CONSTITUTIONS

VOLUNTAS DEI INSTITUTE



Trois-Rivières, Canada 1999

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PONTIFICAL DECREE

The clerical secular institute Voluntas Dei was canonically erected July 2, 1965 by decree of the Bishop of Edmundston (Canada). After some twenty years of progressive development, the Institute has petitioned for Pontifical approval, with the concurrence of the actual Bishop of Edmundston and sixteen other Bishops.

Founded by Rev. Fr. Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I. who celebrates this year his Fiftieth Anniversary of Ordination, the Institute proposes to its members a spiritual characteristic, becoming the instrument of Christ carrying out the will of the Father (Const. 2); adopting Mary Immaculate as their model; and an apostolic objective: Creating peace and brotherhood in Jesus Christ (Const. 12).

In the period following its canonical erection, the Institute has spread to different countries, raising up numerous vocations and realizing this missionary dimension which has been essential to the Institute since its inception, even through Associate Members.

The experience gained demonstrates the validity of the spiritual and apostolic contents which characterize the Institute, as well as the seriousness and soundness of formation given to its members, and lay people, to help them live their commitments to consecration and mission.

Taking all of these into account all of the above, and by the unanimous consent of those Bishops directly interested, the *congresso* of the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, meeting on April 3, 1987, have judged that the Voluntas Dei Institute is worthy of being counted among Institutes of Pontifical Right.

The Holy Father John Paul II has kindly granted his consent on June 30, 1987.

Therefore, the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, by this present decree, declares the Voluntas Dei Institute to be of Pontifical Right with all rights and privileges pertaining.

All things to the contrary not withstanding. Given in Rome, July 12, 1987.

J. Jérôme Card. Hamer, o.p. Préf.

+Vincentius Fagiolo Archiep. em. Theat. Secre.

DECREE OF APPROVAL OF THE PRESENT CONSTITUTIONS

The clerical Secular Institute of Pontifical Right Voluntas Dei submits to the Apostolic See the Constitutions written according to the prescriptions of the new Code of Canon Law, instantly requesting that they be approved.

This Congregation for Religious and Secular Institute, after submitting the text to a particular examination, approves by the present Decree the proposed Constitutions, according to the French text which is kept in the Archives.

All legal norms being observed.

All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given in Rome, September 21, 1988.

J. Jérôme Card. Hamer, o.p. Pref.

+Vicentius Fagiolo Archiep. em. That. Vestan. Secre.

FOUNDER'S PREFACE

The Constitutions are the charter of our commitment to God. They are the expression of a contract with Him. It is in them that we discover the spirit of the Gospel, the daily impression of Jesus on each and everyone of us. They motivate us to reexamine our gift of self; they clearly spell out for us the determinations of God as taught and carried out by the Son who directs us by placing us under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, by giving us the most holy Virgin as a companion along the way, and by stimulating us through the example of the team considered as a fundamental value.

We are aware of having been called by Jesus himself to live a special lifestyle: to be consecrated persons immersed in the midst of the world, revealing Christ with the means of the world. As Christ allows himself to be guided by the decisions of his Father, so do we let ourselves be directed by the decisions of the Son.

Jesus tells us what he told his disciples: You did not choose me, no, I chose you (vocation) and I have commissioned you (mission) to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last (witness), and then the Father will give you anything you will ask of him in my name. (Jn 15: 16)

The Constitutions are more than a mere code of law. They are Christ's expression of his very Spirit to each of us. He tells us of our calling to live intimately united to him. He asks us to be a continuation of his presence in the world, to be living communicators of his love and mercy.

The Constitutions are the exclusive property of the Church with the recognition of the Institute as an Institute of Pontifical Right. The Constitutions are the certainty we seek of a true relationship with Jesus, a perfect listening to the Holy Spirit, an ever-present assurance of following the will of God, and real apostolic effectiveness everywhere in the world.

Not to show concern for the Constitutions is a sign of tepidity, a slowing-down of our spiritual energies, a lessening of the sense of our vocation, paralysis and stagnation regarding our obligations toward souls to be saved, hearts to be loved, and neighbours to be served. Our Constitutions are our rule of life.

The Constitutions are the road map we must study in order to find the direction where we encounter the wills of God, the inspirations of the Spirit, and Mary's help. They are a buoy that charts the way through the difficulties of life. Let us therefore keep them close at hand, along with our Bible.

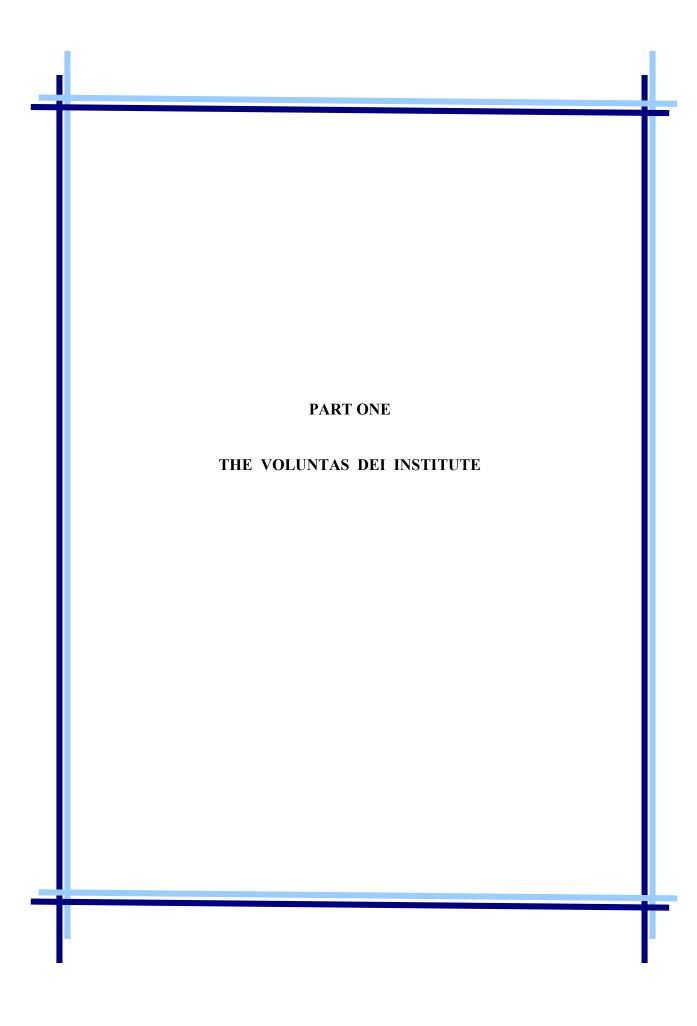
Our Institute has two kinds of members. The first are bound by VOWS and the others – the Associate Members – by COMMITMENTS. Let us together regularly draw from the Constitutions the density of our spirituality which has been inspired by the Holy Spirit, the charism which is none other than the spiritual portrait of the Voluntas Dei whom Jesus will welcome with these words at the end of one's life, *Come, blessed of my Father*.

On the day of the Annunciation, Mary welcomed the Constitution the angel Gabriel brought to her from God. Her welcome was marvellous: *Ecce, Fiat, Magnificat*. Let us open our hearts and accept the Constitutions as God's free gift to us. For a Voluntas Dei, there is no other manner of accepting than Mary's way. Like her, we shall accompany Jesus in all of life's situations. *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*: we shall remain standing at the foot of the cross as witnesses to the Redemption, even in life's most painful moments.

God wants to rapidly make saints of us. By meditating on our Constitutions, we shall be obliged to believe this. Is it not amazing on Jesus' part to have such confidence in each one of us?

Louis-Marie Parent, o.m.i.

December 25, 1988



CHAPTER I Nature, Charism, and End of the Institute

1. The Voluntas Dei Institute is a secular institute of pontifical right. It calls on its members – clerics and single laymen – to discover the will of God, to be faithful to it, to cherish it, and to accomplish it. The Institute commits its members to a common apostolic project: that through their consecration in the midst of the world, the Kingdom of God come about in themselves, in their own milieu, and wherever Christ has his rights.

The Institute also includes married people who are known as Associate Members. They commit themselves in the Institute to live according to their state in life the same ideal and apostolic project as the clerics and the single laymen.

2. The charism of the Voluntas Dei Institute is formulated as follows:

TO BE, IN THE MANNER OF THE VIRGIN OF THE ANNUNCIATION, THE INSTRUMENT OF CHRIST CARRYING OUT THE WILL OF THE FATHER, IN THE REALITY OF THE PRESENT MOMENT, IN THE MIDST OF THE WORLD, "WHEREVER CHRIST HAS HIS RIGHTS".

- 3. Following the example of Christ who came on earth to do in all things the Father's will, members enter the Institute for the sole purpose of better accomplishing the will of God as it is made known to them in His Word, in the events and the decisions of lawful authority. For its part, the Institute helps its members to rely on the action of the Holy Spirit who alone can form in them the filial attitudes of docility and availability to the will of the Father.
- **4.** The members of the Institute recognise in Mary Immaculate their mother and teacher in the faith and the apostolic mission. They also recognise in her their perfect model, she whose life was one of total assent to the will of God. That is why the Institute has chosen for its patronal feast the ANNUNCIATION, the day on which the entire Church celebrates the mystery of the Virgin Mary's *Fiat*.
- **5.** The Institute's motto is:

VOLUNTAS DEI PER MARIAM IMMACULATAM

(The Will of God through Mary Immaculate)

CHAPTER II Spirituality of the Institute

- 6. The spirituality of the Institute is none other than that of the baptised in the Church: a life of communion with the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. In accord with the will of God, each member endeavours to develop in a special way the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, as well as the cardinal virtues of justice, prudence, fortitude, and temperance. These are the foundation of a spiritual balance that shapes the members of the Institute into true witnesses of Christ in the world.
- 7. To the ideal of life which the Institute proposes to its members: *To do in all things the will of the Father, like Christ and the Virgin Mary*, is attached a proper spirituality known as the Spirituality of the Three Fives:
 - 1) By the first five, members of the Institute develop a life of intimacy with the Lord through daily prayer, and especially through the following spiritual exercises:
 - mental prayer or meditation,
 - reading of the word of God and of works of spirituality,
 - sharing in the Holy Eucharist,
 - visit to the Blessed Sacrament,
 - devotion to the Virgin Mary, particularly through meditation of the mysteries of the Rosary and recitation of five decades of the Rosary.
 - 2) By the second five, members develop in a special way a spirit of recollection, humility, and fraternal charity through acquiring the following attitudes:
 - presence of God:
 walking in the presence of God by living the present moment, by turning inwardly
 to Him at least once every hour, and by taking advantage of every opportunity to
 intensify this union with God.
 - absence of criticism: avoiding all inner and outer criticism; having positive regard for others so as to welcome Christ inhabiting them.
 - absence of complaint: avoiding all inner and outer complaining; opening oneself to a sense of the marvellous, so as to welcome Christ who is present in events.

- being of service (availability):
 fully accepting one's responsibility, accepting any act of devotedness requested by
 legitimate authority, and enjoying working freely in the building up of the
 Kingdom.
- Peacemaking:
 Applying oneself to maintaining peace of heart, implicating oneself in the cause of establishing an evangelical climate of justice and fraternity, and being an instrument of reconciliation in one's milieu.
- 3) by the third five, members of the Institute daily take advantage of five concrete occasions for exercising charity in order to develop positive contacts with others, in the manner of Christ.
- **8.** In order to develop an ever-growing communion with the Lord and the people in their milieu, members of the Institute initiate and take advantage of opportunities for praying with others, especially with members of their own Team. For the same reason, they enjoy celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation rather frequently.
- 9. Because they are actively committed to mission in the midst of the world, members of the Institute see the need for special moments of prayer and renewal. They see to having a monthly day of recollection and an annual retreat.
- 10. When circumstances prevent members from carrying out a spiritual activity as prescribed, they ensure that it is replaced by another activity, except for mental prayer from which they never exempt themselves and which they endeavour to prolong, rather, if apostolic activity permits.
- 11. So as to truly live this spirituality of the Institute, members frequently examine to their way of living, and they regularly meet with their facilitators in a spirit of mutual openness and fraternal welcome.

CHAPTER III Apostolic Objective of the Institute

- 12. The Voluntas Dei Institute seeks to be present in every milieu, and its apostolic objective is TO CREATE PEACE AND BROTHERHOOD IN JESUS CHRIST. In this way, the Institute shares in the mission of the Church that was commissioned by Christ to reveal and convey the love of God to all people of all nations.
- 13. This is an eminently missionary objective. The missionary dimension is basic to the Institute, and it is an indispensable component of the initial grace of its founding.
- 14. This objective compels one to a genuine fraternal life. From the aspect of this objective, members are encouraged to find in Christ their own solidarity with everyone, especially with those who suffer the most and who are the least favoured, and to work at building up a more loving world.
- 15. In order to establish and develop in themselves this spirit of peace and brotherhood; in order also to work more effectively at this mission task, members of the Voluntas Dei Institute join together in teams and propagate the team spirit as their way of sharing in the Institute's apostolate.

CHAPTER IV Members of the Institute

- 16. Members of the Institute and the Institute itself are God's gift to the Church. Hence the Institute welcomes as people chosen by God, baptised people who desire to follow Christ and serve the Church, and who feel challenged by the Institute's spirituality and apostolic project. In fact, the charism given to the Institute by its Founder is rooted in a secular spirituality adapted to every Christian in search of perfection, whatever that person's way of life or task within the People of God.
- 17. The Institute accepts as members in the strict sense:
 - 1) Any cleric, duly ordained priest or candidate to holy orders who
 - seeks to serve the mission of Jesus Christ, and who maintains real ecclesial ties;
 - desires to profess and live according to the evangelical counsels;
 - seeks fraternal communion and agrees to share in the Institute's team life.

Clerics admitted to the Institute may be incardinated to either a diocese or the Institute (Art. 87).

- 2) Any single layman who has opted for celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom and who
 - desires to consecrate his life in service to the mission of Jesus Christ in the Church and the world:
 - desires to profess and live according to the evangelical counsels;
 - and wants to share in the Institute's team life.

The expression single layman also applies to the widower who is free of any bond or attachment incompatible with consecration in the Institute.

- **18.** The Institute accepts as Associate Members, married persons husbands and wives living the sacrament of matrimony who seek to
 - commit themselves to share in the work of Jesus Christ, Priest, Prophet, and King, in the Church and in the world;
 - profess the evangelical counsels according to their state in life;
 - share in the Institute's team life.

The designation "married persons", in the Constitutions, refers to the "couple", and the norm is to admit a couple – husband and wife. Nevertheless, specific sociological conditions or special situations may make it impossible to admit both. In exceptional cases, therefore, the District may, after having obtained authorization from the Director General and his council, admit the husband alone.

After a couple have made their commitments in the Institute, the death of one spouse does not invalidate the other spouse's right to continue as an Associate Members, as long as this member does not remarry.

| 19. Members commit themselves according to their status in the Institute. The respective commitments are specified in Part Two (Members in the strict sense) and Part Three (Associate Members) of these Constitutions. |
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CHAPTER V Formation in the Institute

20. The Institute offers all of its members a basic formation, and it then challenges them to pursue their permanent process of Christian formation in a responsible manner. Moreover, the Institute ensures that clerics, single laymen, and Associate Members receive a formation specific to their status.

General Provisions

21. The Director General with his council appoint a Director of Formation whose task is to revise the Guides which correspond to each stage of formation.

The Director of Formation must also look after the preparation of documents pertinent to permanent formation, in order to guarantee unity of action within and between the Districts.

- 22. The District Director and his council appoint from among the District Members in the strict sense one or more persons to look after the formation of members at the different stages of incorporation in the Institute.
- 23. Those in charge of formation must regularly meet with those entrusted to their care. During these fraternal meetings members share their experience regarding their commitments, their relationship with the other members, or their apostolate. They may also bring up any other topic likely to help them in the pursuit of perfection. On the other hand, they also welcome as marks of charity any observation or suggestion made to them by the person in charge of their formation.
- **24.** In the first stages of formation, the District Director ensures that sessions and meetings are periodically organized for the purpose of dispensing the required basic formation as defined in the Formation Guide.
- 25. The authorities and those in charge of formation utilise every means at their disposal to discipline the use of freedom and to impart steady convictions in every member, since the lifestyle which is theirs will confront them with the frequent obligation of making personal decisions regarding either their spiritual life or apostolic work.
- **26.** In those Sectors where there are Aspirants, Probationers and Professed Members before Stability, the Sector Facilitator guides and observes them in a special way in order to help them progress in their understanding and implementing of the formation they have been receiving.

At the time of recommending the Aspirant to Probation, the Profession, the Professed to renewal of vows before Stability, and the Professed Member to Stability, those responsible for formation consider the recommendations of the Sector Facilitator.

- 27. Members of the Institute strive to give evidence of the greatest possible apostolic effectiveness in the Church's service. That is why they endeavour to acquire the best possible professional training, while keeping in mind that union with God is the basis of their apostolate.
- 28. In order to live the Institute's objectives and to wholly fulfill their specific vocation, members constantly seek to perfect their understanding of things both divine and human.
- 29. The District Director takes appropriate measures to ensure that special formation is given to those members assigned to more difficult or demanding apostolic tasks.
- **30.** The District Director ensures that members set time aside for themselves for personal renewal in prayer and contemplation so as to reorder and strengthen their union with God, which is the basis and condition of their apostolate.

Therefore, every six years beginning with one's profession, members of the Institute may consecrate at least two months to the contemplative life in an appropriate place.

31. The District council organises each year intensive sessions for the spiritual formation of its members. These sessions are held in an atmosphere of prayer and study.

Particular Provisions

For Candidates to the Diaconate and the Priesthood

- **32.** In order to live more fully their vocation and mission, those called to the diaconate and the priesthood are given training compatible with Church directives, as prescribed by canon law and other documents of the Magisterium, while respecting local Church customs.
- 33. The District Director ensures that formation take into account the nature and end of the Institute as well as those conditions under which the candidate to the diaconate and the priesthood is to exercise his apostolate.
- **34.** The District Director and his council require from the candidate to the diaconate and the priesthood who is to be incardinated in the Institute, a pastoral internship according to norms established by each District's statutes. This internship is regularly evaluated by the District council and may be prolonged, if necessary.

In approving each District's norms regarding internship, the Central council takes into consideration the legislation of each particular Church.

For Lay Members

- 35. Lay members are called in a special way to witness to the Lord in the world. They shall be witnesses to the extent that they nourish their faith by prayer, knowledge of the Word of God, and periods of spiritual renewal offered by the Institute.
- **36.** It is important for lay members to acquire ever greater professional competency, since their profession or trade is their primary apostolic field.

CHAPTER VI Team Life in the Institute

37. The Team is a grouping together of members of the Institute, for the purpose of meeting together regularly.

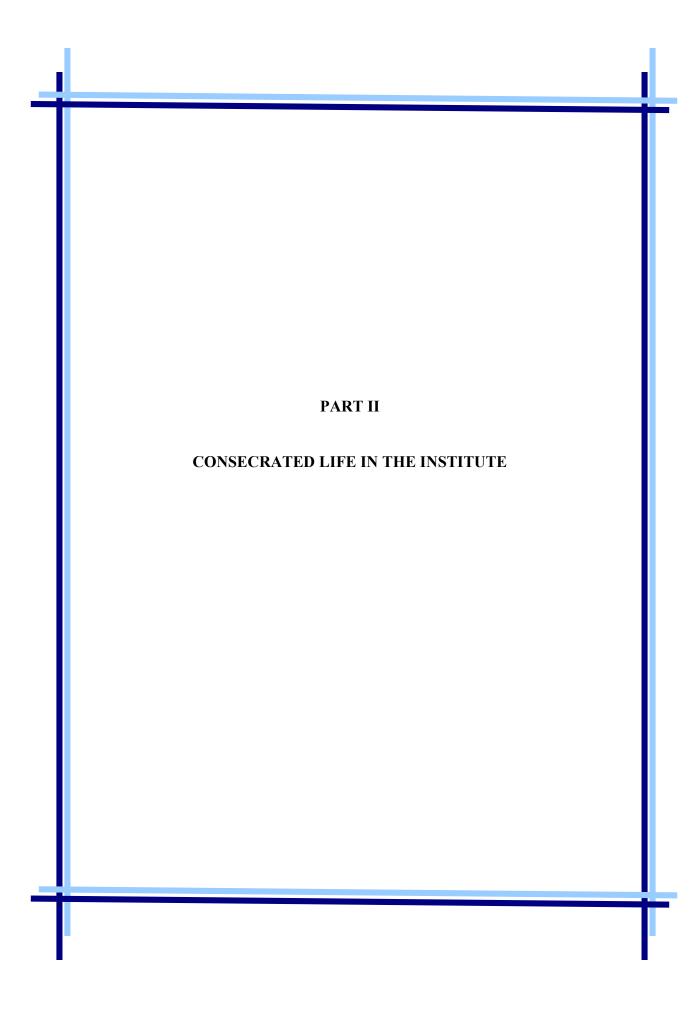
The Team is the requisite place for living and for listening to the Word of God, the place for an ongoing reading of the signs of the times, and for discernment of the will of God.

The Team is a place of choice for exercising hospitality and for undergoing love, and spiritual and apostolic formation.

- **38.** For the Team to truly be a place of spiritual growth and mutual support, members of the Team must attend their Team meetings even in the midst of all-absorbing activities. This regular contact with their teammates allows members to deepen further their spiritual attitudes and carry out the Institute's apostolic objective.
- **39.** Within a given Sector, Teams group together members in the strict sense and Associate Members residing in the same geographic area.

Recognising in one another members of the same Church family, all members fraternally welcome one another and help one another grow in the ideal of life proposed by the Institute. In fact, interchange between single members and couples who have committed themselves to evangelical radicalism is a source of mutual challenge and appreciable mutual help (Art. 15).

- **40.** A Team is composed of at least three (3) members, one of whom is the Facilitator. The Team is under the immediate authority of the Sector Facilitator.
- **41.** The Team Facilitator sees to the good order of the Team and ensures that its objectives are met.
- **42.** The Team Facilitator advises competent authority on the state and functioning of the Team.



CHAPTER I Secular Consecration

43. Secular consecration is lived in the midst of the world. It is gift of self to God and response to a call of grace to live the evangelical counsels in order to be in the world as leaven in dough. This commitment is lived in the respect of earthly values, with concern for promoting and evangelising them.

The entire human being is already enwrapped in the baptismal grace which engenders one to divine life. Consecration in the Institute specifies the grace which is proper to the cleric and the single layman; it directs in a special way their gift of self by way of the evangelical counsels. Members surrender to God so as to be totally His and, following Jesus, they commit themselves to a life of adoration, filial surrender, and service.

- 44. In order to live this consecration in the Voluntas Dei Institute:
 - 1) clerics, while carrying out their ministry as servants and missionaries in any field of endeavour compatible with the Church's desires, commit themselves by vow to follow Christ through professing the evangelical counsels.
 - 2) Single laymen, acting competently in the particular field where they exercise an apostolate of witness and service, commit themselves by vow to follow Christ by professing the evangelical counsels.

Obedience

45. Obedience is a characteristic mark of members of the Voluntas Dei Institute. Grounded in responsible fidelity to all that is asked by the Institute's authorities, carrying out the will of God is the hallmark of their whole lives.

Following the example of Jesus whose pleasure it was to do the Father's will, members apply their energy and generosity to learning about and understanding the projects and directives of the Church and the Institute, and to carrying them out as perfectly as possible, as expressions of the will of God.

In this spirit, members are open with competent authority and share with them in all simplicity their own perception of the will of God for themselves, as well as their desires, difficulties, and objections. They then abide by the latest decisions of authority, refraining from any negative criticism of them.

- **46.** By the vow of obedience, members of the Institute commit themselves to submit to decisions of authority in all that is consonant with the Constitutions. Members also commit themselves:
 - to accept the intervention of authority regarding their behaviour and the witness of their lives;
 - to accept directives of the Institute regarding application of the Constitutions;
 - to seek the advice of the Institute's authorities regarding important personal projects, and to take this advice into account.
- 47. The vow is directly involved *sub gravi* when members receive from legitimate major authority a written command expressly given in Christ's name or by virtue of obedience, in all matters concerning observance of the vows and the Constitutions.
- **48.** Members apply themselves to witnessing to their joy in carrying out the will of God as expressed in everyday life. For greater service to the Church, they endeavour to adapt with humility, joy, and promptness to projects initiated or accepted by the Institute.
- 49. Members have at heart the faithful observance of the Constitutions and the Rules of the Institute, as well as the Statutes of their respective District. They recognise in these a living expression of God's will for them and a providential means for working effectively at their own sanctification, and for actively sharing in the apostolate of the Church universal.
- **50.** Members of the Institute develop in themselves and promote in the faithful a deep respect for and great docility toward the Holy Father, endeavouring to obey his directives in an open and generous manner. They shall do likewise regarding their bishop, within the bounds of common law and in the respect of the Institute's Constitutions.
- **51.** For everything regarding one's apostolate in the local Church, members of the Institute follow the local ordinary's directives, while taking into consideration prior contracts between the latter and the authorities of the Institute.
- **52.** In questions of disciplinary prescriptions, temporary dispensation from the Constitutions and the Rules may be granted by:
 - 1) the Director General for the Institute as a whole. He advises the District Directors concerned, at the time such dispensation(s) takes (take) effect.
 - 2) The District Director, for his own District. If he dispenses an entire group, the District Director informs the Director General without delay.

Poverty

53. Christ showed the greatest predilection for the poor and made himself poor. This is the reason why members of the Institute strive to embody this example through a life of moderation and of sharing.

- **54.** By professing evangelical poverty, members witness to the possibility of living in the midst of worldly goods without becoming slaves to them. In order to live this commitment in a spirit of total availability, members take care:
 - to adopt a lifestyle that weds trust in God with attitudes of moderation and simplicity that free the heart and render one available;
 - to work for one's subsistence;
 - to contribute financially, according to directives of the Central or District councils, in order to support the apostolic and missionary outreach and aid in the administration of the Institute;
 - to show solidarity with and preference for the poor.

Members agree to embody these requirements in a personal project of poverty.

55. Regarding the vow of poverty, members commit themselves to use and dispose of their goods and property in a dependent and limited manner, according to the Constitutions.

They commit themselves to submit their personal project of poverty to the District Director for approval; at the time of their first Profession, at their Stability, in the event of a significant change in their material situation, and whenever requested to do so by the District Director.

By the vow of poverty, members also grant legitimate authority the right of oversight and intervention in their personal affairs. By this right of oversight and intervention:

- regarding their personal project of poverty;
- regarding the use and control of their belongings, according to terms and conditions established by the Constitutions and District Statutes

members exhibit the true evangelical detachment to which they have committed themselves by vow and, in this way, they keep themselves from any spirit of greed in the administration of their affairs.

Members of the Institute retain in fact the ownership of their personal effects and property as well as the capacity to acquire others; they also retain their administration and may accrue interest. Consequently, in intervening regarding the use and disposal of goods and property, authority expresses its viewpoint, which members are to consider when carrying out those activities stemming from their exercise of ownership.

- **56.** Aware of its members' collective responsibility, Institute authorities ensure that in the Institute as a whole the better advantaged share with those who have less.
- 57. Members of the Institute aim beyond the strict obligations of the vow of poverty. They observe the duties of justice and charity by avoiding unnecessary expenses and by using their belongings in service to the poor. In this way, they endeavour to love the poor more and more.
- **58.** Before obtaining Stability, members of the Institute must make their last will and testament and forward it to the District Director either the original document and all codicils, or else written information regarding where the document is kept.

Chastity

- 59. Jesus who is the revelation of the Father's love for all humankind, is the witness of the faithfulness of God. Responding himself to God's passionate call of love, Jesus made himself a total gift to God; at the same time, Jesus' life is wholly surrendered for the sake of all. He is God's unique love poured out in us, and he helps us love everyone without exception, just as he did.
- 60. As a response to a call from the Lord to live the fullness of love, consecrated celibacy is the sign of a reality transcending earthly values. It is in fact a sign of the Kingdom to come which is already present as a challenge to a world wrapped up in itself.

Members are called to live a disinterested and universal love in total availability to God and others. They commit themselves by vow to live in celibacy and to observe perfect continence.

61. Members develop in themselves this grace of consecrated chastity through which they witness to the world that Christ is their first love, that all love is rooted and fulfilled in him, and that he alone shapes in them a universal and faithful heart. The sincere and pure affection that members have for each other and everyone supports them in their struggle for an ever-growing fidelity.

Formula of Profession

62. The Formula of Profession is as follows:

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, in order to respond more perfectly to the grace of my baptism and to better create peace and brotherhood in Jesus Christ, I commit myself by vows to live the evangelical counsels of obedience, poverty, and chastity until , according to the Constitutions of the Voluntas Dei Institute. May God come to my assistance.

CHAPTER II Incorporation in the Institute

Admission

- **63.** Admission in the Institute starts a process of gradual formation leading to incorporation according to the following steps:
 - Aspirancy
 - Probation
 - Profession before Stability
 - Stability
- **64.** Before being admitted, the candidate must
 - 1) present a personal written request to the District Director
 - 2) fill out the admission form
 - 3) submit the following documents:
 - candidate's curriculum vitae;
 - certificates of baptism and confirmation, along with any other official document supporting his actual state of life;
 - a statement to the effect that the candidate is free to join the Institute;
 - a certificate confirming the candidate's sound physical, psychological, and moral health, made by competent persons;
 - for candidates to holy orders, the other documents required for entrance to the seminary, as well as any other information deemed necessary by the Institute authorities;
 - the written permission of one's bishop, if one is a deacon or priest, or otherwise obligated to the bishop.
- **65.** The right to admit a candidate to the Institute and to Aspirancy belongs to the District Director with the consent of his council.

In those places having no District, this right belongs to the Director General with the consent of his council.

66. Upon joining the Institute, the Aspirant signs a document whereby he promises to claim neither compensation for services rendered nor financial remuneration if he were to leave the Institute for any reason whatsoever.

Aspirancy

- 67. The object of Aspirancy is to allow the Institute to get to know the candidate, his qualities, aptitudes, and dispositions. This period also allows the Aspirant to learn more about the Institute and to begin living the life of the Institute and its apostolic objectives, in order to deepen his vocation.
- **68.** Aspirancy lasts from six (6) months to two (2) years according to need, as judged by the District council.
- **69.** At a suitable time the Aspirant makes a written request to begin his Probation to the District Director.

The right to admit an Aspirant to Probation belongs to the District Director with the consent of his council.

- 70. If the Aspirant is deemed suited to pursue his training in the life of the Institute, he may be admitted to Probation; in which case the Aspirant prepares for this by a preliminary retreat.
- 71. If, following the guidelines provided for such cases, the District Director believes that the Aspirant must be denied Probation and be dismissed from the Institute, he is not obliged to give the reason for this decision; he shall nevertheless take care to act with the utmost charity.

The Aspirant, too, is free to leave the Institute if after reflection, prayer, and consultation he realises that he is not called by the Lord to this lifestyle.

Probation

- 72. Probation is the period preparatory to first Profession. Its special purpose is spiritual formation according to the requirements of secular consecration.
- 73. In order to be validly accepted to Probation, one must
 - have reached 18 years of age;
 - not be bound by Profession to another institute of consecrated life or a society of apostolic life;
 - not be bound by the sacrament of matrimony.
- 74. To accept someone of the Eastern Rite to Probation, one follows canon law.
- 75. Once validly accepted to Probation, the Aspirant must read and sign before two (2) witnesses one of whom is the District Director or his delegate the following declaration:

On this day, in complete freedom, I begin my period of Probation in the Voluntas Dei Institute as a member in the strict sense, in order to share in the Institute's mission in the Church, in the midst of the world.

I commit myself to seriously work at my sanctification through the use of those means placed at my disposal by the Institute. May God come to my assistance.

- **76.** Probation lasts at least two (2) years and may be prolonged by the District Director and his council, but not beyond a further two (2) years.
- 77. The Probationer may freely leave the Institute if, after reflection, prayer, and consultation he realises that the Lord does not call him to such a lifestyle. Likewise, the District Director, with the assent of his council, may dismiss him; in which case he is not obliged to give the reason for this decision. Nonetheless, he shall take care to act with the greatest charity.

Profession

- **78.** For admission to first Profession, at a suitable time the Probationer submits a written request to the District Director who, following his council's assent, may admit him; in which case the Probationer may make his Profession on the anniversary date of his Probation. He readies himself for this by a preparatory retreat.
- **79.** By Profession, the Probationer:
 - professes the vows of obedience, poverty and chastity according to the present Constitutions;
 - commits himself to strive for evangelical perfection according to the spirituality of the Institute, and to exercise apostolic charity under the guidance of his superiors.
- **80.** Vows are taken annually and are always renewable upon expiration. Nonetheless, from his first Profession the member must have in his mind and heart the intention of giving himself totally and conclusively.

Each District determines the official date for renewal of vows.

- **81.** Admission to Profession is as follows:
 - 1) for first Profession, by the District Director according to established procedure, following the Probationer's formal request;
 - 2) for subsequent professions before Stability, by the District Director according to established procedure, following the Professed Member's formal request;
 - 3) at all professions prior to Stability as well as at profession conferring Stability, a Formula of Profession must be signed by the Professed Member, the District Director of his delegate, and by one witness. The formula is then sent to the District Director;
 - 4) for profession granting Stability, the written assent of the Director General and his council is required;

5) for professions subsequent to Stability it is sufficient to signify to the District Director the intention of renewing one's vows; a document of acceptance from the District Director is not required. As with preceding professions, a Formula of Profession must be signed by the Professed Member and the witnesses, and be returned to the District Director who then forwards it to the Director General.

82. To be valid:

- 1) first Profession must be preceded by a Probation period of at least two (2) years according to article 76 of the Constitutions;
- 2) the candidate must be admitted by competent authority according to articles 65 and 78:
- 3) profession must be made in formal terms;
- 4) prior to Stability, Profession must be received and signed by the District Director or his delegate;
- 5) subsequent to Stability, it is sufficient that the member each year sign the formula prescribed by the present Constitutions before two (2) co-signing witnesses, and that it be returned to the District Director to be forwarded to the Director General.
- 83. For renewal of vows, certain circumstances may legitimate anticipation or postponement, regarding the official renewal date, but never by more than one (1) month prior to or one (1) month following the official date. In both cases the official date always remains the same. In case of anticipation, the renewed vows take effect only upon the official expiration of the preceding Profession; in case of postponement, the preceding Profession continues until the effective date of renewal, provided the member has the intention of renewing his Profession.
- **84.** If, after seven years of Profession, Stability is not granted to the member, he must leave the Institute.

Stability, Call to Orders, and Incardination

- **85.** After five (5) years of Profession, the Institute grants Stability to the Professed Member:
 - if he is at least twenty-four (24) years of age;
 - if he requests it from the District Director;
 - if the District council recommends him to the Central council;
 - if the Central council admits him to Stability.
- **86.** Stability in the Institute is conferred in the following terms:

The Voluntas Dei Institute, happy to give thanks to God with who has lived years of Profession in the Institute, commits itself to consider him henceforth as a permanent member, that is, as one who is incorporated definitively to the Institute.

87. A cleric may be incardinated in a diocese or the Institute.

If the Professed Member requesting Stability is a cleric already incardinated into a diocese, he may either remain incardinated into his diocese or become incardinated into the Institute.

- 1) If the cleric remains incardinated into his diocese, he cannot be granted Stability without the prior agreement of his diocesan bishop.
- 2) If he desires Incardination in the Institute and if the superiors deem this useful to the Institute and its mission, the cleric's incardination can be done only after he has been granted Stability in the Institute, and according to procedure recognised by canon law for passing from one diocese to another.
- **88.** For candidates to the priesthood who desire incardination in the Institute and who are called by the superiors for the needs of the Institute and of its mission, it is only after Stability that they can be called to Holy Orders.

Eventual Separation from the Institute

89. A member may leave the Institute at the expiration of his vows, regardless of the number of years of Profession, for any serious reason made known to competent authority. If the member is a priest incardinated in the Institute, he is bound by the Code of Canon Law: before leaving the Institute he must find a bishop willing to incardinate him into his diocese or at least welcome him in his diocese for a trial period, so that the member may not eventually find himself incapable of exercising sacred ministry.

Likewise, for just and reasonable motives, the District Director, with the consent of his council, may refuse admission to Profession to a member who does not have Stability. In which case, the member must leave the Institute.

- 90. If exceptionally and for serious motives a Professed Member must leave the Institute before expiration of his vows, he requests an indult of departure from the Director General. This indult comprises dispensation from one's vows.
- **91.** The dismissal of a Professed Member who does not have Stability requires serious motives:
 - lack of the spirit proper to the Institute;
 - cause of scandal to others;
 - inability to correct certain faults
 - instability in one's vocation
 - contempt for the spiritual exercises specified by the Constitutions.

When such a situation arises, two (2) warnings with threat of dismissal are given by the District Director, in writing or in the presence of two (2) witnesses. If after a second reprimand the member has not amended himself, the District Director submits the case to the council.

If a majority of the District council pronounce themselves by secret ballot to be in favour of the member's dismissal, the latter cannot renew his vows in the Institute. If the District council decides that the member must leave before expiration of his Profession, the case is forwarded to the Central council. If the Central council decides on dismissal, the Director General issues the decree of dismissal which, however, does not take effect before confirmation by the Holy See.

- **92.** Dismissal of a Professed Member after Stability requires grievous reasons, specifically:
 - 1) scandal against natural law;
 - 2) manifest infidelity to one's commitment by vows in the Institute:
 - known infidelity to consecrated celibacy;
 - refusal to participate in supporting the financial burden of the Institute according to minimum amounts specified by legitimate authority;
 - refusal to obey an order given in the name of the vow.

Whenever such a situation arises, two (2) reprimands with threat of dismissal are made by the District Director, in writing or in the presence of two (2) witnesses. Following the second admonishment, if the member does not amend his ways, the District Director submits his case to the council.

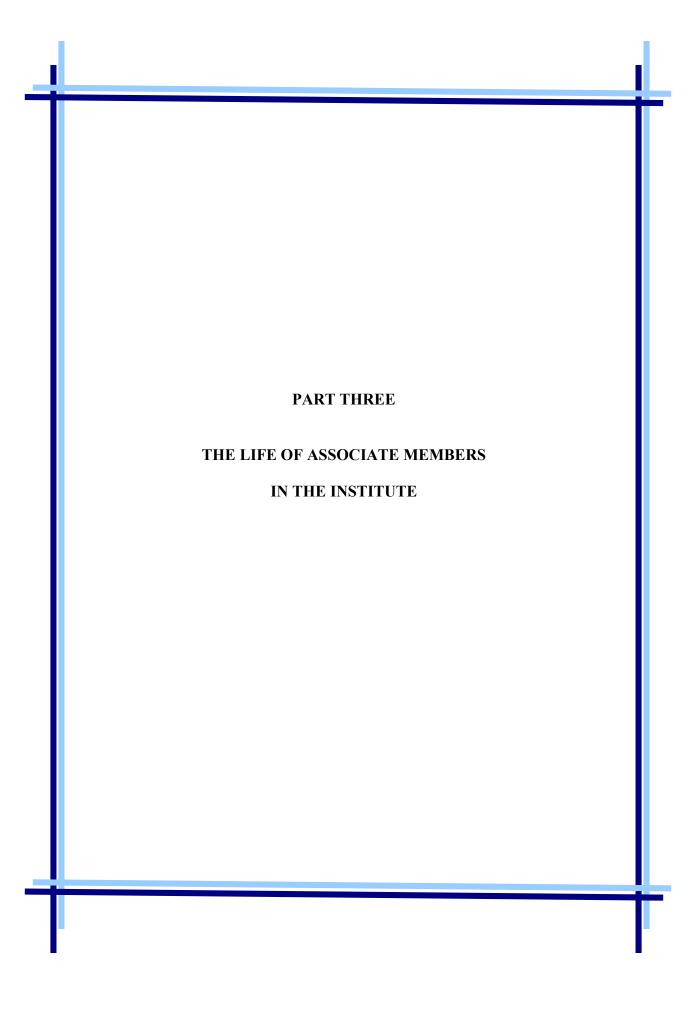
If the majority of the District council pronounce themselves by secret ballot in favour of the member's dismissal, the case is submitted to the Central Council. If the latter decides on dismissal, the Director General issues the decree of dismissal which, however, does not take effect before confirmation of the dismissal by the Holy See.

Dismissal always comprises dispensation from vows made in the Institute.

- 93. If the dismissed member can not support himself by his own means, the District council shall decide on the aid to be offered for the sake of charity.
- 94. Whenever a question of dismissal arises, both the District Director and the Director General are obligated to resort to all possible means suggested by prudence and Christian charity to bring back the member onto the right path; they must also offend neither justice nor charity, and avoid that the member leave the Institute with the least feeling of resentment.
- **95.** In case of dismissal or departure:
 - 1) the cleric incardinated in a diocese remains attached to his diocese;
 - 2) the cleric incardinated in the Institute must find himself a bishop who would incardinate him according to the recognised procedure.

CHAPTER III Sick and Departed Members

- **96.** The Institute considers it a duty of charity to give all its sick members fitting material and spiritual aid. The Institute helps them deepen their understanding of the Christian meaning of suffering.
- 97. When a member of the Institute is in danger of death, the Team Facilitator advises the member of his state as delicately as possible. The Facilitator helps the member surrender his life to the Lord and ensures that the ailing member receives the sacraments. The Facilitator also informs family as quickly as possible.
- **98.** At the death of a member of the Institute, care is taken to advise the other members. Each member is committed to pray for the deceased member and to celebrate or join in the celebration of the Eucharist.
- 99. Once a month each member offers his day for the Institute's deceased members and benefactors.
- 100. At the death of the Holy Father and of the local bishop, each member offers special prayers for them.



CHAPTER I Associate Members

101. The Voluntas Dei Institute offers sacramentally married couples who desire to live their baptismal faith, a way to Christian perfection and evangelical witness in their own milieu, by associating them to the Institute.

While taking account of their state of life, the Institute offers these couples:

- a commitment to evangelical radicalism;
- a spirituality centred on a life of active charity;
- an apostolic project common to all in the Institute;
- team life;
- sharing in the life and governance of the Institute.
- **102.** Associate Members of the Institute live in all things the spirituality of the Institute, and are committed to every article in these Constitutions pertinent to this spirituality (Art. 1-11).
- **103.** TO CREATE PEACE AND BROTHERHOOD IN JESUS CHRIST: Such is the apostolic objective common to all members of the Institute, regardless of their status (Art. 12-14).
- **104.** Associate Members of the Institute fully participate in the team life of the Institute.
- **105.** Associate Members share in the life and governance of the Institute at every level except for those particulars and restrictions stated in the Constitutions regarding them (Art. 138, 147, 151, 156, 163, 168, 172, 181, 191, 192, 194, 199, 206).

CHAPTER II The Commitments of Associate Members

- 106. Associate Members of the Institute commit themselves in a new way to the ideal of Christian perfection proposed by the Gospel, as well as to living this commitment in the secular mission confided to them by the Church through the Institute. They live their sacramental marriage commitment, witness to the Gospel values in their family and social milieu, and consecrate themselves totally to the Lord.
- 107. This offering is made in the Institute by a commitment to follow the obedient, poor, and chaste Christ according to their state in life.
- 108. The Associate Members' commitment to obedience, poverty, and chastity draws its inspiration from all that has been said regarding the consecration of members in the strict sense, except for the following:
 - 1) Regarding commitment to obedience, Associate Members and the Institute authority take into consideration those obligations inherent to the sate of matrimony which is the prime commitment of their lives.
 - 2) Regarding commitment to poverty, the Institute authorities and the Associate Members take into account the duties of justice and charity between spouses, toward their children, and other family members.
 - 3) In the practice of commitment to chastity, and in response to Christ's special call to love in charity, Associate Members commit themselves to live conjugal chastity and sacramental fidelity in such a way as to render greater glory to God and to help the world grow in the true meaning of love. This sacramental fidelity thus becomes an ecclesial sign of God's love for humankind.
 - Considering that it is a couple's love that is presented as an offering to God through commitment to conjugal chastity, in the event of the death of one of the spouses, the other spouse may continue his commitment in the Institute if the decision is made not to remarry.
- **109.** The Formula of Commitment of Associate Members is the following:

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, in order to respond more fully to the grace of my baptism and to better create peace and brotherhood in Jesus Christ, I commit myself as an Associate Member to live the commitments of obedience, poverty, and chastity until , according to the Constitutions of the Voluntas Dei Institute. May God come to my assistance.

CHAPTER III Incorporation of Associate Members

Admission

- 110. The admission of Associate Members to the Institute starts them on a process of gradual formation leading to definitive association with the Institute. This process comprises the following stages:
 - Aspirancy
 - Probation
 - Commitment prior to Stability
 - Stability
- 111. To be admitted into the Voluntas Dei Institute, the candidate must be free of any tie that is incompatible with the obligations he or she is about to take up. Moreover, the candidate must be directed by the right intention, be capable of fulfilling the spiritual and apostolic life commitments as proposed by the Institute, and possess sufficient maturity in his marriage commitment.
- 112. The candidate must fulfill the ordinary formalities of the Institute and produce the documents required for admission.

Before admission, the candidate must:

- 1) make a written personal request to the District Director;
- 2) complete the Institute's admission form;
- 3) append the following documents:
 - one's curriculum vitae
 - certificates of baptism and confirmation
 - copy of the marriage certificate and of any other official document justifying one's state in life
 - certificates of sound physical, psychological and moral health, given by competent persons
 - the written permission of one's bishop, if the candidate is a permanent deacon.

Aspirancy

113. Admission to and duration of Aspirancy for Associate Members in the Institute follow the guidelines set in Articles 65 to 71 of these Constitutions.

Probation

- 114. Probation for Associate Members refers to the formation period during which they consciously prepare to freely commit themselves to follow Christ according to the spirit of the Beatitudes and the evangelical counsels.
- 115. To be accepted to Probation, the Associate Members must:
 - live in the sacramental state of matrimony;
 - not be bound by commitment to another institute.
- 116. Once accepted to Probation, the Aspirant must read and sign in the presence of two (2) witnesses one of whom is the District Director or his delegate the following statement:

On this day, in complete freedom, I begin my period of Probation in the Voluntas Dei Institute as an Associate Member, so as to share in the Institute's ecclesial mission in the midst of the world.

I commit myself to work seriously at my sanctification by using those means offered me by the Institute. May God come to my assistance.

117. Duration of the Probation period and eventual separation from the Institute at this stage are specified in Articles 76 and 77.

Commitments

118. At the end of one's period of Probation, the Associate Member makes a written request to the District Director to make his commitment in the Institute as an Associate Member. The right to admit belongs to the District Director, after consent of his council.

If the Probationer is admitted, he or she hereafter enjoys within the Institute a status corresponding to that of the Professed Members, except for stipulations to the contrary, in the present Constitutions.

- 119. By making his Commitment to live obedience, poverty, and evangelical chastity according to the Constitutions, the Associate Member commits oneself to strive for evangelical perfection according to the spirituality of the Institute, and to exercise apostolic charity under the direction of authority.
- **120.** Commitments are annual and always renewable. However, from his first Commitment, the Associate Member must, in his heart and mind intend to give himself totally and irrevocably to Jesus Christ.
- **121.** While it is understood that the Commitments of Associate Members are not a public profession of evangelical counsels, Articles 81 to 84 apply to Associate Members also, by replacing « Commitments » for « Vows » or « Profession », and « Committed Associate » where the text has « Professed ».

Stability

- **122.** After five (5) years of Commitment, the Institute grants Stability to an Associate Members:
 - if he or she requests it from the District Director,
 - if the District council recommends the member to the Central council,
 - if the Central council grants the request.

The member thus admitted henceforth acquires permanent incorporation in the Institute.

123. Stability in the Institute for an Associate Members is conferred in the following terms:

The Voluntas Dei Institute, happy to give thanks to God with who has lived years of Commitment in the Institute as an Associate Member, commits itself to henceforth consider him (her) as permanently associated to the Institute.

Eventual Separation from the Institute

124. An Associate Member is free to leave the Institute at the expiration of his annual Commitments, for a serious motive made known to competent authority.

Likewise, for just and reasonable motives and after customary warnings (Art. 91), the District Director with consent of his council, may refuse admission to renewal of Commitments to an Associate Member who does not have Stability. The member must then leave the Institute.

- **125.** Dismissal of an Associate Member after Stability requires serious reasons, namely:
 - 1) scandal against the natural law;
 - 2) notorious infidelity to one's commitments as an Associate Member of the Institute:
 - infidelity to married life,
 - refusal to share in the financial burden of the Institute according to the minimum specified by legitimate authorities,
 - refusal to obey an order given in the name of the commitment to obedience.

When such a situation arises, two (2) reprimands with threat of dismissal are made by the District Director, in writing or in the presence of two (2) witnesses.

If, following the second reprimand and further lapses, a majority of the District council vote by secret ballot for dismissal of the Associate Member, the case is submitted to the Central council. If the latter decides on dismissal, the Director General notifies the member concerned of his dismissal, and this, in writing.

Dismissal of one of the spouses does not deprive the other of his right to remain an Associate Member of the Institute.

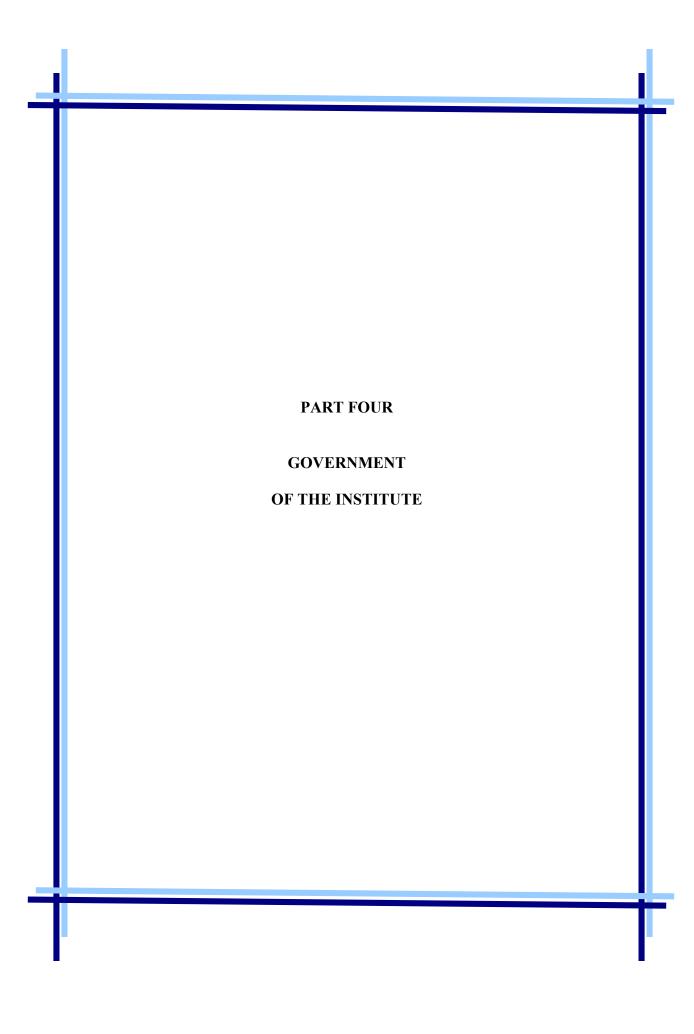
Throughout these different steps, the authorities concerned shall be careful to safeguard the terms of Article 94.

CHAPTER IV Formation of Associate Members

- **126.** The formation of Associate Members takes into account the general dispositions regarding formation, in Part One of the Constitutions (Art. 20 to 31).
- **127.** The District Director and his council ensure that the Associate Members receive the help necessary to nourish their conjugal spirituality on the Word of God and the teaching of the Church.

CHAPTER V Sick and Deceased Associate Members

- **128.** It is a service of charity for the Institute to provide all its sick Associate Members with the material and spiritual help they need. The Institute helps them deepen their Christian understanding of suffering.
- **129.** When an Associate Member is in danger of death, his Team Leader or Sector Facilitator advises the member as delicately as possible regarding the seriousness of his condition, helps the ailing member make the sacrifice of his life, and ensures that he or she receives the sacraments.



CHAPTER I Authority as Service

130. The Voluntas Dei Institute is composed of Districts divided into Sectors.

However, it is within the Team that members of the Institute live out their life of attachment to the will of God and of service to the Church. What gives the Team its character is concern for carrying out God's will together, abiding by the objective and the spirituality of the Institute, with each one acting according to his particular charism.

It is in this spirit that those involved in the service of authority constantly endeavour to discern what God expects from the whole as well as from each one, regarding the Church and the Institute, along with the concrete situations of those in the Institute. The role of authority is therefore one of mediation, and authority must ensure that the members are aware of carrying out not their own will, but the will of God.

- 131. Attuned to the will of God and to the members, authority remains attentive to those channels through which the will of God is made known. It is only after such patient and charitable searching that authority makes decisions required for the benefit of each and everyone. As the link of charity and unity, they have at heart to promote in the Institute an atmosphere of trust and collaboration in which all feel at ease to take up their share of responsibility in view of the apostolate.
- 132. In a spirit of total availability and out of responsible obedience, members apply all their resources and initiative to carrying out their professional and apostolic task.

Conscious of the respect due to persons, they do not content themselves with simply executing orders received, but they strive to engage in a frank and open dialogue with authority. This is a condition essential to the exercise of authority as a service.

While maintaining their right of appeal to higher authority in case of conflict, members nonetheless keep in mind that they must submit to the decisions of authority, in order to respect the common good and the will of God.

CHAPTER II Authority in the Institute

133. The First Superior of the Voluntas Dei Institute is the Holy Father to whom all members owe obedience, even in virtue of their vow of obedience.

All members are subject to the jurisdiction of the local ordinary, according to the prescriptions of canon law.

- **134.** Within the Institute, authority is vested in the following:
 - the Director General assisted by his council, for the Institute as a whole;
 - District Directors assisted by their respective council;
 - Sector Facilitators.

The Director General and the District Directors are major superiors.

- 135. Exceptionally, supreme authority in the Institute is vested in the Assembly General duly convened. Likewise at the District level, authority is exceptionally exercised by the District Assembly duly convened.
- **136.** The Director General and the District Director, each according to his own competence, the prescriptions of canon law, and the present Constitutions, have the power to govern the Institute and administer its temporal affairs, as well as to make decisions required for the good of each and everyone, following a patient and charitable search of the will of God.

CHAPTER III The Assembly General

137. *De jure*, the Assembly General meets every six (6) years for the election of the Director General and councillors, and to deal with the Institute's most pressing matters.

Members of the Assembly General

- **138.** The Assembly General is composed of
 - 1) *Ex officio* members:
 - the Director General
 - the councillors General
 - Directors of officially erected Districts
 - Directors of Districts-in-formation
 - The Director General who convened the last Assembly General

2) Elected delegates:

- In each officially erected District or District-in-formation, Professed delegates are elected by the Professed Members, and the Associate Members delegates are elected by the committed Associate Members.
- The delegates are elected keeping in mind the composition of the Assembly General, in which the number of Professed delegates may not be inferior to that of the ex officio members. Regarding the number of Associate Members delegates, it shall be one-third that of the Professed delegates.
- **139.** If the Secretary General and the Director of Administrative Services are not members of the Central council or delegates to the Assembly General, they are asked to appear before the Assembly for questions concerning their mandates, but they do not have the right to vote.
- **140.** The Director General and the councillors General remain members of the Assembly until the end, even if they are not re-elected.

Convocation and Procedure

- **141.** The Assembly General is de jure convened by the Director General or, if the office is vacant, by the Assistant Director General.
- **142.** The Director General is de jure president of the Assembly General. If he so desires, he may leave to the Assembly the task of appointing a chairman for the duration of the Assembly, while respecting Articles 155, 156, and 161.

143. The Assembly General then proceeds with the election – by a relative majority of votes – of the Secretary whose duty is to draw up the acts of the Assembly.

Intermediate Assembly

144. According to need, an Intermediate Assembly brings together every three (3) years and for consultation only, the Director General, his councillors, the Directors of officially erected Districts and Districts-in-formation, and the former Director General.

The Intermediate Assembly studies questions regarding the spiritual life, the Institute's apostolic commitment, formation, and any other pertinent issues.

The Central council reserves the right to invite other members to the Intermediate Assembly.

Reports to be tabled at the Assembly General

- **145.** The Assembly General receives the following reports:
 - 1) From the Director General, a written relation regarding the state of the Institute.
 - 2) From the Director of Administrative Services, a certified report on the Institute's financial status.
 - 3) From the Director of Formation, a written report on his work since the last Assembly General, and his recommendations for better service to the Church and the Institute.
 - 4) From the Directors of officially erected Districts and Districts-in-formation, a written account on the state and financial situation of their respective region.

Matters to be treated at the Assembly General

- **146.** The Assembly General deals with the Institute's most important matters, that is:
 - 1) To study and decide on necessary adaptations to the Constitutions and Rules of the Institute, following directives received to that effect since the last Assembly General, from the Holy See for secular institutes.
 - 2) To search for those means that are best suited for preserving and amending the discipline of the Institute, and to promote the effectiveness and expansion of its apostolate.
 - 3) To determine the sums which the Director General and the District Directors may dispose of or authorize for extraordinary expenses, either by themselves or with the assent of their respective councils.
 - 4) To study the proposals submitted to the Assembly General and respond to them in the most fitting manner.
 - 5) To relocate the Institute's headquarters. In this case, permission of the two local ordinaries involved the bishop from whose diocese we are moving and the one into whose diocese we are moving is required.
 - 6) To receive and accept the Institute's financial statements.
 - 7) To review the formation guides pertinent to each stage of formation.

147. Unless otherwise specified, all matters at the Assembly General are decided by an absolute majority.

Associate Member delegates are de jure members of the Assembly and have an advisory vote when the matter at hand concerns the Associate Members as a whole or each Associate Member in particular, as well as when the Assembly deals with matters affecting them even in an indirect way. They are also invited, with the right to an advisory vote, to join in discussions regarding the Institute's charism, and to join in all other matters, but in these last they have no voting rights.

- **148.** The Assembly General has power to modify or interpret the Constitutions. Any modifications or interpretations require at least a two-third majority vote by the Assembly General, and the assent of the Apostolic See.
- **149.** The Assembly General can make rules for the entire Institute, provided they do not disagree with canon law and or the Constitutions.

Election Procedure

- **150.** The Director General and councillors general are elected towards the end of the Assembly General.
- **151.** To be eligible for election as Director General, one must:
 - have completed thirty-five (35) years of age;
 - have had Stability in the Institute for at least five (5) years;
 - be a priest.

Is elected a person of sound judgement, great strength of character, good prudence, and known for his great attachment to the Church and the Institute.

152. The Assembly General elects from among its non-eligible members and by a relative majority of votes a chairperson to preside over the election of the Director General.

The two (2) youngest members of the Assembly General act as scrutineers.

The election chairperson and the two scrutineers maintain their right to vote.

153. The Director General is elected by an absolute majority of votes. In a first exploratory stage, the members of the Assembly indicate their preference by secret ballot. This exploratory ballot replaces nominations.

Those whose candidacy is recommended by the exploratory ballot state – if they are present at the Assembly – whether or not they accept their nomination. The election then follows.

154. If after the first ballot no candidate has received an absolute majority of votes, a second ballot is required.

If following the second ballot no candidate has received an absolute majority of votes, a third ballot is required.

If after the third ballot no candidate has received an absolute majority of votes, a fourth ballot is cast on which are entered only those two (2) members of the Institute having obtained the greatest number of votes cast.

At the fourth ballot is elected the candidate who has received the suffrage of at least fifty percent (50%) of the voting members.

If at this fourth ballot the vote is tie (50% - 50%), the senior by Profession is elected, and where there is parity of Profession, the older in age is elected.

If no candidate fills these conditions, the process must be repeated (Art. 153), after a brief adjournment if necessary.

- **155.** If the newly-elected Director General is not present at the Assembly, the Assembly is suspended until his arrival. In case the newly-elected cannot attend, he appoints a member of the Assembly to at in his name.
- 156. Under the presidency of the newly-elected Director General or his delegate, the Assembly proceeds with the election of the councillors general and, from among these newly-elected councillors, they elect the Assistant Director General who must fulfill the same election conditions as the Director General (Art. 151).
- 157. To be elected a councillor, one must be at least thirty (30) years of age and have Stability in the Institute. Besides, are elected only those who are truly capable of filling those functions that have been indicated above regarding the Director. Those elected must accept their election as an opportunity offered them to devote themselves to the good of the Church and the Institute.
- **158.** The Assembly Secretary draws up the acts of these elections, which acts are signed by the newly-elected Director General or his delegate, the two scrutineers, and the Secretary himself, for preservation in the archives of the Institute.

Official Acts of the Assembly General

159. All acts of the Assembly General are faithfully recorded by the outgoing Director General, the Assembly Secretary, and the two scrutineers. These acts are preserved in the archives of the Institute.

The outgoing Director General adjourns the Assembly General.

160. Decisions of the Assembly General are communicated to the members of the Institute by the Director General, and they remain in force until the next Assembly General which can modify or repeal them according to whether such is deemed advisable.

161. In the event of the Assembly General in progress being adjourned for more than two (2) weeks, the newly-elected Director General exercises the rights of his charge specified in Article 142.

CHAPTER IV The Director General

- **162.** The Director General of the Institute is elected by the Assembly General to a six-year term. He may not serve more than two (2) consecutive terms. For the duration of his mandate, he ceases to be under the jurisdiction of his District of origin.
- 163. With assistance from his council, the Director General governs and administers the entire Institute according to the canonical rules regulating secular institutes, and these Constitutions. Although everything depends on his authority, he exercises it regularly by following established hierarchical order. He has authority over everyone in the Institute, and he has the right to participate in all official meetings of the Institute, at every level. If need be, the Director General may delegate a Professed Member to act in his name. This delegate may be a committed Associate Member, if matters to be dealt with concern only the Associate Members in general or one of them in particular.
- **164.** The Director General vigilantly watches over the faithful observance of the Constitutions, and the Rules and Statutes of the Institute, and employs the means necessary to this end.
- **165.** The Director General must be free from all tasks which could be prejudicial to the duties of his charge.
- **166.** The Director General himself or, if he is legitimately prevented, his delegate must officially visit every District of the Institute once every six (6) years; he may also make any such visit each time it is deemed necessary.

If it is a matter of delegating a Visitor for the entire Institute or one District, he must obtain the assent of his council.

167. The Visitor has the right and the duty to question all the members of the Institute, during his visitation, and to seek information on everything regarding the Institute. All members have the duty to answer truthfully, and no one may either prevent or hamper in any way the object of this visitation.

The Director General must present to his council the report of his visitation, as well as that of his delegate.

CHAPTER V The Central Council

168. Besides the Director General, the Central council is composed of eight (8) councillors General, including one couple to represent the Associate Members.

The councillors general are elected by the Assembly General for a period of six (6) years, and they may not serve for more than two (2) consecutive terms.

The council is presided by the Director General or the Assistant Director General. The quorum required is for (4) Professed Members.

- **169.** According to the Constitutions, the Councillors general help the Director General in the governance, administration, and spiritual leadership of the Institute. That is why they may not take on charges that would prevent them from adequately carrying out their office.
- **170.** The Assistant Director General elected for this purpose by the Assembly General has the special task of replacing the Director General when the latter is either absent or incapacitated, or in the event of a vacancy.

In this latter case, by the very fact of the vacancy of office, the Assistant Director General is invested with the powers of the Director General himself, unless otherwise stipulated by the Constitutions. He continues with the Central council to govern the Institute until election of the new Director General, seeing to duly convene the Assembly General as soon as possible, for this election. This convocation must be within twelve (12) months of the date of vacancy. During his administration, he takes care to maintain the Institute's status quo as closely as possible, making changes only when it is urgent to do so.

171. The Director General convenes his council at least once a semester or more often, as he deems necessary.

When the Director General requires the assent of his council before taking action, he proceeds as follows:

- 1) he convenes the councillors, for their vote;
- 2) if their consent is required, the Director General cannot validly act counter to the majority vote;
- 3) if it is prescribed that he only consider their advice, it is sufficient that the Director General receive that advice without having to follow it, in order to act in a valid manner. It is nonetheless wise for the Director General to carefully consider this advice and, especially when it is unanimous, not to disregard it without a truly overriding reason which he himself considers and judges.

172. Decisions to be voted on require a majority vote, usually taken by secret ballot.

The Associate couple elected councillors general participate *de jure* in council meetings. They have a deliberative vote when the vote to be taken affects areas concerning the Associate Members as a group, each Associate Member in particular, or when it is a matter of deciding on questions that may regard them even indirectly. They are invited to attend the other sessions, but without voting rights.

- **173.** Besides those cases mentioned by canon law or other sections of the present Constitutions, the Central council's deliberative vote is required to:
 - 1) determine the place and date of the Assembly General;
 - 2) convene an extraordinary Assembly General;
 - 3) convene an intermediate Assembly General;
 - 4) officially erect, modify, or suppress a District;
 - 5) establish or suppress a District-in-formation;
 - 6) found, constitute, accept, or suppress with requisite authorization of the local ordinary a particular work;
 - 7) approve a District's statutes;
 - 8) appoint the Secretary General and the Director or Administrative Services;
 - 9) accept the resignation of a member of the Central council, of the Secretary General, or of the Director of Administrative Services;
 - 10) appoint a councillor general to fill a vacancy;
 - 11) dismiss a councillor general, with approval of the Holy See;
 - 12) appoint a visitor general for the entire Institute or for a District;
 - 13) ratify the election, relieve of their office or accept the resignation of District Directors and their councillors before the expiration of their term of office;
 - 14) appoint a Director for a District-in-formation until such time as the Director General allows the District to elect one on its own;
 - 15) admit a Professed Member or a committed Associate Member to Stability, following the recommendation of the District Director and his council;
 - 16) accept, refuse, or postpone a member to Aspirancy, Probation, Profession or Commitment, and Stability, or dismiss one, where there is no District;
 - 17) accept to deaconate or priesthood a candidate recommended by the District council;
 - 18) incardinate in the Institute a cleric who has already been granted Stability;
 - 19) decide on the dismissal of a member, following articles 91, 92 and 125;

- 20) authorize a District council to accept someone who at one time had been a Professed or committed Associate Member in the Institute;
- 21) approve financial statements and reports of the Director of Administrative Services;
- 22) approve the Institute's annual financial statements;
- 23) authorize the Director of Administrative Services and the District Directors to incur exceptional expenses over and above the amount allowed them by the Assembly General;
- 24) authorize the estrangement of Institute property, the value of which exceeds the powers of the District Directors. If there is question of valuable objects or of others the value of which goes beyond the limit set by ecclesiastical authority, a deliberative vote of the Central council is required to authorize transfer only after prior permission of competent authority;
- 25) authorize the Director of Administrative Services and the District Directors to incur extraordinary expenses or obligations for sums exceeding their powers. If these sums exceed those set by ecclesiastical authority, the prior authorization of competent authority is required;
- 26) authorize the Director of Administrative Services and the District Directors to invest sums and transfer funds, when the sum exceeds that established by the Assembly General;
- 27) authorize the acceptance of mortgaged legacies or donations, safeguarding article 188;
- 28) accept budget estimates of the central administration, and take appropriate measures for securing the funds necessary for the general administration of the Institute and for coming to the financial aid of less fortunate Districts;
- 29) accept District budget estimates and modify them, if necessary.
- **174.** For a decision to be valid regarding questions relating to numbers 173.2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 22, at least six (6) councillors must be present.
- 175. The Central council's advisory vote is required in those instances stipulated by canon law and by the Constitutions, as well as when the Director General considers any appeal from a member whose Profession, Commitment, or Stability has been refused or postponed by a District council.
- 176. In all other cases where neither canon law nor the Constitutions require the council's deliberative or advisory vote, the Director General may always validly proceed by himself in total freedom. However, it is wise for him, even in these matters especially in important matters implying serious dangers or consequences not to proceed without seeking the advice of his council.

- 177. Whenever the Director General requests the vote or advice of his councillors, he must make known to them clearly and completely the question at hand, and provide them with all the information and documents pertaining to the issue or which shed light on it. For their part, the councillors must give their opinion in all honesty, and loyally vote according to their consciences.
- 178. The councillors general must be discrete and prudent. They are bound to confidentiality regarding all matters discussed at council as well as regarding matters they learn about through exercise of their office. Should anyone break this confidentiality, he should be severely reprimanded.
- **179.** It is the Director General's responsibility to publish the council's decisions if it is deemed necessary or timely, to declare them compulsory, and to regulate their application.
- **180.** Minutes of council meetings are recorded by the Secretary General in a special minutes book, and they are signed by the Director General, all council members present at the time, and the Secretary General.

CHAPTER VI

The Secretary General and the Director of Administrative Services

- **181.** The Secretary General is chosen by the Director General and his council from among the professed members who may or not be members of the council. The Director of Administrative Services is chosen by the Director General and his council from among the professed members or committed members of the Institute who may or not be members of the council.
- **182.** The Secretary General and the Director of Administrative Services are appointed to a three-year, renewable term.
- **183.** Under the direction of the Director General and his council, the Director of Administrative Services oversees the administration of the Institute's holdings.
- **184.** The Secretary is entrusted with recording the acts of the council, with official correspondence, preservation of the archives, and any other task entrusted to him by the Director General.
- **185.** If the Director of Financial Services is not a member of the council, he may be invited to council meetings that deal with matters arising from his competency.

CHAPTER VII Financial Administration

- **186.** The Institute, its officially erected Districts and Districts-in-formation may acquire, own and administer movable goods and real estate in conformity with canon law and the Constitutions.
- 187. The properties of the Institute are administered by the Director of Administrative Services under authority of the Director General and his council. Likewise, District property is administered under the authority and control of the respective directors and councils according to the Constitutions, Rules, and Statutes.
- **188.** The Institute never accepts life-mortgaged legacies or donations. Regarding time-mortgaged legacies and donations, however, District Directors in council accept them only with the utmost circumspection, and with the authorization of the Central council.

CHAPTER VIII Districts

- **189.** The official erection of a District is reserved to the Director General and his council.
- **190.** Each District is under the immediate authority of a District Director who exercises authority over all members within the District; he also has the right to attend all official District meetings.
- 191. What has been stated regarding the functioning of the general government of the Institute also applies to the governance of Districts, unless circumstances dictate otherwise. Necessary adaptations shall be made, in these cases, except for those prescriptions contained in this chapter.

District statutes are established by the District Assembly and submitted for approval to the Director General and his council. These statutes take into account the particular situation of the members and the milieu's cultural values. These adaptations must also be consonant with the Constitutions.

Officially Erected Districts

192. The District Director must be a Professed Member with Stability, who is recommended by his fervent life, untiring devotedness, unswerving love for the Institute, and recognized for his prudence in administration and leadership.

Because he is a major superior, the District Director must be a priest.

- **193.** The District Director is elected to a four-year term by the District Assembly, and he may not serve more than two (2) consecutive terms. The election must be confirmed by the Director General and his council, before taking effect.
- **194.** Are elected District councillors by the District Assembly Professed Members and one (1) committed Associate Member couple who are truly capable of performing this function. Before taking effect, the elections must be ratified by the Director General and his council.
- 195. Deliberative decisions of the District council are usually taken by secret ballot and are carried by majority vote.
- **196.** Deliberative vote of the District council is required in the following instances:
 - 1) to accept, refuse or postpone members to Aspirancy, Probation, Profession and Commitment before Stability;
 - 2) to refuse, postpone, or recommend to the Central council a member for Stability;

- 3) to accept, refuse or postpone the rite of admission to ministries to candidates for the priesthood;
- 4) to study requests for the deaconate and priesthood and, if accepted, to recommend the candidates to the Central council;
- 5) to recommend to the Central council the dismissal of a Professed Member or a committed Associate Member, according to articles 91, 92 and 125;
- 6) to recommend to the Central council the acceptance of someone having already been a Professed Member or a committed Associate Member in the Institute;
- 7) to manage the District's personnel;
- 8) to accept the resignation of the District Director or of one of the councillors (all decisions in this matter must be submitted to the Central council for final approval);
- 9) to recommend to the Central council the dismissal of a member of the District council;
- 10) to accept the resignation of the District Secretary or of the Director of Administrative Services;
- 11) to set up Sectors and Teams;
- 12) to appoint Sector Facilitators;
- 13) to ratify the election of the Team Leader or, if necessary, to appoint one after consulting with the Sector Facilitator;
- 14) to establish general guidelines for the District's apostolic commitment;
- 15) to approve civil contracts as well as agreements with the local Church which bind the District and which become valid only after the signed, written agreement of the Director General or his delegate;
- 16) to approve the District budget to be submitted to the Central council for ratification;
- 17) to decide on measures to be taken for securing funds needed for the good administration of the District;
- 18) to intervene regarding members' use and disposal of their property, in conformity with the Constitutions and the District statutes;
- 19) to take the necessary measures to constitute and administer a common fund to ensure the security of the contributing members (the fund's proposed structure shall be submitted to the Central council for ratification);
- 20) to administer any other fund needed for the District's good operation;
- 21) to convene the District Assembly;
- 22) to appoint a person or persons as Director(s) of Formation;
- 23) to approve formation programmes.

In the above-mentioned cases, the District Director can act validly only after having received a majority vote of his council.

197. The District Director with his council:

- 1) organises at the District level those meetings stipulated by the Constitutions and Statutes;
- 2) transmits as soon as possible to the Central council one (1) copy of the following documents:
 - minutes of District council meetings
 - Aspirants' admission questionnaires, completed and signed copies of Aspirancy, Probation, Profession and Commitment forms
 - Contracts and agreements binding the District
 - the annual financial statement.

The District Assembly

198. The District Assembly is convened at least once every four (4) years.

It is called to elect the District Director and his councillors, to draft or revise the statutes and submit them to the Director General, to receive financial statements and reports, to study and otherwise deal with questions of the District's spiritual life, apostolic commitment, and formation, as well as with the other most important affairs of the District.

199. The District Assembly is composed of the following:

- 1) ex officio members:
 - District Director
 - District councillors
 - the District Director who convened the last District Assembly.
- 2) elected delegates:
 - Professed Member delegates to the Assembly are elected by the District Professed Members, and the committed Associate Member delegates are elected by the District committed Associate Members.
 - the Associate Member delegates take part in the District Assembly in the same manner stated regarding the Assembly General (Art. 47).
- **200.** Regarding procedure to be followed for the election of the District Director and the District councillors, and the rules of order for the District Assembly, refer to what has been said about the Assembly General.

Districts-in-formation

- **201.** A District is called "in formation" when it is established as such by the Director General and his council.
- **202.** The Director of a District-in-formation is appointed by the Director General and his council. When the District-in-formation has progressed, the Director General may allow its members to elect their own Director.
- **203.** It is the duty of the District-in-formation, in collaboration with the Director General, to take dispositions for its own operation. To this end reference is made to those dispositions made regarding officially erected Districts, and structures are gradually put into place.
- **204.** Before the erection of a District-in-formation into a District, the Central council considers the following points, among others:
 - number of Professed Members and committed Associate Members with and without Stability in the Institute,
 - number of Sectors and Teams,
 - hope of further development,
 - possibility for financial self-financing,
 - possibility for self-management.

CHAPTER IX Sectors

205. Within a District, a Sector is a grouping of members who are geographically close to one another or who share a common language. The Sector comprises one or more Teams.

206. The Sector is under the authority of a Facilitator chosen from among the Professed Members and appointed by the District Director and his council for a two-year, renewable term.

The Sector Facilitator is answerable to the District Director, regarding the state and functioning of his Sector.

- **207.** Tasks of the Sector Facilitator are the following:
 - 1) to be a reference point of authority for the member in matters pertaining to the vows and commitments, according to stipulations of the present Constitutions and the District statutes;
 - 2) to guide the members of his Sector during their formation period prior to Stability;
 - 3) to advise the District Director at the different stages of incorporation prior to Stability;
 - 4) to guide the Sector in collaboration with the Team Leaders and in accord with the District Director;
 - 5) to accept any other mandate given by the District Director, on behalf of members of the Sector.

Meetings of the Sector Facilitator with a member shall always take place in a spirit of friendly and fraternal dialogue marked by discretion.

The Constitutions of the Voluntas Dei Institute are for its members an expression of the will of God and a special way of responding to their particular vocation.

Besides, to be obedient servants of the Spirit, members shall take special care to deepen their understanding of these Constitutions through prayer, and to faithfully apply them to their lives.

APPENDIX

Decree of Erection as Secular Institute of Diocesan Right

Joseph-Roméo Gagnon

By the Grace of God and the Authority of the Apostolic See Bishop of Edmundston

To Our dear Sons the members of the VOLUNTAS DEI INSTITUTE: greetings and blessing in the Lord.

CONSIDERING the canonical erection of the Voluntas Dei Association as a pious union, effected May 8, 1958, by His Excellency Bishop Henri Routhier, O.M.I., Vicar Apostolic of Grouard where the Association was born;

CONSIDERING the organisation of the above-mentioned Association aiming at the formation and sanctification of its members according to the norms of the Apostolic Constitution "Provida Mater Ecclesia";

CONSIDERING the ever-increasing number of its members and its works in such a way that said Association already number close to two hundred members either in formation or already exercising their apostolate in several Canadian dioceses and in foreign countries;

CONSIDERING the canonical erection of said Association – whose Central House is located in the Edmundston Diocese – as an Association of Perfection under the name of Voluntas Dei Institute caused by Us to be effected on May 31, 1963, by virtue of faculties to Us conceded by a rescript of the Sacred Congregation for Religious (Prot. No. IS 225-60) dated May 1, 1963;

CONSIDERING the petition to Us addressed by the Reverend Father Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I., Founder of said Association, requesting that it please Us to erect the said Association to the rank of a Secular Institute:

CONSIDERING the faculties granted Us by the Apostolic Constitution "Provida Mater Ecclesia", Art. 6, par. 1 and 2, and by the Nihil Obstat of the Sacred Congregation for Religious granted in a rescript bearing Protocol Number IS 225-60 and dated Pentecost Sunday, June 6, 1965,

Have decreed and do decree the following:

Art. 1 - Is canonically erected as a Secular Institute of Diocesan Right the Association of Perfection known as the "Voluntas Dei Institute".

Art. 2 - The Institute is to comply as soon as possible with the request made by the Sacred Congregation for Religious that corrections be made to the Institute's Constitutions.

Art. 3 - Members of the Institute having previously professed vows in the Association will have to renew them as soon as possible after the present erection as a Secular Institute. The period of consecration already spent in the Association maintains all of its canonical effects for

the member of the new Secular Institute.

Art. 4 - By the fact of the Institute's canonical erection, the already existing Centres become

ipso facto Centres of the Institute.

Art. 5 - Copy of this decree must appear at the head of the Constitutions.

All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Edmundston, at Our Episcopal Palace, under Our signature and seal and the signature of Our Chancellor, the second day of July in the year of our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and Sixty-Five, on the feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Joseph-Romeo Gagnon Bishop of Edmundston

By authority of The Most Reverend Bishop of Edmundston.

The Rev. Aldéo Daigle Chancellor