human and Christian qualities which foster community life, training the candidate in the spirit of brotherhood and service;

on the level of our hospitaller life:

the human, Christian and evangelical values which make it possible for us to develop ourselves fully in harmony with the life-style and aims of the Order.

Progressive Integration

60. Candidates are progressively integrated into the life of our community, in accordance with the successive stages and steps of their formation. They will share in the life of prayer, brotherhood and apostolic service so far as this can help them experience and assimilate the evangelical values of life in common.
61. Formation programmes will be worked out bearing in mind the individuals involved and the aims of the successive stages, balancing theoretical content with the development, expression and communication of the candidate's feelings.
62. The place chosen for a formation centre must be suitable for attaining the objectives of the various stages; there should thus be an atmosphere favourable to silence, prayer, study and the possibility of a gradual experience of our community life in its different aspects.

Initial Formation

63. Initial formation in our Order seeks to help the candidates attain that human and spiritual maturity which will enable them to live out the following of Christ in a responsible manner according to our charism and life-style, in freedom and faithfulness.

The stages which move towards this aim in an integrated and progressive manner are as follows:

prenovitiate, novitiate, and scholasticate.

Masters and Communities of Formation Centres

64. Major superiors entrust the direction and running of each of these formative stages to a Brother, who must:

possess the personal balance and cultural and theological education necessary in order to fulfil the task entrusted to him in a proper manner;

remain open to God's action in his own life demonstrating the maturity in faith proper to an adult person, in his day-to-day manner of behaving;

foster love for and fidelity to our charism and mission in accordance with the guidelines of the Church and the Order;

support the action of the Holy Spirit in candidates, treating them in the same way in which Jesus treated his disciples: in a constant spirit of service trusting in their efforts and understanding their weaknesses.

Apart from the possession of the foregoing qualities and sufficient experience in the hospitaller apostolate, a Brother must also have made his solemn profession in order to be eligible for appointment as Master of Novices or Scholastics.

- 65.** The Brothers who make up in the community in which a formation centre is situated should be aware of their responsibility and of the importance of their example for the growth of the candidates, and hence:
they strive to live their vocation and apostolate steadfastly;

they are open to the signs of the times, to young people, and to dialogue with those in charge for formation and with the candidates;

they constantly foster the spirit of unity, so that candidates and new Brothers may, through experience, learn the value of brotherly help as an element of growth and perseverance in one's own vocation.

Prenovitiate

- 66.** Provinces provide centres for vocational consultation and guidance, organised in accordance with varying circumstances, so that future candidates for our Order can carry out a first discernment as to their vocation.

During postulancy, which is the period of preparation directly preceding the novitiate, and which must last for a least six months, the candidate deepens his discernment of his own vocation:

with prayer and reflection;

with sincere dialogue with those in charge of formation;

with suitable participation in the life of the community;

with study of those subjects envisaged in the overall formation programme of the Order.

Novitiate

- 67.** The main aim of the novitiate is to enable the novices to have a deep experience of their personal relationship with God, the community and those who suffer.

This requires an atmosphere of silence, prayer, austerity, joy and fraternity, which will enable the novices to grow in self-knowledge, to interiorise their sense of membership of the Order, and to discern their own vocation in order to be able to respond freely and responsibly to Christ's call.

In conformity with the formation programme of the Order, novices must receive a formation which helps them to integrate the various aspects of the life of a Hospitaller Brother of Saint John of God.

They must therefore be:

helped to cultivate the human and Christian virtues; introduced into a more demanding way of perfection through prayer and self-denial;

led to contemplation of the mystery of salvation and to reading of and meditation on the Sacred Scriptures;

trained to offer worship to God in the sacred liturgy;

formed to the requirements of a life consecrated to God and to men in Christ through practice of the evangelical counsels and of hospitality;

taught about the character, spirit, aims, discipline, history and life of our Order;

educated in love for the Church and its bishops.

Admission of postulants to the novitiate is performed by the Provincial with the consent of his Council. No candidate may be admitted into our Order who does not possess the qualities required in order to take on the type of life proper to our Institute.

The length of the novitiate in our Order is two years.

In order for the novitiate to be valid, the first year must take place in a house which is duly designated for this purpose. The novitiate is invalidated by an absence from the novitiate house of more than three months, continuous or broken; any absence of more than fifteen days must be made up for.

The norms of the universal law of the Church and of our own specific laws should be observed as concerns the conditions for the admission of candidates and the other requirements of the novitiate.

- 68.** When the period of the novitiate is over and his vocation has been sufficiently tested, the novice gives himself to the Lord, binding himself to the Order with temporary vows.

At the time of profession, he receives the habit of the Order which our Brothers wear as an outward sign of their consecration and token of poverty.

Scholasticate

- 69.** The scholasticate is the period of formation between first profession and solemn profession.

Its aim is to help the Brother to advance in the perfection of charity and to reach a level of human and spiritual maturity which makes it possible for him to understand and live his consecration in the Order as a true good for himself and others.

During this period, the scholastics:

obtain the professional and pastoral training which makes it possible for them to carry out the apostolic mission of the Order;

gain a deeper understanding of the motivations and requirements of their consecration to God and the meaning of membership of the Order.

- 70.** When the period of temporary vows is over, if the Brother makes a request of his own free will and it is approved by the competent superiors, he consecrates himself definitively to God with solemn profession.

There is a period of preparation for this definitive choice, and during this period the Brother is freed of other concerns. In an atmosphere of greater reflection and prayer he measures his life against the Gospel and gains deeper understanding of his consecration and also of the spirit and charism of the Order.

- 71.** We all feel responsible for the formation of the young, and so we welcome them and help them in their progress towards maturity, especially with the witness of our consecration, lived out joyfully in brotherly communion.

The young Brothers should, in turn, open themselves to community relations with generosity and simplicity, dedicating themselves wholly to the service and mission of the Institute as an expression of gratitude towards the Brothers who have gone before us, and from whom we have received the spiritual heritage of the Order.

Ongoing Formation

- 72.** Ongoing formation is both a requirement of our life itself and our constant response to the regenerating action of the Spirit, who calls us to support God's plans for the world with the energy, relevance and competence demanded by our consecration in the hospitaller life.

This task lasts throughout our whole life; it commits us to ever deeper reflection on what we have acquired during our initial formation and requires us to keep ourselves up-to-date with the valuable elements in the culture of our times in order to improve constantly the way in which we carry out the specific mission entrusted to us by the Church.

- 73.** We all feel responsible for our own formation and this keeps us open to God's will in a changing world; thus we all contribute, according to our individual ability, to helping our community reach this aim.

The local community is the normal environment in which our life grows, and it must thus maintain an attitude of constant movement forward in this area.

However, some occasions of ongoing formation occur at other levels, thus further enriching and unifying the Order.

CHAPTER FIVE

GOVERNMENT OF OUR ORDER

The Principles of Government

- 74.** The Church has received from the Lord Jesus, its divine founder, the power which he received from the heavenly Father.

Since our Order has been approved by the Apostolic See, it is an institute of pontifical right and shares in such authority in its legitimately elected or appointed superiors.

This authority in the Order is a true service of love, which the superiors perform for the common good, in imitation of Jesus Christ, seeking the will of God for the Institute, the various communities and each individual Brother.

- 75.** Superiors should thus exercise authority in a fraternal spirit, asking the opinions of others, encouraging initiative, and bearing in mind the universal law of the Church and the specific laws of the Order.

They should strive to ensure that the Brothers entrusted to them seek God sincerely, cultivate true fraternal communion and help their neighbour in accordance with our hospitaller charism.

Following our Rule, superiors should be models of right action for all, admonishing the restless, encouraging the fainthearted, welcoming the sick, and being patient with all.

- 76.** We live the gift of hospitality, which we have received from the Holy Spirit, in an institution approved by the Church; our Order is therefore, like the Church, both charismatic and institutional.

Suitable rules and regulations facilitate the exercise of our charism and help in living it in its fullness, furthering the mission of service to the people of God.

Our Order is therefore governed by the universal law of the Church and by our own laws as contained in our Constitutions and General Statutes and in the documents of the Holy See concerning our Institute.

The Organisational Structure of Our Order

77. Within the universal Church, our Order forms a single body, composed of:

LOCAL COMMUNITIES,
set up in specific places for the exercise of our apostolate and sharing in the fraternal life under the charge of a superior;

PROVINCES,
made up of a certain number of communities, which share in a special relationship of brotherhood and apostolic service, under the direction of a major superior;

VICE-PROVINCES,
which are Provinces in the making;

GENERAL DELEGATIONS,
made up of one or more communities placed under the direct supervision of the General Definitory;

PROVINCIAL DELEGATIONS,
made up, as the case may be, of one or more local communities, dependent on a Province.

78. The setting up and suppression of Provinces, Vice- Provinces and General Delegations, and any alterations in their respective demarcations, fall under the jurisdiction of the General Definitory, which must first ask the opinion of the Provincial Definitory concerned.

The setting up and suppression of local communities and hospitaller works, and any alteration in their aims, fall under the jurisdiction of the General Definitory; such decisions must have the consent of the Provincial Definitory, and must be taken after the opinions of the communities in question have been heard;
the norms of the universal law of the Church must, moreover, be observed.

The setting up and suppression of Provincial Delegations, and any alterations in their demarcation, fall under the jurisdiction of the Provincial Definitory, and must have the approval of the General.

79. The norms laid down in the Constitutions and General Statutes for Provinces and Provincials apply also, unless the contrary is stated, to Vice-Provinces and Vice-Provincials.

Organisation of Government

80. a. *The Exercise of Authority*

The authority which our Order has received from God, through the ministry of the Church, is exercised:

in the extraordinary way, by the General Chapter over the whole Order, by the Provincial Chapter over the Province and by the Local Chapter over the community;

in the ordinary way, by the General, Provincial or Local Superior, each within the limitations of his own authority, and with the assistance of his respective Council.

b. Chapters

In order that a Chapter may be celebrated, the presence is required of at least two-thirds of those who must be convened.

As regard elections, these are carried out by secret ballot and the person who obtains an absolute majority of the votes of those present shall be declared elected; after two inconclusive ballots, a third ballot is taken, in which only the two candidates who obtained the greatest number of votes in the second ballot have a passive voice;

if the number of votes are equal in the third ballot, the Brother who has been in solemn vows for the longer time shall be considered elected; and if they both made their solemn profession on the same date, then the elder shall be considered elected;

the procedure described above shall be followed for the election of the General, with the prior election of a President for that session, elected by the Chapter from among its members;

all elections made in the various Chapters need the confirmation of their President, who is not, however, required to grant this, except in the case of elections made in the General Chapter.

As regards other matters, unless the Chapter itself decides otherwise, decisions are taken by secret ballot and require an absolute majority of the votes of those present; however, if the numbers of votes are equal after the second ballot, the President may have the casting-vote.

c. The Temporary Character of Offices

Offices for the government of the Order are temporary: their duration is linked to the celebration of the various Chapters, at which each of these offices must be renewed.

All major superiors and their respective councillors may be re-elected for a second eight-year or four-year term, but not for a third consecutive term.

Postulation is not permitted except in special cases, and at least two-third of the voted are required in order for it to be valid.

- 81.** Councils and Chapters are, each within the sphere of its own specific competence, the expression of the participation in, and concern of everybody for the common good.

General Government

General Chapter

- 82.** The General Chapter is the deepest form of communion in the charism of the Order and is the place where collegiality is manifested in a special way. It has supreme authority within the Order and is, therefore, the body with prime responsibility for the guidance of our Institute in carrying out the mission entrusted to it by the Holy Spirit in the Church.

Thus, each individual Brother must, within his own sphere of responsibility, contribute to helping the Chapter attain its aims, by participating at its celebration as a capitular Brother, or by responsible collaboration in its preparation through the election of vocals, or by offering any suggestions he may have for the good of the Order, or, above all, by humbly asking the Lord's help.

- 83.** The General Chapter:
examines the state of the Order regarding the requirements of the religious life according to the teaching of the Church;

studies, fosters and authentically sets forth the different ways in which our charism may be manifested;

resolves, with a practical declaration, any doubts or difficulties which may arise concerning the Constitutions;

elects the Superior General and at least four General Councillors; postulation is required if the General is a priest and if this is his third consecutive mandate.

promulgates the decrees it judges useful for the good of the Order.

84. The General Chapter is celebrated:
every six years; or

at the end of the first three-year period, if a new General must be elected because the office has fallen vacant during this first three-year period.

It is convened by the General or the Vicar General.

85. The following have the obligation to take part,

as members by right:

the general or Vicar General, as President;

the General Councillors;

the Provincials or Vicars Provincial;

the Vice-Provincials or Vicars of Vice-Provinces;

the General Delegates who are in charge of General Delegations;

Vocals elected in accordance with the norms laid down in the General Statutes also take part; these vocals must be solemnly professed Brothers and their number must not be less than that of those taking part by right.

86. Between one General Chapter and another, the General may, with the consent of his Council, arrange for the celebration of a General Conference of the Order, in accordance with the norms laid down in the General Statutes.

Superior General

87. The Superior General is first and foremost the bond of union of the whole Order; he, more than anyone else, has the duty of protecting and faithfully fostering the special spirit of our Institute among our Brothers and in our works.

In his own person and government he must therefore reflect the genuine charism of the Order and its apostolic ideal of charity, bearing in mind wise traditions and encouraging new initiatives suitable for the specific time and place.

No Brother can be Superior General if he has not been in solemn vows for twelve years.

The authority of the General extends over all the Provinces, communities, hospitaller works and Brothers in the Order, in accordance with the universal law of the Church and the specific laws of the Order.

During his term in office the General will personally, or through a delegate, make at least one canonical visitation to all the communities and works of the Order.

If there is sufficient cause with regard to the common good, the General can remove or transfer any Brother from any position or office whatsoever, in accordance with the norms laid down in the General Statutes.

General Councillors

- 88.** The General Councillors collaborate with the general in the government of the Order, **[P. 92]** thus expressing the brotherhood of the whole of our Institute.

They therefore give the General their advice with fidelity, sincerity and in full freedom whenever they are asked and whenever they consider it useful in the Lord.

The General Councillors must be Brothers who have been in solemn vows for at least six years.

Together with the General, they constitute the General Definitory.

- 89.** If the Office of General should for any reason fall vacant, the first Councillor will govern the Order as Vicar General until the celebration of the General Chapter.

If the General is absent or otherwise prevented from acting the first Councillor will act for him; if the first Councillor is absent or otherwise prevented from doing this, the next Councillor who is available will carry out this task. Unless he is granted a special mandate, such an Acting Vicar cannot modify the dispositions of the General.

The office of Procurator General, Bursar General and Secretary General exist in order to help in the general government of the Order; these offices are not necessarily connected with the office of General Councillor. The Brothers appointed to these positions must have been in solemn vows for at least six years. The provisions of the General Statutes will be observed in regard to their duties and the conditions for their appointment or election.

Provincial Government

Provincial Chapter

- 90.** While always recognising the authority of the General Chapter and the General, the Provincial Chapter is the extraordinary governing body of the Province; it represents in a special way the inter-communion of the different local communities and their communion with the entire Order.

Bearing in mind its importance for the life and apostolate of the Province, the Brothers making up the Province will take a responsible part in preparing for it or in its celebration, according to the specific tasks of each individual.

- 91.** In the Provincial Chapter:

the state of the Province is examined under each aspect of our religious life;

the decisions and guidelines of the General Chapter are put into operation, bearing in mind local circumstances and requirements;

in accordance with the general Statutes, the following are elected or appointed:

the Provincial;

at least two Provincial Councillors;

The newly elected Provincial will appoint in a meeting of the Provincial Definitory the Provincial Delegates, the Local Superiors and the Masters of novices and scholastics

decrees helpful to the good of the Province are promulgated.

92. The Provincial Chapter is celebrated every four years and is convened by the General.

93. The following have the obligation to take part, as members by right:

- the General, or his Delegate, as President;
- the Provincial or Vicar Provincial;
- the Provincial Councillors;

the Provincial Delegates who govern any Provincial Delegations.

Vocals, as described in the General Statutes, also take part; these vocals must be solemnly professed Brothers and their number must not be less than that of those taking part by right.

94. A Provincial Conference is celebrated in each Province at least once between one Provincial Chapter and the next, in accordance with the norms laid down in the General Statutes.

Provincial Superior

95. As major superior, the Provincial bears the main responsibility for the fostering and development of the religious life and all formation and apostolic activities of the Province.

A Brother may not be Provincial unless he has completed six years in solemn vows.

The authority of the Provincial extends over all the communities and works and all the Brothers in the Province, in accordance with the universal law of the Church and the specific laws of the Order.

In the course of his four-year term in office, he will make at least one canonical visitation to each of the communities and works in the Province.

Provincial Councillors

96. The Provincial Councillors collaborate with the Provincial in a fraternal spirit in the government of the Province.

Aware of their responsibility, they give the Provincial their opinions and advice, not only when he asks them to do so but also whenever they consider it helpful for the common good.

They must be Brothers who have completed at least three years in solemn vows.

Together with the Provincial they constitute the Provincial Definitory.

97. If the office of Provincial should fall vacant for any reason, the first Councillor will govern the Province as Vicar Provincial, in accordance with the norms laid down in the General Statutes.

If the Provincial is absent or otherwise prevented from acting, the first Councillor will act for him; if the first Councillor is absent or otherwise prevented from doing this, the next Councillor who is available will carry out this task. Unless he is granted a special mandate, such an Acting Vicar cannot modify the dispositions of the Provincial.

To help in Provincial government there are also the offices of Bursar and Secretary. The provisions of the General Statutes will be observed in regard to the conditions for their appointment.

Local Government

The Local Superior (or Prior) and His Council

- 98.** In virtue of his office, the Local Superior is the chief animator of the community, and has the authority granted him by the universal law of the Church and the specific laws of the Order.

In accordance with the norms laid down in the General Statutes, the Local Superior must be a Brother in solemn vows.

As the person in charge of the religious family, the Brothers should show him due respect and give him proper assistance in the performance of his task.

He should make sure, and insist in a fraternal spirit, that the Constitutions and other norms of the Institute are observed, paying special attention to ensuring that the requirements of community life are met.

He should approach his Brothers frequently in open dialogue and should listen to them in a friendly manner, finding out about their hopes and needs, in order to help them pursue the aim of the religious life.

At least in communities with a minimum of six professed Brothers, a Vice-Superior (or Sub-Prior) and two Councillor should be appointed, in accordance with the norms laid down in the General Statutes.

Local Chapter

- 99.** The Local Chapter has the task of examining and deciding on matters concerning the life of the community, in accordance with our own laws and the universal law of the Church.

It is one of the main occasions for the expression of attitudes of dialogue and co-responsibility on the part of the Brothers of which it is composed.

The Local Superior should therefore not alter legitimate customs and habits or bring in innovations without first listening to the Local Chapter or, as the case may be, without its consent; he must also have the permission of the Provincial when this is called for.

Administration of Temporal Goods

- 100.** In accordance with the universal law of the Church and our own specific laws, our Order as such, its Provinces, its communities and its works have a juridical personality and consequently have the right to acquire, own, administer and transfer property as may be necessary for the support and development of our life and our charitable and hospitaller mission.

The respective superior, either in person or through delegates, are responsible for performing any acts of administration, and also for accepting donations, legacies or pledges for the Order, Province, local community, works or individual Brothers, under whatever terms, and for signing relevant documents, always making sure that the universal law of the Church and our own specific laws are observed.

Our Brothers should remember that they are not the owners of temporal goods but merely stewards and administrators.

The administration of property must be carried out to the advantage of the sick and those in need, in conformity with the laws of the Church, our Constitutions and General Statutes, and the just laws in force in the different countries.

CHAPTER SIX

FIDELITY TO OUR HOSPITALLER VOCATION

Response to God's Gift

101. Fidelity to the vocation we have received is possible thanks to the unchanging faithfulness of God. He has chosen us to reproduce the image of his Son, and thus enriched us with the gifts of the spirit, as a guarantee of the irreversible nature of his love and his call.

This attitude on God's part requires of us a response of unbroken faithfulness:

to God himself, living in communion with him and carrying out his will;

to ourselves, nurturing and developing the gifts we have received;

to our Brothers, helping them to reach their full development;

to the Church, carrying out our mission in accordance with the charism we have been given;

to the sick and those in need, offering them our service as a manifestation of God's love for them.

102. We are aware that in living out the gift we have received we are conditioned by our human frailty and by an environment which continually urges us to accept values foreign to the Gospel.

This leads us to live in an attitude of constant humility and conversion, accepting the need for personal self-denial as a means of cultivating fidelity.

We nurture and develop this attitude:

in the relationship with God, in times of recollection and silence in which we encounter him personally renew the direction of our existence and accept others as they really are;

in fraternal contact, where our communitarian relationships are, as circumstances may indicate, characterised by: encouragement, understanding, simplicity, or fraternal correction.

Fidelity to Our Specific Virtues

103. Our spirituality consists of living love of God and of one's needy neighbour in a unified manner. We show this basic attitude in our daily life with gestures and deeds of sympathy, service and self-giving to the poor and the sick.

We keep this spirit alive inasmuch as we keep those who suffer at the centre of our whole apostolic activity and of all our concerns.

All this requires special attentiveness on our part, both on the individual and community levels, so that all our gifts, whether of a spiritual, intellectual or material nature, are always at the service of the poor.

It also helps us always to retain the simplicity and austerity required by our vocation, voluntarily renouncing those things which do not bring us closer to God, even though they would make our lives more pleasant.

Sense of Membership of the Order

104. For us, being Hospitaller Brothers of Saint John of God is the concrete way of living as Christians and religious. We thus feel that it is important to show our identity.

This factor encourages us to dedicate ourselves wholly to the development of our Order and the fulfilment of its mission in the Church, and also to feel that the joys and difficulties of our Brothers throughout the world are ours too.

We seek to find out about and increase our knowledge of the history and spirituality of our Order and constantly strive to live in faithfulness to its wise traditions.

Separation from the Order

105. If any Brother, after profession, should find difficulties in remaining in the Order, he will first of all seek God's will for him with serious discernment.

In such a situation, his Brothers, and particularly his superiors, will try to be supportive, especially with prayer and fraternal dialogue.

Should the decision be taken to separate from the Order, whether temporarily or permanently, and whether through the Brother's will or through his superiors' decision, our own specific laws and the universal law of the Church must be observed in this procedure.

Any Brother who leaves the Order, whether voluntarily or through lawful dismissal, cannot claim anything from the Institute for any activity performed in it; however, the superiors will offer him assistance in accordance with equity and evangelical charity.

The Constitutions of the Order

106. In order to be able to introduce changes in the text of the present Constitutions, the approval of the General Chapter, expressed with at least two-thirds of the votes, is required, and also the consent of the Holy See, which is also responsible for their authentic interpretation.

107. The General Statutes contain the practical norms most necessary for the application of the principles contained in the Constitutions.

Any changes which may, in time, seem opportune are the responsibility of the General Chapter, which must, in each case, express its wish with at least two-thirds of the votes.

108. Observance of the constitutions is an expression of our communion with the Church and a very effective means of maintaining the vitality of our charism. This is why, remembering the duty of observing them which we assumed at our profession, we constantly strive to discover their genuine meaning and to conform our lives to them.