

**RULE OF LIFE
OF THE
SECULAR AUGUSTINIAN
RECOLLECTS**



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Rule of Life of the Secular Augustinian Recollects

“Fraternal love also embraces the institutes of nuns and sisters as well as associations of the faithful which, following the Rule of St Augustine and according to the Spirit of the order, either dedicate themselves to the contemplative life, commit themselves to various apostolic works, or endeavour to achieve Christian perfection in the way appropriate to their secular state.

All the institutes and associations, together with the order of Augustinian Recollects, comprise the Augustinian Recollect family. Mutual co-operation is to be encouraged between them and the diverse families of Augustinian origin”. (Constitutions OAR, 112)

“The religious are to promote the Augustinian Recollect secular fraternity, the members of which, remaining in the world, pursue evangelical perfection according to the charism of the Order, while maintaining their secular identity (cf. canons 303 and 677, para.2; *Starting afresh from Christ* 31c). By their sharing in this charism, communion with the brothers of the order and with the hierarchy comes into being and develops. They thereby fulfil a common mission within the Church and serve as leaven in the world (Constitutions OAR, 114a)

I. Sons and daughters of God within the Church

Baptism.

1. God, who is both three and one, has created humanity in his image and likeness to make of us sharers in his own divine life. In the history of salvation, this has been done through baptism, which is the ‘foundation of all Christian life’. By means of baptism, we are ‘freed from sin and reborn as sons and daughters of God, we come to be members of Christ, and we are joined to the Church and made sharers in its mission’.¹

In the Church, united to Christ.

2. Because of its union with Christ, the Church is ‘unfailingly holy’²; moreover, it sanctifies those who are united to it, and makes us reach out towards holiness. Indeed, as the Apostle says: ‘What God wants is for you all to be holy’. (1 Thess. 4,3)

In order to go forward on the path of holiness with a whole-hearted spirit of joy, we must always live united to Christ, for “to love Christ with perfection”³ is the principal undertaking of our life. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, who points us towards Christ as our final destination and our only way: ‘Christ our God is the homeland to which we going; Christ the Man, the path by which we journey. Let us go with him; let us make our journey by means of him.’⁴

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1213

² Constitution *Lumen Gentium*: the Church 39

³ *The Way of Life* 1,7

⁴ *Sermon* 123,3.

Charity

3. Charity is the very soul of holiness. It 'governs, shapes, and perfects all the means of sanctification'.⁵ Given that God himself, who is perfect, is both our model and the yardstick by which we measure ourselves, we are called to perfect holiness and perfect charity: 'It is therefore quite clear that all Christians, in any state or walk of life, are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love'.⁶

This is what the '*Way of Life*' of our friars means when it states that charity is our aim and is the goal of every Christian.⁷ The great precept of love is embodied as the beginning of the Rule of our Holy Father in this way: 'before all else, beloved brothers, let us love God and then our neighbour, because these are the principal commandments given to us.'

II The Nature and purpose of the Fraternity: Holy people, within the family of Augustine

Charisms

4. 'God has, however, willed to make men and women holy and to save them, not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness'.⁸ Within this people, we all share the priesthood of Christ, as we also share in his prophetic and kingly offices. However, through his Spirit, each one of us receives particular gifts and charisms, according to the vocation that has been received and our position within the Church.

Founders of Religious Families

5. One of the main charisms with which the Church has been gifted by the Spirit is that of being founder of a religious order. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the journey towards the fullness of Christian life and the perfection of charity in Christ has raised up such men and women within the Church. By their example, teachings, and charism, they have founded a wonderful range of religious families that are a sign of the immense richness of the gifts of God, and of Christ's many-sided grace.⁹

Augustine

6. One of these individuals is St Augustine (354-430 A.D.), the bishop of Hippo and doctor of the Church, who received from God the grace of being the trustee of an ideal and of a way of life that over the centuries has called many people. These responded at the time of Augustine (5th-7th centuries), just as they would hundreds of years later, when the Church formally established the Order of St Augustine (13th Century). In the same way, this happened in the 16th century, when our Augustinian Recollect Order emerged as a movement that experienced the heritage of Augustine as very much its own, and sought to nourish itself from that spirituality.

⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 826. Constitution *Lumen Gentium*: the Church 48

⁶ Constitution *Lumen Gentium*: the Church 40. ST JOHN PAUL II, Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*: vocation and mission of lay people in the Church and the world 30.

⁷ Cf. 1,1

⁸ Constitution *Lumen Gentium*: the Church 9

⁹ Cf. Decree *Perfectae Caritatis*: the renewal of religious life 1

Religious and Lay People, Too

7. As he lived it, Augustine's ideal was a monastic one of life in community and keeping the three vows of consecrated chastity, poverty, and obedience. But such was its power to grow that it couldn't be confined just to the monasteries. The ideal is also shared by many lay people who feel the urge to live out the union of hearts and souls, and to make present the spirit of St Augustine in the Church and in the world. It is a true vocation by means of which God freely and fully joins them to the Order, in such a way that they enrich it and fulfil their Christian identity within it.

The Fraternity in History

8. From the beginnings of the Recollection, the Secular Augustinian Recollects have joined ranks with the friars and the nuns. They lived beside them in the monasteries, worked with them on the missions, and in Japan suffered martyrdom with them, in the greatest testimony of Christian love. Their most outstanding figure is St Magdalena of Nagasaki.

In modern times "we can speak of a *new era of group endeavours* of the lay faithful".¹⁰ Amongst ourselves, too, the Secular Augustinian Recollects have once again flourished, fully aware that 'by their sharing in this charism, communion with the brothers of the Order and with the hierarchy comes into being and develops. They thereby fulfil a common mission within the Church and serve as leaven in the world'.¹¹

True Sons and Daughters of Augustine

9. Such is the Augustinian Recollect Secular Fraternity, which welcomes those Christians who, under the Holy Spirit's prompting towards a perfect Christian love, make the commitment to live the Gospel in the light of the experience and spirituality of the Order of Augustinian Recollects. As guide and pattern its members have St Augustine, and with Augustine as companion and intercessor they follow Christ, and direct towards him all their apostolic commitment. They belong fully to the Augustinian Recollect family and share in its values, its graces, and its fruitfulness. They are sons and daughters of the Augustinian Recollection within the fraternal communion of its spiritual riches.¹²

III The interior life

10. The path followed by the Secular Fraternity, the path of Augustine, penetrates into our own interior life where we find God himself, the treasure that is shared, and opens up into communion and sends us out to engage in the apostolate. It is in line with what the *Way of Life* calls "absorption" or "recollection"¹³, and with its three distinctive features of interiority, community, and apostolate, defines the characteristic Augustinian Recollect way of being.

Restoring the image of God

11. The limitless love of God in first place calls us to come back to him, to experience conversion in the dynamic process that we call 'recollection'. In this process, human beings, weakened by the wounds of sin, enter within themselves to where

¹⁰ ST JOHN PAUL II, Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*: vocation and mission of lay people in the Church and the world 29.

¹¹ *Constitutions of the Augustinian Recollects* 114.

¹² Cf. *Constitutions of the Augustinian Recollects* 114

¹³ Cf. *Way of Life* 1,6; 4,2; 7, 1-3; 11,2

God is already waiting for them. There, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, they achieve the restoration of the image of Christ which they carry stamped on their souls.¹⁴ Sin had destroyed this image, but through the grace of baptism it starts to be rebuilt.

Every day, however, in order to restore and perfect this image, God demands of us a firm and generous co-operation. As Augustine said, 'the one who made you without any effort on your part will not justify you without it'.¹⁵ In accordance with our Augustinian Recollect charism, the Lord asks of us that we open the doors of our hearts¹⁶ more and more each day, just as Augustine did following his own conversion.

This frame of mind leads us to a discovery of the greatness of the eternal values that are within ourselves. These create tensions and feelings of unease in us because God, having created us in his image, destined us to enjoy the infinite goodness that he himself is: 'Lord, you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you'.¹⁷

A Life of Prayer

12. In this process we, like Augustine, light up our minds and strengthen our wills by reading and studying Sacred Scripture on a regular basis.¹⁸ The Word of God both questions us and, as a response to this, stirs up in us the practice of both personal and community prayer. Rather than just an isolated pious activity, this is a whole way of life, which in our Recollect history has found expression as mental prayer.

Dialogue with God is both the summit and the source of dialogue with our brethren, with whom we place in common the fruits of our prayer and the experiences of contemplation. Because of this, we have certain times for prayer in common with the members of the fraternity. Accepting ourselves as Church, we also take part in liturgical prayer.

In the liturgy - in praying the Office, just as much as in the sacraments - we meet the Lord in his mysteries. The Church our mother, who creates our fraternity and feeds us for eternal life, builds herself up around this liturgy, especially by the Eucharist: "Let us love the Lord our God; let us love his Church. Him, as Father; her, as Mother. Him, as Lord, her, as Handmaid, for we are sons and daughters of the Handmaid."¹⁹

Ascending to God

13. Our renewal will be the more complete according to how close we get to God through our knowledge of him and, in particular, through love. It is therefore always necessary for us to return to ourselves in order to know ourselves. We do this with an attitude of prayer and petition: 'Oh God, always the same! May I know myself and know you, too. This is my prayer'.²⁰

This outline of the Augustinian path of interior life finds a striking expression in those words of Augustine when he writes: 'Don't go outside; return to yourself: truth dwells in the human interior. If you see that nature is changeable, go beyond yourself...you possess the place where the light of reason burns.'²¹

¹⁴ Cf. *Sermon* 90,10

¹⁵ *Sermon* 169, 13.

¹⁶ *Confessions*. 10, 1

¹⁷ *Confessions*. 1,1. Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*: the Church in the modern world 21.

¹⁸ Cf. *Constitutions of the Augustinian Recollects* 76

¹⁹ Commentary on Psalm 88, 2, 14

²⁰ *Soliloquies* 2,1,1.

²¹ Cf. *True religion* 72

IV Community life

Communion and community

14. Following the example of Augustine, the brothers and sisters strive to love God unconditionally,²² and for the sake of him alone. The love that is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5,5) is precisely what moved Augustine,²³ and moves us as well, to imitate the ideal of the first community in Jerusalem, which had one heart and one soul directed towards God.²⁴

‘In this way’ - our Holy Father concludes - ‘your soul is not really yours, but rather belongs to all your brethren; and their souls are yours. Or rather, their souls and yours are not souls, but the one soul of Christ’.²⁵ Boldly summed up in this way of understanding are the self-denial and spirit of service that are the roots of our Christian communion.

This communion leads us to ‘honour God in each other’,²⁶ for we have been created to be living temples of God, and to take care of one another’s needs. At the very heart of our fraternity, we are to be concerned for our brothers and sisters and always prepared to work with them as they carry out their plans and achieve their goals.

Such is the love that unites hearts and souls in community of brethren and spreads out among all people to win them for Christ and unite them to him within the Church.²⁷ This also is the love that lays the foundations of community for our religious brothers and sisters. Of itself, our status as secular people does not necessarily exclude some of us from living in community. Although it would be something exceptional, such a community would be a visible testimony to the fraternity we seek to live.

Community & Friendship

15. We create fraternity by being a group of people who share faith, hope, and charity. In a union of love, we strive for our ideal as brothers and as friends, not just to transmit to others what we are ourselves, but also so that we receive from them what God has given to them. “Whenever I see someone burning with Christian charity and see that because of this charity he becomes my faithful friend, I know that all the secrets with which I may entrust him are not entrusted to a man, but to God, in whom he dwells whenever he is charitable: *God is charity, and whoever dwells in charity, dwells in him*”.²⁸

Fraternal life as sons and daughters of Augustine demands of us that we carefully develop the values of friendship. This creates and sustains trust, loyalty, sincerity, and mutual understanding. We rejoice in the abilities and in the successes of our brethren as if they were our own, and we unite our efforts in our shared undertaking as each member finds fulfilment in their self-giving to others.²⁹

All this has to be shown in daily life and in the regular meetings of the fraternity. It is not enough merely to have the intention of creating fraternity; it is necessary to play an active part in the meetings, thereby strengthening human relations, building up the sense of belonging and bringing about the realization of the common ideal.

²² Commentary on Psalm 55,17

²³ Cf. Sermon 356, 1.

²⁴ Letter 243, 4. Rule 1,2

²⁵ Letter 243, 4

²⁶ Rule 1,8

²⁷ Commentary on Ps. 33, 2, 6. *OAR Constitutions of the Augustinian Recollects* 6

²⁸ Letter 73, 10. Cf. Soliloquies 1, 12, 20; 13,22. Confessions IV 4,7

²⁹ Cf. *Constitutions of the Augustinian Recollects*,18

V. A Life of Apostolate

Radiating love

16. In baptism we are moulded into one with Christ the 'new man'(Col.5,10), and we must make our lives a permanent witness to being sons and daughters of God and brothers and sisters of everyone. We work to extend the Kingdom, dealing with worldly affairs and organizing them for the greater glory of the Creator.³⁰

We are the work of the love of God, and we are called to pass on this flame of love, to such an extent that we can make our very own those bold words of St Augustine: "My ambition is that we should live together with Christ. I do not want to save myself without you".³¹

This is a love which cannot be only sentimental; it must be real and inspire all that we do, as our Father teaches: 'Love, and then do what you will; if you are silent, be silent out of love; if you cry out, cry out for love; if you put something right, do it for love; if you forgive, forgive out of love. The root of love is within you. Out of this root, nothing but good can come forth'.³²

This mission of love is universal and has no boundaries: 'If you wish to love Christ'-says St Augustine'- extend your love throughout the whole world, because the members of Christ are scattered throughout the whole world.³³ Encouraging, supporting, praying, speaking with, giving explanations, in a humbly and friendly way, draws everyone to the love of God'.³⁴ That way, the words of Augustine will become our own words: 'My ambition is that together we may live with Christ..I do not want to save myself without you'.³⁵

In the celebration of the Eucharist, which is the foundation and summit of the community and 'the soul of every apostolate',³⁶ as well as in other liturgical celebrations, we are to find the inspiration and the energy we need to make our lives a testimony to communion with God and with people.

Disciples and missionaries in the midst of the world

17. Our fraternity is 'secular' in so far as we are not religious, but live in the world. It follows that our particular and personal apostolate consists of working so that unity and peace, which are both fruits of love, become a reality within the family, in the Church, and in the world. As sons and daughters of Augustine, we are fully aware that 'charity holds things together, holding things together creates unity, unity maintains charity, and charity leads to clarity.'³⁷

³⁰ Cf. Constitution *Lumen Gentium*: the Church 31.33 et seq.

³¹ Sermon 17,2.

³² Cf. Commentary on the letter of St John 7,8

³³ Cf. Commentary on the letter of St John 10,8

³⁴ Cf. Commentary on Psalm 33, Sermon 2,1.

³⁵ Sermon 260E,2

³⁶ Commentary on Psalm 30, Sermon 2,1

³⁷ Commentary on Psalm 84,12

Such an undertaking always ought to lead us to defend justice and to denounce injustice in accordance with the Gospel, given that the two causes of peace and justice are inseparable. We ought to practice all the virtues demanded by social relationships, such as sincerity, honesty, courtesy, and civic responsibility, as without them there can be no true Christian life.³⁸

It is vital that we accept as our own the responsibility of renewing the way the world is organised, taking part in society in a direct and practical manner. In this, we are guided by the light of the Gospel and the mind of the Church, as well as being motivated by Christian charity. Let us co-operate in this task with our skills and knowledge and with our own sense of responsibility, seeking the justice of the kingdom of God in everything. We are to strive to establish a human society that, fully respecting its own laws, is in accord with the fundamental principles of Christian life and adjusts itself to different times, places, and peoples.³⁹

At work and in the family

18. In accordance with the thinking of Augustine, we should not think of our work as just a burden, or as a means of survival, but rather as working together with our Creator in shaping the world and as service to the human community.⁴⁰ We therefore have to make sure that we fully master the jobs we have, and at every moment behave in a decent and charitable manner.

Those brothers and sisters called to the married life must remember that in living out the sacrament of marriage, there is a special calling to bear witness to the Paschal presence of the Lord.⁴¹ Therefore, in an ever-growing way they should show their spirit of love and service, as a specific expression of their sacramental union.

In no way can there be conflict between one's family and the fraternity. Both are fruits of the same love, and this love becomes stronger as it flows from one reality to the other. Far from being just a devotion or preference of one of the family members, the fraternity ought to lean towards involving the family, with the idea of involving and enriching it. The family thereby becomes the first field for our apostolate, not with the purpose of gaining recruits, but through a natural growth in love.

In Social Action

19. We should see Christ in everyone, but especially in those in most need. 'Focus your attention on the Christ lying in the street' - Augustine tells us - 'turn your gaze to Christ, who is cold and hungry; to Christ who is a stranger and in need'.⁴²

Neither is this just an individual's obligation, according to the way one is moved by the Lord. None of our fraternities should be without a specific social commitment which reflects the love of God that both constitutes and maintains it.

Integrated into Church and Society

20. Our Augustinian charism indicates for us certain aims which take precedence over others. Nevertheless, our field of activity is not limited to those areas identified closely

³⁸ Cf. Decree *Apostolicam actuositatem*: the apostolate of the laity 4

³⁹ ST JOHN PAUL II, Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*: vocation and mission of lay people in the Church and the world 30.

⁴⁰ Cf. Decree *Apostolicam actuositatem*: the apostolate of the laity 7

⁴¹ Cf. Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*: the Church in the modern world 67

⁴² Cf. Sermon 25, 8

with the Order. We may be -and we ought to be- animated by the Order's spirituality to encourage the liturgical, spiritual, and missionary life of the parish community and of other apostolic communities and movements, in close co-operation with the pastoral policy of the diocese.

For the same reason, we have to be open to all new trends in social action, such as pro-life campaigns, the defence of women and children, environmental protection, and voluntary work of all sorts. We should take part in these, giving generously of our free time.

VI Continuously in formation

Out of Love

21. Speaking of the formation houses, the early *Way of Life of the Discalced Augustinian Friars*⁴³ highlights their importance and emphasises that the principal object of formation is “the love and charity of God and of their neighbour”, for which reason it must be carried out “with diligence and care”.⁴⁴ This same spirit must drive our permanent formation, which is “another name for renewal and religious conversion”⁴⁵

Our Father holds that “faith, without reflection, is nothing”⁴⁶ It follows that permanent formation is necessary for the development of our faith in God, for a deepening in the interior life, for journeying toward human fullness, and for fulfilling our mission of being the yeast of the Kingdom. Without formation, we will not be able to analyse the realities of the world or the events of life, neither will we be capable of replying with our own voice to the questions put by the men and women of today.

Formation for the secular Augustinian Recollect is a life-long process: “beginning with the initial testing of his vocation, it helps him to walk in faithfulness to the call and mission received from God until he becomes the perfect man in Christ, according to the charism of the Order”.⁴⁷

To be faithful to the Augustinian Recollect spirit, our formation always has to be kept up-to-date. It is adapted to the age, condition of life, and talents of the brothers and sisters. Formation should be the fruit of personal reflection, fraternal dialogue and sound instruction, especially regarding theology, ethics, and social teaching. This is given by the spiritual guide, and by members who have been particularly trained for this task.

The Augustinian Spirit

22. We have to ensure that we know about St Augustine and the other great personalities of the Order. We ought to study in depth their history and spirituality, as well as be aware of the Order's current situation. Only in this way will we be able to be in tune with the concerns of the Order and its plans, so that all our work is touched by its charism.

⁴³ Cf. *Constitutions of the Augustinian Recollects*, pp. 359-385

⁴⁴ Cf. 8,2

⁴⁵ *Constitutions of the Augustinian Recollects* 257

⁴⁶ *The Predestination of the Saints* 2,5

⁴⁷ Cf. *Constitutions of the Augustinian Recollects* 118

St Augustine invites us to search for the absolute truth and the absolute good, and by stirring up in the brother or sister an insatisfaction with what they are, helps them to achieve what they have yet to become.⁴⁸ The charism of Augustine makes us protagonists in our formation, encourages us to stay faithful to our commitment, to form our will in the freedom of love,⁴⁹ and to persevere to the end.⁵⁰

The local community has a two-fold mission: firstly, it must renew itself, ask itself about its faithfulness to God, build on its fraternity and on the internal and external witness it offers. In second place, it has to offer formation to the brothers and sisters, ensuring that it teaches, corrects, encourages, and shares everything necessary in the Lord, in an on-going programme of activity and periodic re-assessment. Alert to the voice of the Lord, the members are to encourage each other to respond better to their vocation as committed lay people in the building of the kingdom of God, within themselves and in the world, according to the Augustinian Recollect spirit and charism.

Prayer

The Rule of St Augustine invites us to persevere in prayer, which is adoration, presence, dialogue, and friendship with the Lord. Prayer gives purpose to our life and fills it with a supernatural content, keeping our hearts always turned towards God.⁵¹

With this purpose in mind, the Secular Augustinian Recollect cultivates the spirit and the practice of prayer with a continuous effort to do so. He or she ensures that daily meditation on the word of God, especially in the sacred liturgy, as well as spiritual reading chosen from the greatest Augustinian sources, causes the 'supreme advantage of knowing Christ'

(Phil. 3.8) to grow within them.

Liturgy

24. The liturgy, as a constant participation in the Paschal mystery, "is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows"⁵². It is, therefore, what most directly sets us burning for the love of God.⁵³

Its central point is the Eucharist, the greatness of which our Father extolled: "Sacrament of piety! Sign of unity! Bond of charity!"⁵⁴ In the Eucharistic celebration we ought discover the inspiration and the power to make of our lives a testament of communion with God and with men.

In so far as it is possible, therefore, the Secular Augustinian Recollect should share in the Eucharist on a daily basis. In the same way, praying Morning and Evening Prayer, he or she thereby joins in the praises of the Church directed in Christ to the Father. Whenever possible, the praying of Night Prayer should be added before going to bed. All this is "our daily bread: daily bread means listening every day to the readings in church; daily bread means also listening to hymns and singing them. These are necessary things for our journey as pilgrims"⁵⁵

Our brothers and sisters will show a great appreciation of the sacramental life of the Church, in particular the sacrament of Reconciliation. They will approach this frequently in a spirit of love and of conversion, knowing that by means of it we return to the Father

⁴⁸ Cf. Sermon 169, 15, 18

⁴⁹ Cf. *83 Various Questions*, 36, 2

⁵⁰ Cf. Letter 48, 2

⁵¹ Cf. *Rule* 1,2

⁵² Cf. *Constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium*: The sacred liturgy 10

⁵³ Cf. *Way of Life* 1,1

⁵⁴ Commentary on the Gospel of St John XXVI 13. Cf. *Constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium*: The sacred liturgy 47

⁵⁵ Cf. Sermon 57, 7

who first loved us (1 Jn. 4, 19), to Christ, who gave himself up for us (Gal. 2, 20; Eph. 5,25), and to the Holy Spirit, who has been poured out abundantly in our hearts (Tim. 3,6)

Devotions

25. Our spiritual life has Mary as mother and teacher. From her we learn to receive the Word and the mysteries of God, and to make ourselves instruments of their saving power. We therefore make an inward commitment to an intense Marian lifestyle, and we express this outwardly by honouring Mary on a daily basis through some devotional practice, whether privately or in community. This could be by praying the rosary, for example. Together with her, we remember St Joseph her spouse most chaste, the special protector of our Order.

As the sons and daughters of Augustine we are, we celebrate with special solemnity the feast of our Father. We also honour the other saints of the Order, amongst whom St Magdalena of Nagasaki particularly stands out as patroness of the Augustinian Recollect Fraternity.

VII. Governance and Joint Responsibility

The Local Fraternity

26. The local fraternity forms the basic structure of the Augustinian Recollect Secular Fraternity; within it, the Church as a community of love makes itself more concretely present. Requests from candidates to be admitted are to be made to a particular local fraternity.

Each fraternity is canonically erected by the competent authority, and is legally both a moral and juridical entity. It is to be run according to the Statutes, which will determine its structure and way of operating, together with the requirements for admission and for the involvement of its members. Each fraternity shall in addition draw up its own local Regulations. Each and every one of the members is responsible for the life of the fraternity and for the progress and development of the brothers and sisters. In addition, as the interior union must also display itself in material things, everyone is to contribute to the common expenses as their circumstances permit.

Organisation at a higher level

27. Nothing of what has been said prevents the establishment of other structures or units at a regional, national, or international level. On the contrary, encouraging communion and universality within the Church is fully in accordance with our spirituality.

Any such structures or units are to be set up according to the Statutes and with the approval of the Prior General, with the consent of his council. In conformity with these Statutes and with their own Regulations, these structures or units are to be under the direction of a president and his or her council.

Councils at the various levels are to solicit from the Order's superiors the appointment of suitable chaplains who have received the appropriate formation

Major Superiors

28. The major superiors, with their respective organs of government, have the mission of overseeing the smooth running of the Fraternity within their corresponding areas of authority. They are to consider the brothers and sisters as true members of the Order, the patrimony of which they, the members of the fraternity, are to promote. Visits by major superiors will be occasions of special importance in the life of the fraternities.

One of the foremost duties of the major superiors is to appoint a religious to the post of chaplain, someone both spiritually suitable and devoted to his task. This shall be at the request of each fraternity, conveyed to the major superior by the local prior.

It will also be a special task of major superiors to develop mutual relations between the friars and the fraternities, as well as encouraging the vitality of these relations by joint planning.

29. It is the responsibility of the Prior General, with the consent of his council, to interpret *The Rule of Life* and the Statutes of the fraternity on a day-to-day basis; their authentic interpretation, as well as any modifications to them, belongs to the Holy See. At their various levels, however, the fraternities have the right to present to the Prior General any amendments which they consider advisable

VIII. Under the Protection of Our Lady of Consolation

30. Right from its beginnings, our secular Fraternity has identified itself with St Augustine and St Monica in placing itself under the protection of Mary, the mother of the Lord. In her arms it has contemplated her son and, under the symbol of the cincture, has received from both of them all its riches. Our Lady of Consolation has been, and still is, a 'sign of sure hope and of comfort'.⁵⁶

Mary is the archetype of a life of faith; she is the perfect believer who opens herself to the Word of God. As model of faithfulness and of hope, Mary continues to 'cooperate with love in the birth of new believers in the church'.⁵⁷ As a figure of the Church, she shows us how to belong completely to Christ, and in him, to all people. Assumed into heaven, she continues to obtain for us the gifts of salvation: Grace, Consolation, Good Counsel, Assistance and Liberation'.⁵⁸

May the Lord give us the grace to observe all of this, moved by love as people in love with the spiritual beauty and the fraternal life together, not as servants under the law, but rather as free sons and daughters under grace.

(Rule 8,1)

⁵⁶ Constitution *Lumen Gentium*: the Church 68. Cf. *OAR Constitutions of the Augustinian Recollects*, 30

⁵⁷ Cf. *Holy Virginity* 6

⁵⁸ Cf. Constitution *Lumen Gentium*: the Church 62

STATUTES

of the Augustinian Recollect Secular Fraternity

“With regard to their structure and government, the fraternities are to observe their own statutes” (OAR Constitutions 114c)

I. Setting up a local fraternity

1. It is normally “the Prior General at the level of the whole Order, the priors provincial within their provinces, and local priors with the Prior Provincial’s permission” (OAR Constitutions 114) who can canonically erect the Augustinian Recollect secular fraternity. Official and reliable records of all related documentation is to be kept in the General Curia.

2. Members of a fraternity who have moved far from any of our religious houses may request the canonical erection of a fraternity in the place where they live, by the following procedure:

a) A request submitted to the geographically-closest major superior. This request is to be accompanied by:

- The name of the new fraternity.
- The name of the location and the diocese in which it is intended to set up the fraternity.

b) Once he has decided to give approval, the major superior will apply to the bishop of the diocese for the necessary authorisation; without such agreement, it will not be possible to canonically erect the new fraternity.

c) For all intents and purposes, the fraternity thereby erected shall be recognised within the Order.

d) Once erected, the fraternity shall draw up its Regulations which are to be presented to the corresponding major superior for his approval.

II. The Structure of the Fraternity

President and Council

3. The local fraternity, comprising the brothers and sisters who have made their promises, and having come together for the purpose, elects its president according to the procedure in the *Ritual* of the Fraternity (no. 80). Following this, and at the proposal of the president, it elects three or more councillors, but always an odd number. In conjunction with the spiritual adviser, it is their responsibility to appoint the person to take charge of formation.

The president, the three or more councillors and the person in charge of formation make up the council of the fraternity, which in turn appoints the secretary and the treasurer.

The council of the fraternity, together with the office-holders appointed by it, serve for three years, and can only be returned for one further consecutive three-year term of office. Prior permission from the major superior is needed for a third term of office.

Those members of the local fraternity who are present at the meeting and have completed at least three years since the renewal of their promises, are eligible to vote. Those members who have completed at least three years since the renewal of their promises -whether or not they are at the meeting- are eligible for election. The same requirement of seniority is demanded of those brothers and sisters who are appointed to office by the local council.

4. The principal functions of the local council are to:

- a) Encourage and nurture the brothers' and sisters' growth toward a maturity that is both Christian and Augustinian.
- b) Resolutely promote the fraternal way of life, and motivate the brothers and sisters towards the common good.
- c) Admit candidates to the period of probation.
- d) Convene the local community for the three-yearly elections.
- e) Refer to the superiors such matters as they deem to be requiring consideration and resolution by those superiors.
- f) Examine the accounts at least once a year and provide trustworthy information about them to the fraternity.
- g) Meet monthly, and whenever it may be necessary, to deal with matters concerning the fraternity, unless the council's own regulations determine otherwise.
- h) Should it be considered useful, nominate a vice-president from among the elected councillors.
- i) Appoint other local posts of leadership or of service. If such office-holders are not elected councillors, they shall attend council meetings as and when needed. They are to take part in its deliberations only in matters within their remit, with the right to have a say, but not to vote.
- j) Should it be considered appropriate, reduce the period of formation prior to the renewal of promises, but only for legitimate reasons and in

exceptional cases. For this, the consent of the spiritual adviser and the express authorisation of the major superior shall be necessary.

k) Receive and enrol within the local fraternity those brothers and sisters coming from other fraternities. The council must first have received a favourable report from the council of the fraternity from which the person has come.

l) Find a substitute for one of the members of the council, should it become necessary.

5. The principal duties of the president of the council are to:

a) Keep alive the spirit of friendship and communion between the brothers and sisters.

b) Encourage and promote the fraternity's apostolic activities.

c) Establish contact with those members of the fraternity who because of age, sickness, distance, or other serious reasons, are unable to participate normally in the activities of the fraternity.

d) Ensure observance of the *Rule of Life* and of the Statutes.

e) Convene meetings of the council and of the fraternity, preside at them, and direct them.

f) Coordinate events, and function according to the guidelines or terms of reference issued by their council.

g) Admit candidates to the probation period, with the consent of their council.

h) Together with their council, give consent for a candidate to be admitted to the renewal of promises, or to be expelled from the fraternity.

i) Represent the fraternity before other fraternities or institutions, and before the Order.

The Spiritual Adviser

6. Each fraternity shall normally count on the advice and guidance of a religious as spiritual adviser. He shall be appointed by the major superior, having listened to the opinion of the local council. In special cases, where the fraternity is located a long distance from a community of the Order, the

closest major superior will seek some qualified person to provide this service.

The role of the spiritual adviser is to:

- a) Offer spiritual encouragement to the fraternity, in particular to those who are in the formation period.
- b) Promote and inspire the Augustinian Recollect spirit in all its activities.
- c) Coordinate and preside at the fraternity's liturgical celebrations.
- d) Attend meetings of the council. His consent shall be required for admission to the renewal of promises and in the choice of the person in charge of formation.
- e) Ensure that he promotes solidarity between the local fraternity and the friars and nuns of the Order.

The Person Responsible for Formation

7. Amongst other things, it is the duty of the person in charge of formation to:

- a) Coordinate formation within the fraternity, in conjunction with the council and the spiritual adviser.
- b) Teach candidates about the demands of a committed Christian life .
- c) Explain and bring to life the Rule of St Augustine, the *Rule of life* and the Statutes of the Fraternity, as well as the subjects making up the process of initial formation.
- d) Present to the council a report on the candidates before their admission to renewal of promises.
- e) Stand in for the president in cases of absence or necessity, should there not be a vice-president.

The Secretary

8. The principal duties of the secretary are to:

- a) Keep and organise the fraternity's archive.
- b) Write up the minutes of the official acts of the council and of the fraternity.

c) Either personally or with the help of another brother or sister, keep up-to-date the books of the council and of the fraternity: the records of notable events, meetings, the deceased, promises, and finances.

The Treasurer

9. The principal functions of the treasurer are to:

- a) Maintain and administer the fraternity's goods.
- b) Keep the accounts for the fraternity's funds.
- c) Present a half-yearly report to the council, as well as an annual report to the major superior.

10. Other duties and functions, both of the president and of the council, may be set out in the Regulations of each fraternity.

Regulations

11. Each fraternity is to have its own Regulations, which are to be drawn up by the council and approved by an absolute majority of the brothers and sisters.

Amongst other things, the Regulations must deal with:

- a) The particular way of living the *Rule of Life* and the Statutes within the local community.
- b) Spiritual, apostolic, and social commitments, both as a fraternity and as individual members.
- c) The frequency of meetings, both general meetings and those of the council.
- d) The responsibilities of the posts that have been set up by the council, as well as the length of the terms of office of post-holders.
- e) The duty of promoting the fraternity, and the way of doing so.
- f) The date of the compulsory renewal of promises.
- g) The design and use of external signs of belonging to the fraternity.
- h) The ways of practising devotion to Our Lady, to St Joseph, and to the saints of the Order.

III The National Council and Assembly

The Council

12. It is highly recommended that national councils should be set up in the different countries. The national council is elected by the national assembly for a period of three years. It is made up of a national president and the members and post-holders considered to be advisable.

It is to meet at least once a year, and whenever the fulfilment of its duties demands.

Its principal responsibilities are to:

a) Promote communication and coordination between the fraternities within the country in question.

b) Organise meetings and activities.

c) Maintain contact and communion with other national councils and with the Order's organs of government.

d) Put forward to the respective superior the names of religious as possible spiritual advisers.

The Assembly

13. The national council is responsible for convoking the assembly, which all the brothers and sisters from the geographical area in question may attend. The president of the national council presides over it.

Its principal responsibilities are to:

a) Give impetus to our knowledge, our shared life, and our particular identity.

b) Reflect on the various aspects of the life and mission of the secular Augustinian Recollect.

c) Draw up plans and adopt joint initiatives between the different fraternities.

d) Evaluate the administration of the outgoing council and elect the members of the new one.

14. The assembly is to be held at least every three years, for the express purpose of evaluating the administration of the outgoing council and to elect a new president.

In the election of a new president, all the brothers and sisters attending the assembly shall have the right to vote. The election is to be carried out by secret ballot by means of voting slips, in accordance with N°80 of our *Ritual*. Following this, the new president shall propose to the assembly the election of the council members and office holders that are deemed necessary (*Ritual* N°81)

IV The Path of Life within the Fraternity

Joining and leaving

15. Anyone of the Christian faithful can be a member of the Augustinian Recollect secular fraternity, providing that they meet the following requirements:

a) They have determined to live profoundly the vocation to holiness received in baptism, and feel a call to the Augustinian Recollect charism.

b) They have no link, by means of a life-long commitment, to any other religious family or institute of consecrated life.

c) They have reached the age indicated in the Regulations of the fraternity.

16. The admission of a member to the fraternity, as well as their departure, and also the expulsion of a member, are the responsibility of the major superior, with the local prior acting as his usual delegate, and with the advice of the local council. Should a brother or sister wish to leave the fraternity, they are to submit a written request to the local council, which will issue its report and act as a channel of communication between the major superior and the person concerned. It will pass on the request to the major superior, and return to the petitioner the decision reached.

It also falls to the major superior to receive members who are on their own or independent. He will assign them to a particular fraternity, the president of which will take charge of establishing and maintaining contact with them. These brothers and sisters are to follow the *Rule of Life* and these Statutes in their entirety, with the exception of that which deals with meetings.

17. Brothers and sisters who have moved far away from their own fraternity:

a) Continue to be full members of the secular Augustinian Recollect Order.

b) May request the major superior to transfer their membership to another fraternity, the request being directed through the local council of the place where they had lived previously.

c) The president of their original fraternity will make sure of establishing and keeping up regular contact with these members, and they in turn shall maintain contact with the fraternity to which they are assigned.

Probationary Period and the Renewal of Promises

18. Before the renewal of their baptismal promises, the candidate is to go through a period of formation of not less than one year, under the direction of the person in charge of formation.

19. During this probationary period, the candidate must:

a) Live out their Christian vocation more intensely, particularly by fulfilling their commitments and by dedication to prayer.

b) Consider whether they will be capable of fulfilling what is demanded by the fraternity.

c) Get to know well the Gospel, the *Rule* of St Augustine, the *Rule of Life* and the Statutes of the fraternity, as well as all the subjects making up the period of initial formation.

d) Take part in the meetings and other activities of the fraternity, in conformity with the person in charge of formation

20. Having completed the probationary period and obtained the consent of the council and the agreement of the spiritual adviser, as well as the approval of the major superior or his usual delegate, the local prior, the candidate shall renew their baptismal promises before the responsible authority.

The formula used is as follows:

Trusting in the grace of the Holy Spirit, and having implored the protection of the Virgin Mary and the intercession of our father St Augustine, I solemnly renew the promises of my baptism, and before you, my brothers and sisters, I freely promise before God to direct myself toward the perfection of the Christian life according to the Rule of Life of the secular Augustinian Recollects and the spirit of the Rule of St Augustine. With filial trust I commend my promises to Mary, Queen and Mother of Consolation.

Having renewed the promises, the candidate becomes a full member of the Augustinian Recollect Fraternity.

