

**Constitutions of the Society of the Sacred Heart**  
**Approved January 1, 1982**

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**1.**

The Society of the Sacred Heart  
is an Institute of pontifical right.  
With the same love  
which Saint Madeleine Sophie had for the Church,  
and like all other religious institutes,  
we recognise that each one of us,  
by her vow of obedience,  
is bound to obey the commands of the Pope.

## ***END AND MISSION***

### ***OF THE SOCIETY OF THE SACRED HEART***

**2.**

God's mercy and faithfulness  
shine forth in a world  
wounded by sin.  
He has sent His beloved Son  
who became one of us, and gave up His life,  
to set us free, to make us a new creation  
and to gather together all things in Himself  
for the glory of His Father.

**3.**

This mission is carried on through the Church,  
the People of God,  
until the Kingdom in all its fullness  
has come.  
The Society of the Sacred Heart shares in this mission  
by making known the revelation of God's love,  
whose source and symbol is for us the Heart of Christ.

**4.**

By our charism, we are consecrated  
to **GLORIFYING THE HEART OF JESUS:**  
we answer His call  
to discover and reveal His love  
letting ourselves be transformed by His Spirit  
so as to live united and conformed to Him,  
and through our love and service  
to radiate the very love of His Heart.

**5.**

Through the Eucharist we enter into  
the mystery of the open side of Jesus.  
In our daily life, the Eucharist celebrates  
His death and resurrection,  
the reality which lies at the heart of the sufferings  
and hopes of the human family.  
Through the Eucharist we are drawn into the gift of Jesus  
to His Father

for the life of the world,  
and in His Body we are gathered into one.

## 6.

We commit ourselves to follow Christ  
by consecrating our lives  
through the profession of the vows of obedience,  
poverty and chastity.  
Rooted in Him through contemplation  
we wish to be women who create communion.  
By the witness of our love and apostolic dedication,  
by sharing the life of our peoples  
whose cultures are rich and varied,  
our communities throughout the world  
help to further communion in Christ.

## 7.

We participate in the mission of the Church  
through the service of education  
which is our way of continuing the work of Christ.  
This service of education and instruction is directed  
chiefly towards the young  
and those who bear within them the future of the world.  
Caught up as we are in the desires of His Heart,  
we want people to grow in dignity, as human beings  
and as children of God.  
Our starting point is the Gospel  
with all that it demands from us of love, forgiveness  
and justice,  
and of solidarity with those who are poor  
and rejected by the world.

## 8.

For us, life, community, apostolic service,  
all spring from our union and conformity  
with the Heart of Jesus.  
This grace of vocation  
is a way of conversion and of apostolic fruitfulness.  
The pierced Heart of Jesus  
opens our being to the depths of God  
and to the anguish of humankind.  
Jesus draws us into His movement of adoration  
of the Father  
and love for all, especially those who are poor.  
We keep returning to this word of Jesus,  
as to a light which gradually transfigures us in His image:  
"Learn of Me, because I am gentle and humble of heart."  
(Mt. 11:29).

## 9.

Mary, woman of faith among the People of God,  
lives close to us,  
as she does to everything that radiates the life of her Son.  
Our Society entrusts itself in a special way to her  
whose heart is united and conformed to that of Jesus,  
so that she may lead us to Him.



## ***SERVICE IN THE CHURCH***

### **10.**

We are sent by the Church  
to communicate the love of the Heart of Jesus.  
In Him all find their true growth as persons  
and the way towards reconciliation with one another.  
This we believe; this we want to proclaim.

### **11.**

Saint Madeleine Sophie chose to express this conviction  
through the service of education, especially of the young.  
Faithful to her inspiration, and, like her, open to new  
situations,  
we make her desire our own:

- that people become ever more aware of truth, of love  
and of freedom
- that they discover the significance of their lives,  
and devote themselves to others
- that they take part creatively in the common effort to  
transform the world
- that they be enabled to encounter the love of Jesus
- that they let their lives be shaped by an active faith.

### **12.**

The urgency of the world's needs,  
the call of our local Church,  
impel us to respond creatively, in conformity with  
the spirit of the Society.  
It is, therefore, at provincial level,  
according to the diversity of our cultures,  
that we discern in what places and by what concrete means  
we are to carry out our service of education.

### **13.**

Conscious that what we do, we do together,  
and remembering a tradition  
marked by a love for young people and missionary spirit,  
we, sent by our superiors, carry out  
this service of education:

- especially in the work of teaching and formation
- in other activities for human development and the  
promotion of justice
- in pastoral work and guidance in the faith.

Activities within our own communities  
contribute to the apostolic effectiveness  
of the whole group.

Wherever we are sent,

whatever our work may be,  
our lives will be inspired by the love of the Heart of Jesus  
and the desire of making Him known, expressed in:

- a concern for the growth of the whole person
- a thirst for working towards justice and peace in the world in response to the cry of the poor
- a passion to proclaim the Gospel.

#### **14.**

Our service of education is carried out  
in a genuine relationship of mutual interaction,  
where each person both receives and gives  
so that all may grow together.

Of its nature, our service of education  
means creating community  
among ourselves and with others.  
It asks of us generous commitment,  
serious on-going formation  
and a broad critical vision of the world,  
enlightened by faith.

#### **15.**

Contemplating Jesus, we learn  
from His attitudes and responses  
how, in all our relationships,  
to witness to the liberating power of His love.  
In faith and simplicity we meet the other  
as a unique person,  
having respect and affection for each,  
and a humility which enables us to be receptive.  
Always, we are filled with hope in our encounters,  
sure of God's power at work in us all.

#### **16.**

As members of the same Body,  
through apostolic prayer,  
mutual support and work undertaken by all,  
each religious, each community,  
has a role and shares the responsibility  
of our mission in the Church,  
for the glory of the Heart of Jesus.

### ***PRAYER***

#### **17.**

"The spirit of the Society  
is essentially based upon prayer and the interior life  
since we cannot glorify the adorable  
Heart of Jesus worthily

except inasmuch as we apply ourselves  
to study His interior dispositions  
in order to unite and conform ourselves to them."  
(Abridged Plan 5).

### **18.**

Jesus calls us  
to a personal encounter with Him.  
He wants to make known to us  
the feelings and the preferences of His Heart.

### **19.**

In the Gospel  
through His words, His attitudes,  
His relationships with people,  
His way of relating to all created things,  
we discover His Heart  
wholly given to the Father and to all people.

### **20.**

In prayer we come to Him  
with everything that touches our life,  
with the sufferings and hopes of humanity.  
We learn to remain in silence  
and poverty of heart before Him.  
In the free gift of ourselves  
we learn to adore and to abide in His love.

### **21.**

The Spirit dwelling within us  
gradually transforms us, enabling us  
through His power to remove whatever  
hinders His action.  
The Spirit unites and conforms us to Jesus  
and makes us sensitive to His presence  
within ourselves, in others and in all that happens.  
Thus we learn to contemplate reality  
and to experience it with His Heart,  
to commit ourselves to the service of the Kingdom  
and to grow in love:  
"Have this mind among yourselves  
which was in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 2:5).

### **22.**

This contemplative attitude permeates our whole being,  
helping us to live ever more united to Christ  
in our relationships, our tasks and our ministry;  
it becomes a powerful force  
of conversion and transformation for mission.  
In welcoming God's word  
Mary gave Christ to the world.  
In receiving the life of Jesus  
we give ourselves with Him so that all may have life.

### **23.**

Prayer, the contemplative outlook on the world,  
union with Christ in daily living  
make us grow in the interior life,  
so that in all circumstances we seek  
to glorify the Heart of Jesus.

### **24.**

The Society's call to contemplation,  
a compelling love written in our hearts by the Spirit,  
makes us seek and cherish  
prolonged times of prayer.  
Our relationship with Christ is nourished  
by the study of Scripture, by reading,  
reflection and daily examen,  
all of which are necessary for the deepening  
of our inner life;  
this relationship is further strengthened  
by periodic renewal and an annual retreat.

### **25.**

Within this common vocation,  
each one receives her own unique call.  
We respond to it personally  
in and through our diverse cultures.  
The demands of mission and our spiritual background  
necessarily influence rhythms and forms of prayer.  
Desiring to keep God at the centre of our lives  
we are drawn to give one hour each day to prayer,  
without this time being considered in any sense a limit.  
Each religious finds her own rhythm of prayer  
and will decide how best she is to be faithful  
to what Christ asks of her and of the Society.  
She will discern the method and style of her prayer-life  
with a person of her own choice,  
with the agreement of the provincial or someone  
delegated by her.  
The Society offers its members the means necessary  
for their life of prayer, according to their needs:

among others

- spiritual direction
- reflection with a religious of the Congregation
- help from the community
- the assurance of the necessary time and  
space for prayer.

We are invited to say the rosary  
and to adopt the forms of Marian devotion  
proper to the country in which we live.

### **26.**

The community takes to heart the need  
to create a climate  
which favours experience of God,

sharing among ourselves and with others.  
Each day our life together is strengthened  
by community prayer.  
We share the Word of God,  
say the Morning and Evening Prayer of the Church  
unless we have been dispensed  
from this by competent authority,  
and adopt forms of prayer which help us  
to grow in faith, hope and love.  
The Feast of the Sacred Heart is for us  
a time to renew and deepen our common spirituality.  
On that day, in a spirit of thanksgiving,  
we renew our vows in union with the whole Society.

**27.**

Knowing our weakness  
and our involvement in the sin of the world,  
we participate often in the sacrament of reconciliation.  
We joyfully welcome God's mercy  
which renews our hearts  
and moves us to restore communion.  
We prepare ourselves for this sacrament  
by the daily examen. (Canon 664)

**28.**

Whether we pray alone or with others,  
our prayer is that of the People of God.  
In the local church  
we celebrate the mysteries of the life of Christ,  
the feasts of Mary and of the saints,  
aware that we are members of one Body, the Church,  
which worships God in prayer and song.

**29.**

The Eucharist is the culmination of this ecclesial prayer.  
As far as we can, we participate in it actively every day.  
By receiving the Body of Christ,  
we unite ourselves to His prayer of thanksgiving  
and to His offering of Himself to the Father  
for the life of the world.  
Gradually, the Eucharist makes us become more truly  
Body of Christ, broken to give birth to a new humanity.

***APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY***

**30.**

Gathered together in community in the name  
of Jesus Christ,  
we are sent to proclaim, by our very lives and activities,  
the Good News of the Kingdom.  
From His Heart we draw the love  
which enables us to live in communion, among ourselves

and with others.  
Whatever the service entrusted to us,  
we stand together, united in our common mission.

### **31.**

Through our mutual trust,  
the sharing of our prayer and life-experiences,  
through our love and loyalty towards one another,  
we come to find real joy in living together,  
welcoming our gifts and our differences  
of culture and mentality.  
Our desire to live in mutual love  
helps us to overcome our egoism,  
and to work through our moments of tension,  
open to forgiveness and reconciliation.

### **32.**

We want to be discerning communities,  
living in awareness and sensitivity to the Spirit.  
This attitude makes us responsive, in our mission,  
to the sufferings and aspirations of our sisters and brothers.  
It helps us to respond better to the calls of God  
in the world around us, and it enlightens us  
to make choices more true to the spirit of the Gospel.

### **33.**

Our life together is a celebration of the paschal mystery.  
As such it calls for a certain self-restraint and asceticism  
which places the needs of others before our own:  
a life which, through prayer and conversion of heart,  
in accordance with the discipline of the Church,  
unites us with Christ's offering to His Father;  
a life of joy in which we celebrate together  
significant moments and feasts which remind us  
of Christ's presence and steadfast love for His people.

### **34.**

We wish to live simply  
so as to express our solidarity with those who are poor.  
Openness, welcome and sharing with others  
will make the community a sign of communion.  
We help one another with simplicity, discretion and realism  
to live out our relationships with family and friends.  
No matter how important the time  
spent with others may be,  
we shall respect the demands of living  
in an apostolic community,  
sincerely seeking to be faithful to all our commitments.  
We shall reserve some parts of the house for the religious  
and we shall create in our community life space for silence,  
times and places conducive to reflection, prayer and renewal.  
To be better fitted to serve,  
we take responsibility for our on-going formation  
and use the means of social communication  
with prudence, discretion and a critical sense.

**35.**

We are particularly attentive to our sisters who are sick trying to ease their suffering.  
Through the Sacrament of the Sick,  
they experience the strength and peace of God.  
Our elderly sisters by their wisdom and their tenderness bear witness to God's faithfulness and the joy of belonging to Him.  
Each one receives the encouragement and the affection of the community,  
enabling us all to live out our mission to the end.

**36.**

All through life we show our care for one another,  
in full activity as in sickness,  
in situations which make us painfully aware of our helplessness,  
and at the moment of death.  
When one of our sisters is called to the fullness of life,  
we confide her to her Creator in our prayers  
and in the celebration of the Eucharist  
with hope and faith in the resurrection.

**37.**

The Eucharistic presence in our communities is a constant reminder that Christ is the centre of our life,  
inviting us to adore Him individually and in community.  
Through the Eucharist we are committed to live united among ourselves,  
to build communion in a divided and unjust world,  
and to give ourselves wholeheartedly to others.

**38.**

The local superior is at the service of the life and mission of the community in a relationship of mutual trust with her sisters.  
She is careful to foster communion and co-responsibility,  
and to encourage enthusiasm for the apostolate.  
She sees to it that community discernment is exercised;  
she herself then takes final responsibility for decisions.  
With love and simplicity  
she fulfils her service of authority and her role as animator.

**39.**

Each community draws up its plan,  
presents it to the provincial and her council for approval  
and is accountable to them once a year.  
Periodic evaluations of this plan  
help us as a community to review together the quality  
and integrity of our life.

**40.**

Communication with other communities and provinces  
makes us aware of the needs of the whole Body

and more ready to serve wherever we are sent.  
Wherever we are, we participate actively  
in the life and mission of the Society;  
we remain united to all our sisters  
in the joy of being called and sent forth  
to love as Jesus has loved us.

### ***CONSECRATION BY VOWS***

#### **41.**

Christ invites us  
to enter into the dispositions of His Heart.  
Coming to dwell in a world  
which is searching for the meaning and true value of life,  
the Word incarnate opens to us a new way  
of strength in weakness,  
freedom in service,  
life through death.  
Called like Mary to follow Christ  
in a life conformed to His,  
we hand over our capacity to relate  
to persons and things.  
By the power of His Spirit,  
Christ transforms this capacity for the service  
of mission.  
In simplicity of heart,  
which looks to God alone,  
we desire only what He wishes,  
without self-seeking or self-interest.

#### **42.**

Our loving response to this gratuitous call of Christ  
is expressed by the public profession  
of the evangelical counsels,  
through the vows of obedience, poverty, chastity  
and a fourth vow, education of youth,  
in the Society of the Sacred Heart, in conformity  
with its Constitutions.  
Relying on God's faithful love  
and supported by the communion of our sisters,  
we ask and promise with joy  
to give ourselves wholeheartedly to Him until death  
and to glorify the Heart of Jesus  
according to our Institute.

#### **43.**

God receives this offering made in the Church  
and unites it to that of His Son.  
He consecrates us with Him and in Him for the Kingdom.  
By the Eucharist, Christ renews and deepens this covenant,  
sign of the Covenant of God with His Church.  
Through our daily life this becomes a reality  
until Christ comes again.



**44.**

This commitment by the vows  
binding each religious to Christ,  
unites us all in love as members of the Society  
so as to constitute but one body.

**45.**

As a sign of our consecration and as a witness to poverty,  
we wear the dress of the Institute, which is to be poor,  
modest and distinguishable from secular dress.  
Its form will be laid down by the general chapter  
and described in the Supplement.  
In individual cases for serious reasons  
and for as long as these reasons last,  
the superior general can authorize some sisters  
to wear different clothing,  
but always such as is poor and modest.

***OBEDIENCE*****46.**

Contemplating Jesus,  
whose food was to do the Father's will  
and who became obedient unto death,  
we learn to obey as He did,  
and to give our lives for others.  
We surrender to God in faith  
so as to be united with Jesus and to continue His mission.

**47.**

Through our simple and loving obedience  
we grow in responsibility, in joy, and in willingness to serve.  
This openness to the action of the Spirit purifies our hearts  
and leads us to the liberty of the children of God.  
Sometimes we shall experience darkness and struggle,  
and it is then that we enter more deeply into  
the mystery of the cross.

**48.**

The way of obedience is a way of discernment  
intimately linked to our call to contemplation.  
We live attuned to the Spirit,  
and together we seek  
to have a contemplative outlook on all reality,  
in order to discover the will of God and make it our own.  
Discernment is then both an attitude and a process  
by which when necessary, we reach a decision  
for which the final responsibility belongs to the superior.

**49.**

Following the example of Jesus  
who in obeying His Father accepted human mediation,  
each one of us, exercising her personal responsibility,

puts her liberty at the service of the mission of the Society.  
We choose in faith and mutual trust  
to accept the authority of superiors.  
By welcoming such mediations we let go of our egoism  
as an expression of our love for Jesus Christ.  
It is through personal and community discernment,  
through dialogue with those in authority,  
that together we may find God.

## **50.**

In this spirit, by the vow of obedience,  
each one of us commits herself  
to obey the decisions of superiors,  
according to the Constitutions.

## **51.**

Our obedience is rooted in daily life.  
We expend our energies and exercise our creativity  
in the community to which we are sent,  
and in the service entrusted to us.  
We let ourselves be challenged by one another,  
by the local Church and by the world around us.  
We respond generously  
with fidelity to the spirit of our Institute.  
We exercise co-responsibility, making our own  
the decisions taken in common.  
We obey our superiors with simplicity  
and we serve one another  
after the example of Jesus who came not to be served  
but to serve.

## **52.**

Each of us confides herself to the Society  
in trust, availability and readiness to serve.  
Participating actively in the life of  
our local, provincial and international communities  
we are all accountable for the mission of the Society.

## **53.**

Obedience is the bond  
which unites us all in the Heart of Jesus  
as we seek to fulfil God's plan of love.

## ***POVERTY***

## **54.**

In total confidence and dependence on His Father,  
Christ emptied Himself in love  
to become one of us.  
He teaches us to be detached from all possessiveness,  
to receive everything gratefully as the Father's gift,  
to become free with regard to riches of every kind,  
in order to be completely available for His service.  
By our vow of poverty we are more deeply committed  
to this way of life.

**55.**

Through humble prayer and through  
contemplating Jesus in His poverty,  
both in the Gospel and in the poor of today's world,  
we learn to open our hearts to the needy,  
to be at their service,  
to enter into their aspirations towards human dignity  
and to make this cause our own.  
We discover what they teach us about the Gospel  
and we recognize in them the face of the suffering Christ.  
Wherever we are, we commit ourselves  
to directing our energies, our resources and our choices  
towards the search for a more just and caring society.

**56.**

Within a Church which longs to be poor and to serve,  
our communities seek  
to be places of joyful sharing and open-hearted welcome  
where all can feel at home.  
Our life style--housing, food, clothing and recreation--  
while allowing the community to fulfil its apostolic  
commitments,  
will be simple and unpretentious.  
We shall strive to reduce our needs,  
to have less in order to share.  
Upon being sent by the provincial  
we assume the demands of serious work,  
and are faithful to the mission proper to our Institute.  
When helplessness, deprivation or insecurity  
in life bring us to greater poverty,  
we shall have the joy of following Jesus more closely  
in His poverty.

**57.**

In this spirit, each one commits herself  
by the vow of poverty,  
to live Jesus' attitude of voluntary deprivation  
and His filial self-surrender to the Father:  
to administer nothing as her own,  
to give to the Society whatever she receives  
by way of salaries, pensions, remunerations, gifts,  
to receive from the Society whatever she may need,  
neither using nor disposing of it independently.  
This community of goods  
lived out in mutual trust and respect for persons,  
deepens our union. (Canons 600, 668)

**58.**

With that desire of possessing nothing  
which characterized the beginnings of our Society,  
the religious of the Sacred Heart,  
at the time of their perpetual profession renounce  
their patrimonial goods  
in favour of those to whom they wish to give them.  
In all these matters,  
they take advice from a disinterested person,

acting always with a view to union in their family  
and the needs of the world's poor. (Canon 668:4)

**59.**

The Society may possess and administer goods  
in view of its mission  
and for the support of its members.  
It will not accumulate them unnecessarily  
and will put them at the service of others  
in an attitude of sharing,  
aware that the gifts of creation belong to all.

**60.**

The fruit of this spirit of poverty,  
which is so essential to the Society,  
will be an attraction for the simplicity, joy and freedom of  
heart  
to which God wants to lead us.  
Limited and weak as we are  
we want to celebrate the love of Him who proclaimed:  
"Blessed are you poor,  
for yours is the Kingdom of God" (Lk. 6:20).

**CHASTITY**

**61.**

Jesus calls us to love Him with a preferential love.  
A life of chastity for the sake of the Kingdom  
is a gratuitous gift of God which surpasses  
human understanding.  
From this gift comes the strength  
which liberates our heart to respond freely to Jesus  
and to direct all our energies towards mission.  
With the joy of finding our treasure,  
we welcome this gift in faith.

**62.**

Our union and conformity with the Heart of Jesus  
widens our capacity to love and to let ourselves be loved.  
It is from Him that we learn  
to look upon the world as the work of the Creator's love,  
to love without being possessive,  
to be concerned for others and to be bearers of His life.  
In a world where so often love is exploited and devalued,  
and many human relationships are scarred  
by deep wounds,  
we seek to reveal  
the strength and tenderness of Jesus' love for each one.

**63.**

Sure of God's fidelity,  
we commit ourselves by vow  
to perfect chastity in a life of consecrated celibacy  
for the sake of the Kingdom.

**64.**

Community life supports and strengthens this commitment.  
The conviction of being gathered together in the name of Jesus,  
the quality of our affection,  
our openness to others,  
the atmosphere of joy and generosity,  
help our communities to become humble but real signs of that all-inclusive love whose source is the Heart of Jesus.

**65.**

We draw from Him a new affection for our family, a love that is true, tender and faithful, bearing in mind the availability demanded of us by our commitment to the Kingdom.

**66.**

Friendship is a precious and demanding gift which may be given to aid us along the way of love and faith.  
It will be all the more genuine in the measure that it opens us to community and mission.  
At the same time, it recalls God's faithful love. Our union with Jesus will give transparency and joy to our friendships.

**67.**

Thus, to live our vow entails a long process of personal integration which requires on-going understanding and acceptance of self.  
Serious apostolic commitment, sharing in the joys and sufferings of others, the experience of being alone with God, give depth and meaning to our gift of self.

**68.**

There are times when we feel more keenly our own weakness and the sacrifices demanded by this way of life;  
and so we keep a watch over our senses and accept the austerities and the loneliness of our consecrated life as a way to deepen union with the Heart of Jesus and to become more outgoing towards others.

**69.**

Our happiness, our peace, our whole way of being will be a sign of Him whom we have met and who comes every day of our lives to fulfil God's Covenant with His people.

**FORMATION AS RELIGIOUS**  
**OF THE SACRED HEART**

**70.**

To live the charism of Saint Madeleine Sophie, as it is expressed in these Constitutions, requires a formation that is at once strong, dynamic and continuous. This formation takes place in the light of faith, and it is rooted in our everyday experience, and carried on through a network of relationships.

**71.**

Community is the principal place of our formation insofar as we experience support and challenge to grow both as persons and as religious of the Sacred Heart.

**72.**

Adapted to the capabilities of each one and directed towards responding to the challenges of the world, formation envisages the development of our spiritual, human and apostolic life. The harmonious growth of the person presupposes an understanding of the affective life, which influences our whole way of knowing, loving and acting. This maturity is acquired gradually: it will be enriched by competent guidance, sincere relationships both within the community and outside it, and with the help of human sciences. A certain discipline will allow us to find the balance between work, rest and relaxation, between relationships with others and solitude, a balance which is essential to personal integration.

**73.**

Aware that it is always the Spirit who transforms us, we take seriously the responsibility of collaborating with the work of God throughout our lives. The Society offers us specific means to ensure this.

**74.**

While all our formation is inspired by these orientations, the initial stages of religious life are more structured. These are the stages when:  
The call to religious life in the Society is verified;  
the novice is initiated into her new life;  
the young professed deepens the living out of her first commitment.

**75.**

When women come to join us  
to live our religious life,  
we share with them  
the wealth of our living tradition.  
Thus the joy of living our mission in the  
Church is renewed and strengthened.

***INITIAL FORMATION***

***THE CANDIDATE***

**76.**

The purpose of this stage is to enable the candidate and the Society to know each other. In this way a call to our Congregation can be better discerned.

**77.**

The provincial, with the consent of her council, admits the candidate to the pre-novitiate, and with the mistress of novices establishes the relevant procedures. This stage will last at least six months and not longer than two years.

**78.**

The candidate will have regular contact with one of our religious, a professed of perpetual vows, named by the provincial. This religious, who helps the candidate to deepen her Christian life, discerns with her the truth of her call to the religious life, her motives, and her ability to respond to this call according to the spirit of the Society.

**79.**

The most important condition for entry to this stage is personal love for Jesus Christ and the desire to serve Him in the apostolic religious life.

In addition, the Society looks for the following qualities in the candidate:

- an attraction for the spirit and mission of the Society
- generosity, availability and readiness of heart
- a level of education normal for the country, which will ensure a sufficient foundation for her formation and allow for a further development
- a balanced judgment, and, appropriate to her age, a

capacity for reflection, an ability to take decisions and to assume her responsibilities

- a certain capacity for forming stable relationships and for accepting solitude, both of which are needed for living in community
- the physical and psychological health necessary for an apostolic life.

These qualities will be considered throughout this stage and evaluated before the candidate enters the novitiate.

For the rest the Common Law of the Church will be followed.

## **80.**

Having discerned her call, the candidate asks in writing to be admitted to the novitiate.

The provincial, with the consent of her council and after the necessary consultations, takes the decision whether or not to admit the candidate.

The minimum age for entry to the novitiate is nineteen.

## ***THE NOVICE***

### **81.**

The novice is introduced to the apostolic religious life of the Society of the Sacred Heart.

The novitiate is the time for the novices to ponder in faith the call received, and to prepare for the first religious commitment.

### **82.**

The Society receives the novice with her gifts and her limitations and offers her ways of responding freely and responsibly to her vocation.

### **83.**

Novices are welcomed into an apostolic community designated for this stage of formation and established as a novitiate by the superior general with the consent of her council.

Their relationship with their sisters is simple and loving, accepting from one another both help and challenge, learning to forgive and to be forgiven. They take their part in the household tasks and services of community life. In community prayer and liturgy, they seek to express their faith and share their own experiences.

The mistress of novices, responsible for their formation under the direction of the provincial, is a member of this community.



**84.**

Faith and mutual trust will be the basis of the relationship between the novice and the mistress of novices. Regular visits with the mistress of novices will help the novice to take in hand her own formation. Together they reflect upon her prayer, her way both of understanding and beginning to live the vows, her relationships and her apostolic experiences. Through this helpful guidance the novice will find a sympathetic understanding and encouragement which will help her to know herself better and deepen her insight into her vocation to union and conformity with the Heart of Jesus.

**85.**

The novices make a serious effort to root their lives in prayer, in order to enter into the spirit of the Society, which is essentially based on prayer and the interior life. Daily reflection on their own lives and on all that happens will lead them to recognize God's presence and action. Spiritual reading and meditation on the Word of God help them to contemplate the attitudes of Christ which will transform their whole being and their activity.

According to the living tradition of the Society, an hour and a half daily is normally given to personal prayer.

The Eucharist is at the heart of life in the novitiate. Through the celebration of this mystery the novices will gradually understand the grace of their vocation: giving their lives for love. The Eucharistic presence is a continual invitation to the prayer of adoration and offering which will become the attitudes of their whole lives.

**86.**

The novices study our Constitutions, our history and the current orientations of the Society in its varied apostolic commitments throughout the world. Scripture, the theology of religious life and the documents of the Church will provide a solid basis for their formation, and give them a context of faith within which to view today's world.

**87.**

Not only in prayer, but also in everything they do, the novices learn to unite themselves to the Heart of Jesus. Times of silence and of solitude will help them remain in an attitude of listening, which in turn will lead them to become honest in their relationship with God, with others and with themselves.

The style of life in the novitiate should also allow the possibility of their making responsible choices. Through self-discipline personally assumed, and in an atmosphere of freedom, calm and joy, the novice will learn to keep a balance between work, rest, prayer, relationships and relaxation. They should take reasonable care of their health for the sake of better service.

**88.**

So as to prepare to follow Jesus Christ in the religious

life, the novices will practice living the vows, according to the spirit of the Society. Progressively, they will enter into the following of Jesus in His obedience. Within the framework of the formation programme, established by the competent authority, they share in the drawing-up and evaluation of the plan for community life as it directly concerns themselves; they assume corporate decisions which they might not always have made of their own accord; they are introduced to the process of making their personal and community evaluation and of being accountable.

Called to commit themselves to consecrated chastity, the novices will increasingly centre their lives on Jesus Christ. Since the novitiate is a time set apart for reflection, it allows them to grow into a new relationship with their families and friends. They discover the wealth of their own affectivity and extend towards others an affection which is honest, tender and faithful.

In a spirit of poverty, they begin to live community of goods and to open their hearts in order to share with others, and, by preference, with those who are most deprived.

## **89.**

Apostolic experiences such as service in the local Church, youth activities, ministry with the poor and less fortunate, are part of formation at this stage. In working with their sisters and others, the novices will learn to have both the attitudes and the heart of an educator.

Apart from the twelve months laid down by Canon Law, the provincial can, with the consent of her council, give the novice the opportunity to have one or more periods of apostolic work outside the novitiate community. The length of time devoted to such experiences is to be carefully regulated and the experiences themselves regularly evaluated with the mistress of novices, the chief criterion being the formative value for the novice. During her absence from the novitiate community, she is guided by a religious approved by the provincial.

In all this the Common Law of the Church is to be observed.

## **90.**

During this time when they are reflecting on their call, the novices learn that Mary, the Mother of Jesus who keeps all things in her heart, is close to them. She teaches them to welcome the Word of God, and go forth to announce it with joy.

## **91.**

The novitiate lasts two years. In certain cases the provincial, with the consent of her council, may prolong it for not more than six months. Towards the end of this stage, the novice asks the provincial in writing to be admitted to temporary vows. The novice makes an eight day retreat before her first commitment.

## **92.**

The mistress of novices must be a professed of

perpetual vows. She is nominated by the provincial.

**93.**

The primary task of the mistress of novices is to help and encourage the novices to live a true and loving relationship with Jesus Christ, to enable them to appreciate the spirit of the Society and to discover the riches of their calling. To be able to do this, the mistress of novices herself will be a person closely united to the Heart of Jesus. She will have a deep understanding of the spirit of the Society, a real apostolic sense, and the capacity to relate in faith, trust and affection to each novice.

**94.**

The mistress of novices organizes the life of the novitiate according to the directives common to the whole Society. She renders an account at regular intervals to the provincial and the superior general. The latter approves the programme of formation with the consent of her council.

**95.**

The mistress of novices takes seriously the responsibility for her own formation and the development of her gifts for this service.

***THE PROFESSED OF TEMPORARY VOWS***

**96.**

The young professed enters a period in which she deepens her life with Christ and her understanding of the mission of the Society, a stage which will take her to final profession.

**97.**

She takes full part in the life of a community which has a true sense of mission. She finds here the context both of her day-to-day formation and of her gift of self to apostolic service and to study.

**98.**

The young professed faces a new situation: that of living an apostolic life open to the world. Many different calls make themselves heard. She becomes aware of them through the problems and needs she discovers, as well as through her relationships and friendships. These calls confront her with choices, and her response will be an expression of her consecration, and of a whole new way of living in the world.

**99.**

She takes her responsibility for day-to-day service in the community and for living out the community goals. She exercises her initiative and supports the initiatives of others. The community help her to accept her own gifts and limitations as well as those of her sisters. Reflection in common on life-experiences and on contemporary issues stimulates her to widen her own horizons and live out her life in faith. Her sisters in community support one another by their affection, love of their vocation, the manner in which they welcome all that happens, and by their joy in the service of others. Meetings with other sisters and young professed of the province help each one find her place in the wider community and assume gradually her responsibility within it. Thus, the young professed grows in the inner freedom, affective maturity and self-confidence, which are so necessary for apostolic life.

**100.**

In the service of a shared mission, she collaborates with her sisters and with others, exercises her initiative, carries out the work entrusted to her, and devotes herself generously. She learns by experience how the Society actually expresses its service in the Church. She continues to deepen those qualities which are essential to her religious life, and to develop in herself:

- the spirit and attitudes of an educator
- love of the poor and commitment to them
- reliability in work
- a discriminating approach to the reality she sees around her
- the habit of accountability.

**101.**

Through her studies, the young professed continues to lay the foundation for her apostolic religious life, so as to deepen her faith, develop her human talents, and to have a more informed view of the world. These studies are chosen according to the needs and abilities of each one and for the sake of a better service of the mission of the Society.

Normally they include:

- biblical, theological, pastoral or catechetical studies
- better understanding of our Institute and of religious life today
- solid personal preparation and professional training.

## **102.**

The context in which she pursues her studies, the balance between work and relaxation, and the help which she receives from her sisters, are important for the development of her whole personality. Her studies and her whole attitude towards them will allow her to train herself to true mental discipline and a strong educative sense.

## **103.**

Through community life, ministry, studies, through encountering people, the young professed enters more deeply into her religious life. In her personal and community prayer, in the midst of the tensions inherent in apostolic life, her relationship with Jesus Christ is strengthened. She seeks to centre her life in the Heart of Jesus, to find in Him the connection between interiority and openness, solitude and relationship, prayer and action. As one who is free, and ready to serve wherever she is sent, the young professed accepts the mediations of religious life. She intensifies her commitment to follow Jesus Christ, happy to belong wholly to God, given to others, simple and straightforward in her life and choices and with her heart drawn to the poor and disadvantaged.

## **104.**

During this period, she is helped by:

- sensitive guidance which allows her to grow in faith and personal integration; for this, a religious of the Sacred Heart, of perpetual vows and designated by the provincial, keeps in close touch with her, accompanying her on her journey of faith, helping her to know and accept herself, to discover her own forms and rhythms of prayer, to reflect upon her life and commitments as consistent one with the other, and to become progressively integrated into the Society
- the yearly evaluation, made with the community and with the professed appointed by the provincial
- the account which she gives the provincial of the various aspects of her religious life.

## **105.**

This stage normally lasts for six years, according to Article 129. The provincial and her council are responsible for the overall plan of formation which they submit to the superior general and her council.

Towards the end of this stage a final evaluation helps both the young professed and the Society to be sure of her call and her ability to respond to it. She asks the provincial in writing to be admitted to final profession. Having studied the evaluations and consulted the persons concerned, the provincial, with the consent of her council, takes the decision whether or not to recommend to the superior

general the admission of the young professed to final profession. On the strength of this recommendation, the superior general with the consent of her council, admits the young professed to final profession. The minimum age for final profession is twenty-five years.

### **106.**

The young professed will then have a period of immediate preparation for final profession, during which time apostolic work is put aside. She prepares for her definitive commitment by prayer, study of our Institute, sharing and reflection on her experiences, and a thirty-day retreat.

### **107.**

As far as possible the preparation for final profession takes place in an international group. The superior general with her council is responsible for this stage of formation. She entrusts this responsibility to an international formation team which she names after consultation with the provincials.

The young professed develops a new awareness of the body of the Congregation by getting to know the general council better and by creating a community with her sisters coming from a variety of countries and cultures. She also strengthens her sense of the universal Church.

### **108.**

Sure of the faithful love of God and desiring to give herself to Him without reserve through perpetual vows, she asks and promises to serve Him forever in the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, wherever she may be sent.

## ***ON-GOING FORMATION***

### ***THE PROFESSED***

#### **109.**

In mutual commitment and trust, the professed give themselves to the Society which, in turn, places its fate in their hands. From now onwards, their life is one of apostolic fruitfulness, fulfilling their vocation to glorify the Heart of Jesus in their tasks and in their entire life.

#### **110.**

In order to remain faithful to our mission in our rapidly changing world, we need to acquire an attitude of discernment and adapt with prudence and wisdom to circumstances.

In this effort we are never alone, because our community ought to be a place of friendship, encouragement and formation. We shall also find help from our superiors who are at the service of our life and our mission. Through

community prayer and liturgy, through guidance and study, and during times of leisure, we contribute mutually to our formation.

### **111.**

Those whom we meet and the events in our lives will give us a greater understanding of the action of God in our personal history and in that of the world.

### **112.**

From time to time it will be necessary to take prolonged periods for spiritual or intellectual renewal. We also make sure we maintain professional competence.

### **113.**

Periodic accountability to the provincial in what concerns our prayer, our community relationships and our apostolic commitments, is both a help for our formation and a requirement of our religious life.

Our trustful dialogue with her, without prejudice to freedom of conscience, keeps us in an attitude of availability, and will help her to be better informed and to act responsibly with regard to the mission of the Society.

### **114.**

As members of an international Society, we open our hearts to the needs of other countries and are ready to serve wherever the Society may wish to send us. We learn also to share our goods not only within the Society but with those who are most deprived, as a sign of our desire to promote justice and create communion. We are convinced that the love of Jesus can be made known through us and can transform selfishness into love and concern. This conviction is for us a source of joy.

### **115.**

There are situations, whatever our age, when a special call of God may come to us through the experience of certain deprivations such as illness, decline of physical energy or the lessening of responsibilities. Our response to such situations cannot be improvised, but is prepared throughout our whole life; in prayer we discover that the fidelity of God dwells at the very core of our weakness.

### **116.**

When old age makes it impossible for us to continue in a full-time apostolate, we look for new ways of manifesting the love of Jesus. We are called not only to accept the love and service of others, but to give to others the love that we have drawn throughout life from the Heart of Christ. This may be the most contemplative period of our life, keeping its prophetic and apostolic power through the truth and depth of our relationships and the joy with which we bear witness to the fidelity of God's love.



**117.**

Through the life-long practice of uniting and conforming ourselves to Jesus in all things, we shall learn to look on death as our Passover with Him from this world to the Father.

By entering into the mystery of suffering and death with those whom we love, we shall prepare for our own death. Then, uniting ourselves to Christ in His sufferings, we shall have the consolation and the hope of being able to know Him and be with Him in His resurrection.

***FORMULA OF TEMPORARY VOWS*****118.**

In the name of the Father and of the Son  
and of the Holy Spirit  
and to the greater glory of the Heart of Jesus,  
in the presence of Mary, Mother of the Church,  
and of all of you who are here witnesses,  
I ...wishing to follow Jesus Christ more closely,  
promise to Almighty God  
obedience, poverty and chastity  
in the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus;  
I commit myself to its mission  
of manifesting the love of Christ  
through the service of education, especially of youth,  
according to our Constitutions.  
Trusting in the fidelity of God  
and in the love of my sisters,  
I make these vows for six years  
before you .., our Superior General  
(or ..., who represent our Superior General).

Done at...on...

***FORMULA OF PROFESSION OF PERPETUAL VOWS*****119.**

In the name of the Father and of the Son and  
of the Holy Spirit  
and to the greater glory of the Heart of Jesus,  
in the presence of Mary, Mother of the Church,  
and of all of you who are here witnesses,  
I ...wishing to follow Jesus Christ more closely,  
promise to Almighty God  
obedience, poverty and chastity, and according to obedience  
to dedicate myself to the education of youth  
in the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for ever,  
in conformity with its Constitutions.



Trusting in the fidelity of God  
and in the love of my sisters,  
I make these perpetual vows  
before you .., our Superior General  
(or .., who represent our Superior General).

Done at .....on...

### ***PRACTICAL NORMS***

#### **120.**

When a person is admitted to the various stages of formation and profession, those in charge must make sure that the conditions prescribed by the universal law of the Church have been fulfilled.

#### ***ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NOVITIATE***

#### **121.**

A written decree given by the superior general with the consent of her council is required for the establishment of the novitiate.

#### ***INCORPORATION INTO THE INSTITUTE***

#### **122.**

The duration of the novitiate is two years. For validity it must include twelve months spent in the novitiate community. An absence from the novitiate house which exceeds three months, continuous or broken, renders the novitiate invalid. Any absence of more than a fortnight should be made good.

In certain cases, the time of the novitiate can be prolonged by the provincial, with the consent of her council, but this prolongation must not exceed six months.

#### **123.**

At any time during the novitiate, the provincial, after consultation with those concerned, and with the consent of her council, may dismiss a novice. The novice is always free to withdraw at any time.

#### **124.**

In order to show her trust in God's Providence as expressed through the Society, the novice, sometime before her temporary profession, will grant the administration of her temporal goods to whomsoever she chooses and she should freely decide who is to have the use thereof or any revenue accruing. She keeps the ownership of her

patrimonial goods and retains power to acquire other goods. She should also draw up a will which will be valid in civil law.

### **125.**

Towards the end of this stage of formation, the novice asks the provincial in writing to be admitted to temporary vows. After having consulted the mistress of novices and her collaborators, the provincial with the consent of her council decides whether or not to admit the novice to temporary vows.

### **126.**

The novice makes a retreat of at least eight days before her temporary vows.

### **127.**

For the validity of temporary profession, the novice must have completed her twenty-first year and have validly completed her novitiate.

### **128.**

By religious profession, members promise by public vow to observe the three evangelical counsels. They are consecrated to God by the ministry of the Church and incorporated into the Society with the rights and duties defined by the Constitutions.

### **129.**

This first commitment is made for six years.

If it seems desirable, the provincial with the consent of her council, may prolong the period of temporary profession, but in such a way that the entire period does not exceed nine years. In such a case, the young professed must renew her temporary vows. By exception, the provincial with the consent of her council may also shorten this period of six years while always safeguarding the three years required for the validity of perpetual profession.

### **130.**

When the period of temporary vows has come to an end, the young professed, who must make her request freely and in writing, and who is considered suitable, may be admitted to perpetual profession, without prejudice to what is stated in the preceding paragraph.

### **131.**

The validity of the profession, in addition to the conditions already mentioned, requires:

- that the profession be expressed publicly and freely

- that it be received by the superior general, personally, or by the person whom she delegates to replace her.

### ***ESTABLISHMENT OF HOUSES***

#### **132.**

Each community lives in a house established by the provincial with the consent of her council and with the approval of the superior general and her council and according to the provisions of Canon Law. (Canons 608-612)

### ***CLOSURE OF HOUSES***

#### **133.**

Upon the recommendation of the provincial, with the consent of her council and after consultation with the local bishop, the superior general with the consent of her council, may close a house.

### ***ABSENCE FROM THE COMMUNITY***

#### **134.**

The provincial, with the consent of her council, may give a permission of absence from the community (one year for personal reasons; an unspecified time in the case of illness, study, apostolate exercised in the name of the Society). (Canon 665:1,2)

### ***PATRIMONIAL GOODS***

#### **135.**

Before temporary vows, the religious who possesses patrimonial goods grants the administration of them to the person of her choice, or to the Congregation. She freely decides who is to have the use and the revenue of these same goods. This act is called "Act of Disposition".

When the decision has been made, this disposition with regard to the administration and the revenue of patrimonial goods cannot be changed by the religious except with the permission of the competent authority.

If the Congregation is in charge of the administration of the patrimonial goods of a religious, it acquires the revenues.

#### **136.**

At the time of final profession, the religious renounces her patrimonial goods and decides to whom she will give

them: to her family, to people other than her family, or to the Congregation.

The goods cannot remain hers, and if, later on, she receives an inheritance, the goods go to the Congregation. (Canon 668)

## ***SEPARATION FROM THE INSTITUTE***

### **137.**

In the case of a transfer to another congregation, the norms laid down by Canons 684: 1,2,4,5 and 685: 1,2 are followed.

In the case of a transfer from another congregation to the Society, the length of the probationary period (at least three years) and the manner of preparation for final profession, are decided by the superior general with the consent of her council. (Canon 684: 4)

### **138.**

In the case of exlaustration, the norms laid down by the Canons 686: 1,3 and 687 are to be followed.

The professed of temporary vows are free to leave the Society when the period of the vows expires. (Canon 688: 1)

The superior general, with the consent of her council, may give an indult to leave the Society to a professed of temporary vows before the expiration of her vows, at the request of the person concerned. This request must be based on serious grounds, and the person is automatically dispensed from her vows. (Canon 688: 2)

The sister who leaves can never claim any remuneration from the Institute for the services rendered during the time spent in the Institute. But the Institute, in a spirit of charity and equity, should help her to become re-integrated into this new stage of her life. (Canon 702: 1,2)

In the case of a professed of perpetual vows who leaves the Institute, the Canons 691: 1,2 and 692 should be followed, and, in the case of a dismissal, Canons 694-704.

## ***GOVERNMENT***

### ***THE SPIRIT OF GOVERNMENT***

### **139.**

The spirit of our government is drawn from the interior dispositions of Jesus who came to serve and to give His life for the world. In Him, we enter into a new relationship with one another in faith and love.

**140.**

Each one's commitment  
to contribute to the progress of the whole  
is an expression of our communion.  
Each religious has a basic responsibility  
which she cannot surrender  
and which no one can carry out for her:  
that of living in the truth of her heart and her life,  
wherever she may be, the charism  
of Saint Madeleine Sophie.  
This means listening to God's calls  
in the world, in others, and within herself.  
She takes the initiative to suggest ways  
of responding to these calls  
and assumes the decisions taken by competent authority  
in a spirit of active participation.

**141.**

Our co-responsibility in government is expressed  
in a common search for the will of God  
to fulfil our mission in the world.  
This discernment will be the hallmark  
of all our government.  
It calls for interior freedom, willingness to serve  
and transcendence of self  
so that we are ready to go wherever we are sent.

**142.**

To some is entrusted the service of authority,  
which they exercise to further communion,  
with simplicity and love, aware of life in all its aspects  
and obedient to the Spirit.  
They have the responsibility  
to facilitate discernment of God's calls  
and the concrete way of responding to them.  
They take the final decision in view of the common good,  
and give leadership and direction for our mission.

**143.**

Thus, no matter what our service,  
we all participate  
in the growth of the Society,  
in a spirit of mutual trust  
which facilitates communication and welcomes pluriformity.  
A sincere affection unites us  
and draws us together in an ever stronger communion,  
so that we may become  
"one heart and one mind in the Heart of Jesus".

***STRUCTURES OF GOVERNMENT*****144.**

These structures are important insofar as they express  
the spirit of our government. They are designed to encourage

all the communities--local, provincial, international--to relate to one another in order to give and receive impetus and direction, and to assume co-responsibility for the whole.

This interaction of communities helps us to carry out our mission in a way that is relevant and true to life, to transcend our own particular situation, and share in that building of communion which Christ entrusted to his Church.

## ***THE LOCAL COMMUNITY***

### **145.**

It is in the local community that the mission of the Society is lived in a concrete way according to the Constitutions. United in love, and alive to reality, we are responsible to carry out our mission together in accordance with the orientations of the province, wherever we are sent.

### **146.**

We are responsible for our common mission and we commit ourselves:

- to create an atmosphere of evangelical freedom and mutual trust which helps each one to grow and makes discernment possible
- to take and carry out community decisions
- to draw up community goals relative to our own situation and have them approved by the provincial and her council, evaluating them periodically and being accountable for them
- to prepare an estimate for the community budget and evaluate actual budget spending
- to create ties with other communities of the province and be ready to help one another
- to participate actively in the progress of the province and in provincial discernment, according to need, mindful always of the life of the whole Society.

Each member of the community participates responsibly in determining what is best suited to the good of the whole. The local superior has the final authority to take decisions, and it is her responsibility to see that these are carried out.

### **147.**

In order to encourage this spirit of trust and discernment, the superior seeks ways of strengthening co-responsibility for the service of the common mission. She

is at the service of unity in the community and is attentive to the needs of each of its members.

She is named by the provincial with the deliberative vote of her council, after appropriate consultations.

She represents the community with respect to civil and ecclesiastical authorities.

She has the final responsibility for the decisions taken.

She is assisted by a council of finally professed religious. Given the different styles of communities, the provincial and her council decide in each case what type of local council is to assist the superior in her service.

The superior is always a professed of perpetual vows. The number of years of profession which she must have is stated in the Provincial Plan of Government.

She is accountable to the provincial and her council for the way in which she carries out her service.

Her mandate is for three years, renewable once.

The superior general, with the consent of her council, and for justifiable reasons, can prolong this mandate for a further three years (nine years in all).

## ***THE PROVINCIAL COMMUNITY***

### **148.**

That the Society may respond more effectively to its mission in any given country or region, it is organized into provinces.

Other types of structure, called districts, can be envisaged according to need.

The superior general, with the consent of her council, has the responsibility of establishing, modifying, uniting or suppressing provinces.

### **149.**

The PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR is named by the superior general, with the consent of her council, and after consultation with the province concerned. She should have a sincere love of the Society, be a person who creates communion, relates well and is sensitive to the signs of the times. She must be able to work with others in a spirit of co-responsibility and discernment so as to give leadership for the mission of the province.

She governs the province in accordance with the Constitutions and exercises authority and the responsibilities of government with the help of her council.

The final decision rests with her except in those cases provided for in the Constitutions.

She represents the province with respect to the civil and ecclesiastical authorities.

Her mandate is for three years, renewable once.

She must be finally professed for at least five years.

### **150.**

The members of the PROVINCIAL COUNCIL are professed of perpetual vows, chosen by the provincial after consultation with the province and with the approval of the superior general. They must be persons who complement one another, are capable of working as a team and are a support to the provincial in her work. They live our spirit of communion among themselves and with members of the province. The provincial and her council work together in a spirit of discernment which demands time for reflection, prayer and discussion.

There will be at least two councillors.

### **151.**

The provincial with the help of her council is responsible for the leadership of the province and for its spiritual and apostolic direction. She welcomes the initiatives taken by individual religious and by communities.

She co-ordinates the efforts of all in the province to live the mission of the Society, in communion with the local Church, in such a way that the religious can assume their co-responsibility.

The provincial with the help of her council is responsible:

- to know the reality of the country and discern its needs
- to give direction to the apostolic service of the province in the light of our Constitutions and the needs of the country
- to encourage reflection upon and evaluation of our service of the Church and our life in the province and take appropriate decisions
- to foster communion and ensure the effective participation of everyone through subsidiary structures
- to discern with people what are the concrete needs in the context of the province's mission, its future planning, and the overall pastoral plan of the area
- to ensure on-going formation in collaboration with those responsible for formation
- to visit the communities regularly
- to maintain communication with the hierarchy of the Church so as to maintain mutual relationships and follow its lawful directives
- to ensure, in collaboration with the provincial treasurer, that the administration of temporal goods is consistent with our commitment to build communion by sharing with those in need, and to encourage this sharing
- to encourage communication among communities and with other provinces



- to foster and extend relations with other religious congregations
- to give the required permission to those who preach to our religious (Canon 765) and for the publication of any writings which treat of religion or morality. (Canon 832)

The provincial sends the religious to their apostolic service and their community.

She must visit the communities herself, at least every two years; these visits are a way of strengthening and renewing spiritual life and apostolic dynamism.

She also has the responsibility for all other matters required by the Institute and the Common Law of the Church.

### **152.**

The co-responsibility of our provincial community requires a common search for the will of God, a search which gives vitality to our mission in the Church.

The provincial chapter and the provincial assembly, each with its own structures, create a climate for this discernment.

### **153.**

The PROVINCIAL CHAPTER is convoked by the provincial, with the consent of her council, either to prepare for the general chapter or to draw up or modify the Provincial Plan of Government. It is composed of ex-officio members and elected members. The number of elected members should exceed that of the ex-officio members. Their mandate covers the duration of the provincial chapter. The provincial and her council are always ex-officio members. The Provincial Plan of Government specifies who are to be the other ex-officio members. Local communities participate actively in the preparation of the chapter.

The provincial chapter which prepares for the general chapter takes place during the year preceding the general chapter.

The functions of the provincial chapter are:

- to study the recommendations of the local communities in view of the general chapter
- to prepare material and present recommendations for study at the general chapter
- to elect the delegate(s) to the general chapter
- to study the reports of the provincial and her council, as well as of other members of the provincial administration, dealing with the life and direction of the province
- to put forward, when necessary, suggestions and recommendations to the provincial and her council on

the means to be taken to strengthen the life and mission of the province

- to evaluate the progress of the province since the last general chapter.

When it is necessary to draw up or to modify the Provincial Plan of Government, in the light of the Institute and the needs of the province, the provincial with the consent of her council, convokes a provincial chapter. This Plan of Government as well as the directives of the provincial chapter should be submitted for approval to the superior general and her council.

All the professed of perpetual and temporary vows have the right to vote for delegates to the provincial chapter.

All the professed of perpetual vows are eligible for election to the provincial chapter and the general chapter.

Those who have been legitimately deprived of these rights in conformity with the Code of Common Law can neither be voted for nor vote.

#### **154.**

The PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY, the consultative organ of the province, is a means:

- of having a real experience of communion
- of promoting interchange
- of sharing experiences and reflections concerning the province
- of expressing expectations and recommendations to the provincial and her council concerning the orientations of the province
- of evaluating the progress of the province.

The provincial, with the help of her council, will make sure that the whole province is involved in this important event in the life of the province. The composition of this assembly is determined by the Provincial Plan of Government.

It is convoked by the provincial with the consent of her council at least once every three years.

A special provincial assembly shall be convoked by the provincial with the consent of her council within the year following the general chapter.

Its purpose is to reflect upon the directives given by the general chapter, and to propose to the provincial and her council ways of implementing these in the province.

#### **155.**

The Provincial Plan of Government can make provision for other consultative bodies.

## *INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY*

### **156.**

In our Society, international communion is created by the interaction of the provinces throughout the world, and by the richness of our diverse cultures. We are called to become one body in Christ; each member needs the other in order to give and receive support and dynamism, and to be directed towards a common aim. This call demands a real conversion, and commits us to seek after justice and communion. Only at the price of such conversion can we claim that we are able to see beyond our own horizons and that universal communion in God our Father has already begun.

### **157.**

The GENERAL CHAPTER ensures and promotes both communion and vitality in the Society of the Sacred Heart in view of its mission. It represents all the members of the Society and has supreme normative authority within the Congregation, in virtue of the Constitutions.

The superior general, with the help of her council, the treasurer general and the provincials, will render an account of their mandate to the chapter.

### **158.**

It is convoked every six years by the superior general with the consent of her council.

It is composed of ex-officio members and elected members. The ex-officio members are: the superior general, the general council, the secretary general, the treasurer general, the provincials, the previous superior general and a member of the international formation team named by the superior general with the consent of her council. The number of elected members must exceed that of the ex-officio members.

After the election of the new superior general and the nomination of her council, those who have just been replaced, as well as the new council, are ex-officio members until the closure of the chapter.

### **159.**

Only the professed of perpetual vows are eligible for election. Provincial chapters elect their delegates in accordance with the criteria laid down in the Chapter Directory.

### **160.**

In exceptional circumstances, the general chapter is also convoked by the superior general at the request of a majority of the provincials, or by the superior general, on her own initiative, with the agreement of a majority of the provincials. A special chapter of this kind, like an ordinary

chapter, is composed of ex-officio members and elected members.

### **161.**

Each member of the general chapter exercises her responsibility in the process of decision-making; she acts in a spirit of discernment and with inner freedom. Each one, going beyond the horizons of her own province, keeps in view the good of the whole Body.

### **162.**

The general chapter has responsibilities as follows:

- it protects the spiritual heritage of the Society, and, in conformity with it, evaluates the progress of the Society since the last general chapter, in fidelity to the Constitutions
- it gives orientation to the Society, being aware of the appeals and needs of the Church and the world, and guided by the Gospel and the Constitutions
- it elects the superior general
- it proposes to the superior general names of religious from among whom she chooses the members of the general council
- it proposes modifications to the Constitutions if it is necessary, and submits them for approbation to the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes
- it revises the Supplement to the Constitutions
- it deals with issues which are of major importance to the Congregation
- it reviews the financial state of the Congregation
- it establishes the criteria to be followed for determining the number of delegates to the next chapter
- it ratifies the superior general's choice of secretary general and treasurer general; if the choice is not made during the general chapter, the names are sent to the provincials for ratification.

For any change which the general chapter may wish to make in the Constitutions, a two-thirds majority of the votes is required; for a change in the Supplement, a simple majority of votes is sufficient.

### **163.**

The SUPERIOR GENERAL is elected by the general chapter. She has authority over the whole Society and governs according to the Constitutions. She represents the Society with respect to the civil and ecclesiastical authorities. Her principal responsibility is to further unity and vitality in the Congregation and to keep it faithful to the Constitutions.

### **164.**

She exercises authority and carries the responsibility of government with the help of the general council. The final

decision belongs to her, except in those cases provided for by the Constitutions, as well as the final responsibility before the Church and towards the Society. In individual cases, she has the right to dispense from the observance of those articles of the Constitutions, which deal with religious discipline. She delegates authority, as needed, according to the Constitutions and the Common Law of the Church.

Her mandate is for six years, renewable once.

She must be finally professed for at least ten years.

### **165.**

She can count on the prayer and unwavering support of the Society, and she will find in her council the help necessary for carrying out this important office. She herself must have deep personal integrity, as well as a real capacity for listening and for relating. Generous in her service of the Society and its mission in the Church, filled with a spirit of prayer and discernment, she will be wise and courageous in her decisions and in her manner of implementing them. She will exercise her authority with simplicity, and with the gentleness and humility which will come to her from her union with the Heart of Jesus.

### **166.**

Election of the Superior General.

The superior general is elected by two-thirds of the votes. The result of the election is announced by the election assistant. If no candidate obtains two-thirds of the votes, a second, and, if necessary, a third ballot is held. If there is still no result, there is a fourth ballot. For this and for subsequent ballots a simple majority is sufficient. If there is no result from the fourth ballot, only the three candidates with the highest number of votes will go forward for the fifth ballot. If a sixth ballot is necessary, only the two candidates with the highest number of votes will go forward. These two then abstain from voting. If in the sixth and last ballot, these two obtain the same number of votes, the one who has been professed the longer is declared elected, or the older, if they were professed on the same day.

The act of election is signed forthwith by the election-assistant and the chapter secretary. If the person who has been elected superior general is not present at the chapter, she is sent for immediately and all business is suspended until her arrival.

### **167.**

The superior general governs with the help of four councillors. With these she forms a discerning community at the service of the Society's mission.

The GENERAL COUNCIL is chosen at the general chapter in the following way:

on the day appointed each chapter member names in writing a maximum of six candidates. The election assistant and the two scrutineers count the nominations and

communicate the result to the superior general. With her, they draw up a list of those who have obtained at least five per cent of the votes. Each chapter member receives a copy of this list. The superior general, keeping in mind the needs of the Society and the complementarity necessary to the council, chooses from a maximum of twenty candidates with the most votes, four members for her council.

Their mandate is for six years, renewable once. They must be professed of perpetual vows and be at least thirty years of age.

A member of the general council can resign only for a serious reason. The superior general can accept or refuse her resignation. To replace a member of the council who has resigned her office or who has died, the superior general consults the provincials, proposing three names. She takes the decision with the consent of her council.

### **168.**

The superior general, with the help of her council, has the following responsibilities:

- to keep the Society alert to the calls of the world and the Church
- to foster communion and unity
- to see that there is collaboration with the hierarchy of the Church
- to be concerned about understanding the reality of the provinces, and to visit them
- to convoke the general chapter and prepare for it
- to see that the directives of the general chapter are implemented in the provinces
- to name religious for the principal services of government, formation and administration
- to give practical interpretations of the Constitutions
- to have recourse to the Holy See for authentic interpretations
- to ensure careful administration of the Society's goods
- to establish, modify, unite or suppress provinces, according to need, in the interval between general chapters.

### **169.**

Should the office of the superior general become vacant, the general council elects one of its member to take charge of the regular business of the Society during the interim and to convoke the general chapter within six months. If there is question of a serious impediment, the general council consults the provincials and informs the Holy See. If the superior general wishes to resign her office, she has recourse to the Holy See. The Holy See must have accepted the reasons submitted before the process of replacing the superior general may begin.

## ***FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION***

### **170.**

In a world which hungers and thirsts for justice, our following of Jesus Christ in His poverty demands that we take a stand and make decisions which will lead us together to a more evangelical poverty. This world, in which so many of our sisters and brothers are suffering and are unable to lead a truly human life, calls into question our own way of living, so that a lasting mark is made upon us and upon the way we use financial resources.

### **171.**

We want to make a genuine effort to bring about a more just distribution of the world's resources, in solidarity with all who suffer. We build communion with them by setting aside our own interests, by giving, without seeking reward or gain, by sharing at every level in the Society and by depriving ourselves for the benefit of those who are in need of everything. We can do this if we are prepared to take the permanent risk of choosing a way of life consistent with our option of solidarity with the poor and oppressed.

### **172.**

Sharing, as an expression of our communion, is essential in our international Congregation. This is the spirit we want to live out in our community of goods. The more we make it a reality among ourselves, the more the sharing of our resources with others becomes imperative.

### **173.**

The international Congregation possesses goods only insofar as they are necessary. This necessity must be considered in the light of fidelity to the members of the Society and its mission, and fidelity to the call to live in solidarity with those who lack the necessities of life.

### **174.**

The Congregation, the provinces, the houses, can acquire, possess, alienate and administer fixed and current assets, according to the Statutes of the Common Law of the Church, of the Institute, and in conformity with Civil Law. All property must be held in the name of the Congregation insofar as the civil law of each country allows. The general chapter determines the fixed sum which may be disposed of by superiors at the various levels.

### **175.**

The superior general and the provincials, with the help



of their councils, direct the work of the treasurers in a spirit of mutual trust.

They see to it that the treasurers have whatever help they need for carrying out their responsibilities. This may be given by experts or by committees.

The service of the treasurers should be in line with the educative mission of the Society and our commitment to justice. Therefore, they shall be not only professionally competent, but also women capable of reflection, prudence and courage.

They give a regular account to the general and provincial councils, and keep them up-to-date on the following points

- the needs of the Society, both in the provinces and in the communities, and the financial implications of these needs with a view to future planning
- the resources available and possibilities for their use
- the economic situation of the various countries including their own, with a view to directing the use of resources according to that fidelity which keeps them alert both to the needs of the Congregation and the cry of the poor.

### ***CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION***

#### **176.**

The treasurer general administers the goods of the Society under the direction of the superior general assisted by her council. She works in close cooperation with the provincial treasurers.

The superior general with the consent of her council and the advice of the treasurer general, submits for approval to the Holy See:

- a) all acts of alienation concerning:
  - objects of artistic or historical value
  - properties which are valued over and above the sum fixed by the Holy See
- b) long-term loans or debts which exceed this same sum.

### ***PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION***

#### **177.**

In the province, the provincial treasurer administers the goods of the Society under the direction of the



provincial, assisted by her council.

She is named by the provincial with the consent of her council, after consultation with the treasurer general and with the approval of the superior general. The provincial treasurer helps the local treasurers to carry out their service, and she works in close collaboration with the treasurer general. The provincial, with the consent of her council and the advice of the provincial treasurer, must submit for the approval of the superior general:

- a) all acts of alienation concerning:
  - valuable objects
  - properties which are valued over and above the sum fixed by the Holy See.
- b) long-term loans or debts which exceed this same sum.

### **178.**

Although we have to own goods, we hold them only as stewards, never forgetting that God destined the world and all that it contains for the use of everyone and for all peoples. Consequently, in a world full of ambiguities, justice and charity impel us to direct our administration towards the realization of this global destiny and to live our special responsibility through community of goods.

## ***CONCLUSION***

### **179.**

In all the circumstances of our life, wherever our mission leads us our sole purpose in living is to glorify the Heart of Jesus, to discover and make known His Love. These Constitutions point out the way. They are for us an authentic expression of our charism.

### **180.**

Trusting in the action of the Spirit whose law is written in our hearts, each one of us pledges herself to cherish these Constitutions, to deepen her knowledge of them, to observe them, and to make them live through a fidelity which is constantly renewed.

We take to heart our responsibility  
to intensify our inner life,  
to live discernment and obedience, to animate  
our apostolic courage so that we may build  
a more just world,  
and, above all, to strengthen that spirit of union and charity  
which should characterize our Society.

### **181.**

In the richness of our varying cultures  
and the diversity of our commitments,  
these Constitutions will be a bond of love and unity  
placing upon the whole Body  
the seal of God's work.

We shall form but one heart and one mind,  
thus giving reality to the words:  
"Cor unum et anima una in Corde Jesus".

Then, in and through our Society,  
the prayer of Jesus may be fulfilled:  
"The glory which you have given me I have given to them,  
that they may be one even as we are one,  
I in them and you in me,  
that they may become perfectly one" (Jn. 17:22-23).

