

FIRST PART

The Somascan Congregation

1. *Founder.*

The humble Congregation of the Somascan religious¹
originates from the *Company of the Servants of the Poor*,
which was founded in the Church of God
by St. Jerome Emiliani
under the action of the Holy Spirit.
Converted to God and deeply renewed
through the intercession of the Virgin Mary,
ardently desiring to follow the way of the Crucified
and to imitate Christ, his Master²,
he became poor
and dedicated his whole being to serving the poor³.
Moved by divine love,
he attracted other men
who, out of love for the Gospel,
offered themselves to Christ along with him⁴.
By committing himself to all works of mercy,
our most fervent Father
lived and proposed to his companions
a way of life
which manifests the offering of oneself to Christ⁵
in serving the poor.
For this reason, in the beginning people used to call them
*Fathers of the Works and the Poor*⁶.

2. *Recognition by the Church.*

On December 6, 1568, St. Pius V included the new Company, that was developing with rich fruits for the Church, in the list of the Congregations of the Clerics Regular⁷. He gave it the right to profess solemn vows and subjected it directly to the Apostolic See.

3. *Apostolic Mission.*

From its very beginning, for the good of the Church, and in order to respond to the appeals of her shepherds our Congregation has undertaken various apostolic activities inspired by the love of Christ⁸. With the same intense love of its Founder, our Congregation continues to devote herself to the material and spiritual care of orphans and the poor⁹, undertakes the human and Christian education of youth and pastoral ministry.

4. *Form of Life.*

The Somascan Congregation is a clerical institute of pontifical right, consisting of religious, priests and laymen. Their lifestyle is the same, even though their ministries are different¹⁰. Following the example of Jesus and his disciples, her members live in community¹¹ sharing everything in common; they persevere united in prayer and work,

strive for the perfection of charity¹²
in humility of heart, meekness, and benignity¹³,
loving poverty and work,
with the most ardent desire
to attract and unite all people to God¹⁴.

5. *Constitutions and Rules.*

The life of the Congregation
is guided by Constitutions and Rules.
They preserve the spirit of the early regulations
and adapt them to the changing times.
Our Congregation proposes them to those
who wish to remain and persevere in her¹⁵.

(1) *C1927*, 1; (2) *An* 5,5; (3) *Lipp* 483; (4) *Moff* 490; (5) *6Let* 6; (6) *C1927*, 2; (7) *C1927*, 5; (8) *C1927*, 2. 4; (9) *C1927*, 913;(10) *C1927*, 5 (11) *C1569*, 41; (12) *LG* 40; (13) *6Let* 7; (14) *Moff* 490; (15) *C1555*, 13.

PART I

Note: The text of the Constitutions is printed in Roman type; the text of the Rules in *Italic type*.

Chapter I

Religious Consecration

6. Divine and Human Dimension of the Religious Consecration.

In his love of predilection, God consecrates us,
calling us to follow his Son¹
in the Somascan Congregation
in order to renew in us the gift of grace²
bestowed upon St. Jerome.
Wishing to return love for love,³
we offer ourselves freely and totally to Christ.
Trusting in him alone⁴
and docile to his Spirit,
we intend to live according to the Evangelical counsels
in brotherly communion
at the service of the poor.

7. Insertion in the Mystery of the Church.

Religious consecration
inserts us in a new way into the Mystery of the Church,
People of God, Bride of Christ, and Temple of the Spirit⁵.
Therefore, we are to be attentive to her needs,
faithful to the instructions of her shepherds,
and zealous so that Christ may continuously renew in her
the sanctity of the Apostolic times⁶.

8. Religious Profession.

By our religious profession
we express our commitment

to responding to the divine call.
In it we profess the vows
of chastity, poverty and obedience
and commit ourselves to live in community
according to our Constitutions and Rules.
Profession makes us sharers in our charism
that is recognized by the Church,
and inserts us in the tradition of sanctity⁷
that, sprung from our Founder as from a fountain,
gives life to our Congregation until today.

9. *Mary, Model of Our Consecration.*

Mary most holy
is the model and support of our consecrated life.
As faithful virgin and humble servant of the Lord,
she lived the evangelical beatitudes in her life
manifesting in the world
the perfect figure of the disciple of Christ⁸.
We appeal to her motherly intercession
so that God may accomplish his Word in us⁹
and, made firm in faith and love¹⁰,
we may be able to offer ourselves every day
as a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to him¹¹.

10. *Testimony of Our Consecrated Life.*

Through our faithfulness
God, who does great things exalting the humble¹²,
transforms us into the image of his Son¹³,
making us a sign of the new life¹⁴
that unites all people in the love of the Father
and prolongs on earth
the predilection of Christ for the little and the poor¹⁵.

(1) *LG* 34,39,40,44; (2) *Eph* 4:7; (3) *C1927*, 354; (4) *2Let* 2; (5) *1Pr* 2:9-10; *Eph* 5:25-32; *1Cor* 6:19; (6) *OnPr* 2; (7) *C1555* 2; (8) *PD*; (9) *Lk* 1:38; (10) *Gal* 5:6; *Eph* 3:17; (11) *Rom* 12:1; (12) *Lk* 1:49.52; *2Let* 9; (13) *2Cor* 3:18; (14) *Rom* 6:4; (15) *LG* 8,46.

Chapter II

Chastity

11. *Spiritual Value.*

Called to be united¹ to God with an undivided heart²,
we foster love and zeal for chastity,
which is gift of the grace of the Lord
and ornament of every perfection³.
It opens our heart
to a more intense experience of God's love,
inspires and promotes brotherhood,
and is a source of apostolic fruitfulness⁴.

12. *Object of the Vow.*

Through the vow of consecrated chastity
for the sake of the kingdom of heaven,
freely and consciously assumed,
we commit ourselves, with the Lord's help,
to perfect continence in celibacy
and to abstaining from what is contrary to it.

13. *Means for a Life of Chastity.*

In order to remain faithful to chastity,
we brighten every day our union with the Lord
with prayer, sacramental life,
and a filial devotion to the Virgin Mother of God.
Always grateful to the Lord
for this gift he continually grants to us,
we do not presume in our strength⁵,

we trust in his help,
and we practice mortification and the custody of the senses⁶.

Typical Expressions of the Somascan Tradition.

The religious who loves chastity:

A. *Develops the means useful to its custody.*

For the custody of chastity, our religious are to develop those means which are constantly proposed by our tradition. They include: faithful fulfillment of one's duties, commitment to study and work, escape from laziness as the source of every evil, and use of all natural means which foster physical and mental health⁷.

B. *Behaves with serene prudence.*

In his ministries, in relationships, and in all the circumstances of his life, our religious are to behave with serene freedom, enlightened prudence, and great love. In visiting people, selecting entertainments, reading books and magazines, and seeking legitimate recreation, they are to be always consistent with his consecration to God.

14. *Chastity and Community.*

Special safeguard and valuable support to chastity are love, which unifies brothers in the community⁸, mutual care, benevolence, and sincerity.

Superiors are to help with kindness and understanding those who might experience particular difficulties, and are to intervene with charity and prudence whenever necessary.

15. *Testimony of Chastity.*

To all those who have frequent dealings with us may we give such a testimony of chastity that, with joy, they may perceive

that through God's help
we are in the world but do not belong to the world⁹,
and that they may praise with us the Lord,
who is the source of every good¹⁰.

(1) *Ps* 63:8; (2) *1Cor* 7:32-34; (3) *C1569*, 43; (4) *PC* 12; (5) *1Cor* 10:12; *C1591* 17; (6) *6Lett* 7.12; *PC* 12; (7) *PC* 12; (8) *PC* 12; (9) *Jn* 17:11.14; (10) *C1927*, 508.

Chapter III

Poverty

16. *Spiritual Value.*

Called to follow Christ Jesus
and to imitate his example and his disciples'
who lived in community,
we have all things in common¹.
We also cherish in our hearts and express by our works
the burning zeal that our Father Saint Jerome² had
for the treasure of evangelical poverty³.
Brimming with confidence in the goodness of the Lord,
our heart free from earthly concerns,
day by day we grow in poverty
so as to share with our brothers and sisters
the riches of the love of God⁴
and the assistance of our fervent charity

17. *Object of the Vow.*

By the vow of poverty, we commit ourselves
not to use and handle material goods
without the consent of our Superiors.
Therefore, we abstain from making and receiving gifts and donations,
even from relatives and friends,
from selling and buying,
lending or borrowing,
keeping in trust anything,
and considering as personal property what we normally use.
Whatever a religious receives,
either for the benefit of his ministry or for that of the institution,
as well as benefits deriving from pensions or insurance,

it all belongs to the community,
and we share it fraternally in common⁵.

18. *Poverty of the Congregation.*

Even though our Congregation
has the right to own the goods
necessary for the support of her members
and for the development of her apostolic works,
she commits herself to be a witness of poverty.
Hence, she is most careful
not only to avoid any accumulation of goods,
but also what is superfluous and has an appearance of luxury⁶.

19. *Spirit of the Somascan Poverty.*

St. Jerome and his early companions
called themselves “*Servants of the Poor*”⁷
and laid down their lives
for the relief of the needy.
Faithful to this legacy,
we recognize as our own vocation
the choice for the poor⁸.
With them we share our life⁹
and even welcome them in our homes.
Preferably, we work in underdeveloped areas¹⁰.
We show an evangelical preference
for what is modest and humble
and obey the common law of work¹¹.

Typical Expressions of the Somascan Tradition.

The religious who is poor:

A. *Is confident in the Lord's Providence.*

Every religious is to always renew his trust in the Lord's Providence¹². In this way, he will be able to accept the hardships and risks of living in poverty with a joyous heart and prompt will¹³. Moreover, content with what the Lord grants him¹⁴, he will provide a genuine testimony to poverty.

B. Looks for the poorest things.

Every religious is to abstain from habits and the use of things which are not compatible with poverty. On the contrary, guided by the Lord's Spirit, he is to diligently seek the poorest things¹⁵ in order to comply more faithfully with the Founder's wishes.

C. Is willing to share everything in common.

No one is to hold as personal those instruments whose use is allowed in the community, but is contrary to poverty if handled exclusively. Whoever is permitted to use them for a legitimate reason, is to be ready to share them at any time¹⁶. Every religious is to handle the community's goods with diligent care.

D. Is willingly dependent upon Superiors and community.

With regard to the daily needs, the religious is to willingly depend upon his Superiors and his community. Such dependence fosters the spirit of faith through which he begs the Providence of the Father for his daily bread¹⁷.

E. Is helped by the example and care of his Superior.

In every community the Superior is to be a stimulus of poverty by his example¹⁸. His task is to eliminate all abuses; but, more importantly, he is to take diligent care of his brothers with religious love by providing them with everything before being asked, so that no one may be put in the position of breaking the vow¹⁹.

20. *Poverty as a Community Commitment.*

While adapting its structures and means to the requirements of the social milieu where it operates,

every community
is to adopt an effective poverty
in its life and ministry²⁰.
In order to achieve this goal, periodically,
a community is to evaluate and review its way of life and possessions.
Moreover, moved by Christ's love,
it is to generously respond to the appeals of the Superiors
for the sake of other communities and the Congregation,
for the needs of the Church and the poor²¹.

21. *Testimony of Poverty.*

If, with God's help,
we will remain faithful to our vocation
of servants of Christ's poor,
we will offer a precious testimony to the world,
and many will be drawn to our works²².

(1) *Acts* 2:44-45; *CI569*, 41; (2) *Ms30* f.21v; (3) *Mt* 13:44; *CI927*, 509; (4) *2Cor* 8:9; (5) *CI927*, 516; (6) *PC* 13; (7) *6Let* 6; (8) *Ord* 33; *An* 16; *Lipp* 483; (9) *An* 14; (10) *An* 13; (11) *PC* 13; *1Let* 21-23; (12) *5Let* 2; (13) *Lipp* 483; (14) *3Let* 10; (15) *Ms30* f.21v; (16) *CI927*, 512; (17) *Mt* 6:11; (18) *CI927*, 517; (19) *CI927*, 526; (20) *ET* 18; (21) *PC* 13; (22) *Ord* 33.

Chapter IV

Obedience

22. Spiritual Value.

Following the example of Christ,
who did his Father' will till death on a cross ¹,
we offer ourselves to God
seeking and accepting his will ²
every moment of our life.
In this way, we will win the freedom
Christ promised to his disciples ³,
proceed faster on the way of perfection ⁴,
and become more available
to serve our brothers and sisters ⁵.

23. Object of the Vow.

Through the vow of obedience,
we commit ourselves to executing the commands of our Superiors
and carrying out the offices assigned by them
in what is in accordance with our Constitutions and Rules.
We recognize the Roman Pontiff
as our supreme Superior;
we give our religious respect and humble service
to his magisterium and directives, even by virtue of the vow.
In our Congregation, those who have the authority to give orders
in virtue of holy obedience,
to which we are expected to seriously obey, are:
the Superior General to all religious,
and the other Major Superiors,
to the extent of their own jurisdiction.

24. *Exercise of Authority and Obedience.*

The Superior is to manifest Christ's love⁶ to his brothers.

They have been entrusted to him by the Lord
and to the Lord he will be accountable for them⁷.

By the particular grace granted to him in the ministry of authority,
he is to lead them to the good.

Along with both, individuals and the community,
he is to seek God's will,
and manifest it through his decisions.

Religious are to make good use of the gifts
which God granted to them for the good of all⁸,
by cooperating actively and responsibly.

They are to dialogue with their Superiors
and be open to welcome the decisions they will deem suitable⁹.

They are to accept with faith the inner suffering
that is often connected with obedience.

Typical Expressions of the Somascan Tradition.

The true obedient:

A. *Welcomes and carries out with trust what has been ordered.*

The true obedient walks the way of Christ with confidence. He is to welcome the Superior's will not only when it is expressed, but also when it is implied, whenever he can predict it. He is to do what is ordered with trust, regarding not the person, but whom the person stands for¹⁰.

B. *Promotes his personality through obedience.*

Religious are not to consider humiliating or contrary to the development of their personality any assignment or work that the Lord entrusts to them through obedience. On the contrary, they are to reckon as certain that that, in God's eyes, the greatest one is the one who humbles himself¹¹.

C. *Is available to transfers and changes of office.*

*As to transfers and changes of office, religious are to show complete openness and accept willingly the obedience that is assigned to them; also, they are not to look for support to avoid it*¹².

D. *Humbly manifests his difficulties.*

*He who is assigned to an office or ministry for which he thinks he is not sufficiently prepared or does not have the skills, is to humbly manifest his difficulty to the Superiors. Then, leaning on obedience as divine strength, he is not to get discouraged, but he is to undertake the assigned task, and he is to hope in the Lord, because He himself will work*¹³.

E. *Submits his initiatives to his Superiors.*

*Religious are to confer with their Superiors and obtain their permission before taking or promoting initiatives, even if they are for the sake of Christian charity. They are to avoid, as much as possible, being involved in affairs with people unrelated to the community*¹⁴.

F. *Asks simply.*

*In presenting the Superiors with their requests, religious are to refrain from excessive insistence or other means which are unworthy of their religious condition; they are to ask in simplicity, ready to give up on their wishes*¹⁵.

25. *Joyful Obedience.*

He who obeys unwillingly,
grumbling or out of fear,
is a source of confusion and ruin within the community¹⁶,
and is unworthy of the status he professes.
It is not he who observes the law by constraint,
but he who gives cheerfully
who grows in the freedom of the Gospel¹⁷.

(1) *Phil* 2:8; (2) *Mt* 6:10; *An* 12; (3) *Gal* 5:1; (4) *C1927*, 474; (5) *PC* 14; (6) *PC* 14; (7) *Heb* 13:17; (8) *PC* 14; (9) *ET* 25; (10) *C1927*, 475; (11) *C1927*, 485; (12) *C1927*, 480-481; (13) *C1927*, 477; (14) *C1927*, 483; (15) *C1927*, 479; (16) *C1569*, 40; (17) *2Cor* 9:7; *C1927*, 476.

Chapter V

Community Life

26. New Family.

Through the grace of our vocation
God gathers us to live in common
as a new family of faith:
loving one another as Christ loved us
and gave himself for us¹,
we form in him one heart and one soul²,
and, sanctified by the Spirit of the Lord,
we announce the kingdom of God and serve the poor³.

I - The Congregation.

27. Brothers in the Somascan Congregation.

The communion of life,
that flows from the bond of our profession,
makes us brothers in the Somascan Congregation
and commits us to faithfully live her charism.
We consider the Congregation as our mother⁴
and endeavor to know and love her.
With generous availability we offer ourselves to her,
ready to go wherever obedience may send us,
so that it might yield abundant fruit in the Church.

28. Priests and Laymen.

In accordance with our Constitutions,

our religious, both priests and laymen,
enjoy equal rights and obligations ⁵,
unless otherwise prescribed by canon law.
Through everyone's faithful cooperation,
in compliance with the grace God bestows upon each one,
the Congregation receives from the Lord the strength
to grow and build up herself in love ⁶.

29. Constitutions and Rules.

Our Constitutions, integrated by the Rules,
are the fundamental norm of our life.
Their faithful observance
makes us sharers in a common way of life,
which strengthens the bonds of love,
assists us in our individual and common journey
toward holiness,
and makes our testimony fruitful.
Our religious are expected to observe
the Constitutions and Rules
by virtue of their profession.
Superiors may temporarily exempt religious
from some disciplinary norms.

II - Local Communities.

30. Congregation and Local Communities.

The Congregation manifests and makes herself present
in the local communities,
where, gathered in the name of the Lord ⁷,
the brothers are strengthened by his Word,
welcome each other in love and simplicity of heart,

share everything in common,
and persevere united in prayer⁸
and apostolic work⁹.

31. *The Journey of the Local Community.*

The local community
is not a mere executer of instructions,
but it actively fosters the life of the Congregation
through its own initiative,
within the boundaries of her directives
and in observance of them.

32. *Superior and Religious.*

Our communities are guided by the Superior,
who is a sign of the presence of Christ among his own.
He is to keep them united
in the harmony of their minds and in their apostolic work,
and welcome all the religious as brothers in the Lord¹⁰.
Religious are to express to him
respect, trust, and confidence,
and are to gladly, openly,
and responsibly cooperate with him¹¹.
The elders and the learned
are to be an example in this¹².

33. *Communities Open to the Poor and Forsaken.*

The life of brotherhood and love
that unites the religious among themselves,
drives our communities to welcome and serve
the poor and forsaken¹³
after the example of our Founder,

and to open themselves generously
to the needs of the people
among whom they minister.

III - Brotherly Love as a Bond of Community Life.

34. Value and Fruits of Brotherly Love.

Every day our communities
are called to grow in love.
Moved by faith,
love leads to give oneself to the brothers.
Through brotherly love,
which finds nourishment in the mystery of the Eucharist,
the community abides in Christ¹⁴,
is enriched by his mind¹⁵,
and lives in Christian joy¹⁶.

35. Inner Intentions.

Sanctified by God's love,
we are called to clothe ourselves
in heartfelt mercy and kindness,
humility, meekness, and patience¹⁷.
With great love
we welcome and forgive each other
and pray for one another¹⁸.

Typical Expressions of the Somascan Tradition.

Love:

A. *Enlivens relations.*

Our religious are to anticipate each other in mutual respect, think highly of each other; they are not to be led by mere human considerations, but with spirit of faith they are to see in everyone the work of the Lord and to appreciate one's virtues and worth¹⁹. An especially intense love must be expressed to our elder confreres, lavishing on them loving care and reverence²⁰.

B. Uplifts conversation.

In conversing, our religious are to take great care to avoid any lack of respect and attention, and to shun what is a sign of thoughtlessness or reason for division²¹. They must strive to be instruments of edification, radiating peace, serenity, and harmony.

C. Is the rule of brotherly correction.

The love of Christ is to direct us with meekness and understanding toward the brother who failed or is the cause of uneasiness in the community. Praying for him and pleading for God's help, approaching him with goodness and patience, we will be instruments of the Lord, so that he may be enlightened of his mistake²².

D. Surrounds persons and things with discretion.

With outsiders, our religious are to use discretion in talking about the internal life of the community and the people of our Congregation²³. Whenever it is necessary, for grave reasons, to consult outsiders, they are to move with prudence and love.

IV - Moments of Life in Common.

36. Common Acts and Brotherly Communion.

Prayer, work, the chapter, meals, and fraternal encounters are special moments in the life of the community, a sign and a source of communion.

Their practical implementation is determined by the Superior, after consulting the chapter of the house, taking into account the instructions of the Chapters and Superiors, and with the approval of the competent Major Superior.

A. *Prayer in Common.*

Our religious are to gather every day for the prayer in common at the time and place established by the Superior, after consulting the Chapter of the house. For such prayer, they may benefit, besides the liturgical celebrations, also from the other forms pointed out by the Constitutions.

B. *Chapter of the House.*

Our religious are to meet periodically under the guidance of the Superior to discuss matters regarding the life of the community and Congregation.

C. *Meals.*

Our religious are to gather together to share their meals in harmony. They are to accept the common food, always keeping in mind the age and other particular conditions of health and work²⁴.

D. *Fraternal Encounters.*

As a means of relaxing after their tasks and of fostering communion, our religious are to prefer to spend their recreation together.

E. *Fidelity and Punctuality.*

Each religious is to be faithful and punctual at the common acts, aware that fidelity and punctuality are signs of mutual and brotherly attention and foster individual and community's work. Possible absences are to be authorized by Superiors.

V - Norms for an Orderly Community Life.

37. *Work and Rest.*

Each religious contributes to the community life also through his own work.

The various activities are to be wisely distributed so that each one may perform his daily duties and enjoy adequate time for himself and a convenient relaxation.

Each is to arrange with his Superior practical ways of rest and vacations, taking into account the general instructions and the needs of the community.

A. *Going out and Traveling.*

In leaving and returning home, religious are to notify their Superior. In traveling, they are to observe the instructions of the local Ordinary. Whenever in need of hospitality, they are to turn, generally speaking, to our Congregation's houses. Guests are to be discreet and are to participate in the life of the community as much as possible²⁵.

38. *Discretion and Silence.*

A section of our houses is to be reserved to the religious only.

The need of discretion and silence is to be born in mind²⁶ so as to attend to prayer, study, and the necessary rest.

The use of media of social communication is to be moderate and prudent.

39. *Dress Code.*

Our habit, a sign of consecration,
is to be both poor and dignified.
Our religious are to wear it
according to the prescriptions of canon law,
Superiors,
and local ecclesiastical authorities.

VI - Sick Brothers.

40. Love toward Sick Brothers.

Our service of charity
is manifested with particular promptness
toward our sick brothers²⁷;
complete care is to be provided for them,
even at the cost of heavy sacrifices²⁸;
seriously ill brothers
are to be continuously assisted²⁹.

A. Spiritual Care.

Religious are to take spiritual care of their sick brothers, comforting them through words of faith and urging them to voluntarily join in Christ's passion³⁰. This attention is to have its peak in the Sacrament of the "Anointing of the Sick," in which the entire community is to take part.

B. Prayer.

Sick brothers are to be commended to the suffering and glorified Lord³¹, so that he may bestow on them relief and health. Other communities are also to be asked to join in the prayer for them.

VII - Dead Brothers.

41. *Love toward Deceased Brothers.*

Christ's love unites the religious in life and death.
Besides the suffrages recommended by our Rules,
it is our commitment
to pray for our deceased brothers
so that the Lord may make them sharers
in his glorious resurrection.

A. *Piety.*

When a religious, novice or associate of our Congregation dies, religious are to do what is prescribed by our Ritual with loving attention. The Superior is to communicate the news to every community at once.

B. *Suffrages.*

When informed about the death of a brother, each community is to celebrate in common the liturgy of the deceased, in accordance with our Ritual. All the religious are to participate in the Eucharist; priests are to offer one Mass as soon as possible. If possible, the Mass is to be concelebrated.

C. *Memory.*

To preserve the religious memory of our brothers, at the death of a religious, the Superior is to take steps to ensure that an appropriate biographical sketch is drawn and sent to every religious community. Furthermore, each community is to celebrate every month one Holy Mass for our dead religious, relatives, associates, and benefactors, with the participation of the community. Our brothers' graves are to be diligently looked after with Christian piety.

VIII - Relatives, Associates, Collaborators.

42. *People Participating in the Life of Our Communities.*

United among themselves
and their members by brotherly love,
our communities
are to maintain special bonds of love
with those who participate
in our life in various ways:
parents and relatives,
spiritual associates, collaborators, benefactors,
people of the area
where the community lives and works.

A. *Parents and Relatives.*

The divine call, which led us to leave our family, ties a new bond of supernatural love with it. Our religious are to manifest affection to their dear ones, especially through prayer. They are to celebrate or have someone celebrate Masses for them. The community is to be close to the families of the brothers and is to share in their joy and sadness.

B. *Spiritual Associates.*

Our Congregation enrolls in a spiritual way those who are in communion with one of our communities and, though living in the world, conform their spiritual and apostolic life to the Gospel, following the example of St. Jerome. The Act of Association pertains to the Superior General on a written and justified proposal of the Provincial or local Superior. Since they share in the spiritual goods of the Congregation, our associates are to be supported with zeal and discretion. A deep bond with our religious family is to be fostered in them. At the death of one of these associates, the community that requested the association is to celebrate the Eucharist and mention them in the Community Journal.

C. *Collaborators.*

The apostolic activities of our institutions often call for the help of outside collaborators. They are to be chosen carefully and trained properly so that they may provide profitable aid. The community is to welcome them warmly and support them in consideration of the common work.

D. Benefactors.

The benefactors of our institutions are to be acknowledged with sentiments and signs of gratitude, particularly by offering prayers and by spiritual support.

E. People of the Area.

In order to witness the extent of evangelical love, every community is to be open to the area where it lives and works. For this reason, it fosters interchange of spiritual and human goods, and builds peaceful and hearty relations with everybody. However, this is to be done within the prudent discretion required by our way of life.

(1) *Jn* 13:34-35; *Eph* 5:2; *Gal* 2:20; (2) *Acts* 4:32; (3) *PC* 15; (4) *C1927*, 361; (5) *PC* 15; (6) *Eph* 4:15-16; *C1555*, 6; (7) *Mt* 18:20; (8) *Acts* 2:42; (9) *PC* 15; (10) *Ord* 23; (11) *Ord* 24; (12) *C1927*, 491; (13) *An* 14; *C1555*, 7; (14) *Jn* 15:4-7; (15) *Phil* 2:5; (16) *PC* 15 (17) *Col* 3:12-17; *6Let* 7.12; *Ms30* f.11; *C1927*, 375; (18) *3Let* 2; (19) *C1927*, 376; (20) *C1927*, 496; (21) *C1927*, 370; (22) *3Let* 3; (23) *C1927*, 501. 911; (24) *C1927*, 584; (25) *C1927*, 861. 876; (26) *1Let* 17; (27) *1Let* 25; (28) *C1591*, 41; *C1927*, 834; (29) *C1927*, 840; (30) *SU* 5; (31) *SU* 34.

Chapter VI

Prayer

43. *Prayer and Life.*

Eager to live only for God
and faithful to the example of our Founder,
who used to spend long hours in prayer
in front of the Crucified Jesus,
we organize our lives
so as to unite an intense commitment to praying
with the fervor of our works.
By means of prayer
God opens the eyes of our blindness¹
to enable us to see that he alone is good,
and makes us docile instruments of his Spirit².
By persevering united in prayer,
we live confident in the Lord
and, filled with his peace,
we walk in truth along his holy way³.

I - Liturgical Prayer.

44. *Value of Liturgical Prayer.*

Since we are called to glorify God perfectly
and to sanctify mankind⁴,
we give pride of place to liturgical prayer.
In it, Christ gives himself to the Church⁵,
unites us to his voice and work,
and brings us into the mystery of salvation⁶.

A. Rite.

Our liturgies are to follow the Roman Rite according to our own calendar, taking into account specific pastoral needs. Each religious is to know its spiritual riches to foster an intense and enlightened liturgical life in both, himself and the believers.

B. Sacred Chant.

As far as possible, liturgical celebrations are to be properly supported by sacred chant. As a treasure of the Church, it is a worthwhile aid in expressing the communion of the souls in prayer and joy of hearts⁷.

C. Places of Worship.

Our churches and chapels are a symbol of the spiritual building that is the temple of the living God, of which all of us are living stones⁸. Therefore, we are to look after to what refers to worship with such a care that God's honor and believers' devotion are promoted⁹.

D. Attitude during Celebrations.

Every liturgical action is to be celebrated with faith, adoration, and praise, which enlighten the hearts of those who serve God. Moreover, it is to be prepared with care, and to be resplendent with dignity and simplicity¹⁰.

45. Eucharist.

The Eucharist

is the foundation of every Christian community.

It renews the memorial of Christ's uttermost love¹¹.

In it, we offer ourselves to the Father¹²

and are made perfect in the union with God and one another¹³.

All the religious are to attend every day

the Eucharistic sacrifice¹⁴,

in order to be fed at that abundant source

of faith and love¹⁵.

Moreover, they are to strive to extend into their lives the mystery accomplished on the altar.

A. Celebration.

In order to visibly express the unity of the priesthood¹⁶, our priests are to concelebrate the Eucharist whenever possible.

46. *Eucharistic Worship.*

The worship of the Most Holy Eucharist is a living component of our tradition. For this reason, we hold a particular devotion to Christ our Lord present in the Eucharistic Sacrament. In this way, we are drawn to participate in his sacrifice and to respond with gratitude and love to him who nourishes and heals the members of his body¹⁷ by giving his life unceasingly.

A. Adoration.

According to our commendable tradition, religious are to foster Eucharistic adoration and the other forms of Eucharistic worship that are recommended by the Church.

47. *Liturgy of the Hours.*

Every day we celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours with attention and devotion. In this way, we prolong in time the prayer of Christ, we offer the sacrifice of our praise to God¹⁸, and we cooperate to building up the Church.

The Superior, after consulting the Chapter of the house, is to decide which part should be celebrated in common¹⁹.

48. *Sacrament of Penance.*

Through the Sacrament of Penance we experience the merciful love of the Father, who grants us pardon and peace, and reconciles us to his holy Church²⁰. Our religious are to approach it frequently with a sincere spirit of conversion. Everyone is free to choose his own confessor.

A. Celebration.

The community may designate its own confessor when it is convenient. In order to adequately express the community aspect of sin and conversion, it is recommended that in particular moments of the year, the Sacrament of Penance be celebrated in communal form.

II - Devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

49. *Meaning and Fruits of the Marian Devotion.*

The Congregation fosters in her religious a filial love toward Mary, the Virgin Mother of God. We venerate her as the Mother of graces²¹ and source of mercy, our confidant and support of the orphans, joy of the afflicted and liberation of the oppressed. By imitating and invoking her, our faith and hope in the Lord will increase²²,

while our heart will be filled with tenderness and love toward the poor and the needy.

50. *Devotion toward the Mother of God.*

In order to promote devotion toward the Mother of God in both, the religious and believers, each community is to solemnly celebrate the liturgical feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary, illustrate her inexpressible mission in the light of the Scripture and Tradition, and foster the practices of devotion in everybody, in accordance with the commendable local customs ²³. Every day, our religious are to express their devotion to the Mother of God through appropriate forms of prayer, especially by reciting the holy rosary.

51. *Mary Mother of the Orphans.*

We venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title of “*Mother of the Orphans*” as patron of our Congregation. From her we derive renewed commitment for a generous dedication to our mission.

A. *Liturgical Solemnity.*

The solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Orphans, is to be celebrated on the 27th of September. This title is also to be remembered on the 27th of every month.

III - Devotion to Our Founder.

52. *Meaning and Fruits of the Devotion toward Our Founder.*

The Lord shows his glory in us²⁴
through our beloved father St. Jerome²⁵.
By developing a filial devotion toward him
we celebrate the power of God,
who accomplishes great things in his servants²⁶,
and take part in the spirit of holiness
that made our Founder a father of the orphans
and a refuge of the poor.

53. *Devotion toward the Founder.*

For the devotion to St. Jerome
to be ever more authentic and ardent,
each religious is to grow in his love toward him
by a renewed knowledge
of his deeds and spirit.
He is to eagerly imitate his virtues
and proclaim the riches of his Christian testimony
as much as possible.

A. Liturgical Solemnity.

The liturgical feast of our Founder Saint is to be celebrated solemnly, and his memorial is to be renewed in a special way on the 8th of every month.

IV - Prayers in Our Tradition.

54. *Other Forms of Prayer.*

When deriving other forms of prayer

from the Congregation's tradition,
we are to make sure that they are
in accord with and inspired by the liturgy²⁷.

55. *Meditation and Spiritual Reading.*

We are to attend to meditation with consciousness.
Through it, the Lord's Spirit introduces us
to the treasure of his Word²⁸,
which, if welcomed and cherished with faith,
becomes light and wisdom
to help us recognize God's gifts²⁹
and discern his will³⁰.

Every day, our religious are to dedicate one hour to meditation
and are to try to extend such time
according to their possibility³¹.

Superiors are to make sure
that everyone has the necessary time for it.

Everyone is to take diligent care
to acquire familiarity with and to study the spiritual authors
in order to deepen his knowledge of God
and to wisely lead others to this goal.

56. *Spiritual Exercises.*

The desire of a more intense encounter with the Lord
is renewed in the spiritual exercises,
which are a privileged time to listen to God's Word
for the conversion of our life.

Our religious,
making themselves free from any activity,
are to attend them every year
with concentration and commitment³².

A. *Retreat.*

In order to grow in their union with the Lord, our religious are to devote a convenient time to a monthly spiritual retreat.

57. *Prayer for the Congregation.*

Confident in St. Jerome's intercession,
we are to raise unceasingly our prayer to the Lord
so that he will keep the Congregation in his peace,
show his way to those whom he calls to our life,
assist with his blessing
those who are entrusted to our care,
and fill with his mercy
the benefactors and collaborators of our institutions³³.

A. *Mass for the Congregation.*

Every month, our communities are to celebrate and, wherever possible, concelebrate a Mass for the spiritual progress and development of the Congregation, with the participation of all the community members. In remembrance of the Congregation's birthday³⁴, every community is to celebrate a thanksgiving Mass on April 29th of every year.

B. *Devotion toward the Guardian Angels.*

Entrusted by God to the particular guardianship of the Angels, we are to keep alive our devotion to them, which is a typical feature of our tradition. To their protection we are to recommend those to whom our mission is addressed, so that they may experience the Angels' assistance on the journey of their life.

58. *Frequent Spiritual Invocations.*

In order to obey the Lord,
who commanded us to pray always³⁵,
and to be faithful to the example of our Founder,

we are to renew the offering of ourselves to the most sweet Jesus
through frequent invocations and spiritual petitions
so that He may fill us with joy and comfort,
and overwhelm us with freedom and solace.

(1) *6Let* 13; cf *Dt* 29:3; (2) *3Let* 7; (3) *OnPr* 21; (4) *SC* 10; (5) *Eph* 5:25; (6) *Heb* 7:25; *SC* 8; (7) *SC* 112; (8) *1Pt* 2:5; (9) *C1927*, 435; (10) *SC* 28; (11) *Lk* 22:19; *1Cor* 11:25; (12) *Rom* 12:1; (13) *1Thess* 5:23; *SC* 47, 48; (14) *C1927*, 408; (15) *1Cor* 12:13; *PC* 6; (16) *SC* 57; (17) *Eph* 5:23; (18) *Heb* 13:15; *LC* 8; (19) *SC* 99; (20) *LG* 11; (21) *OnPr* 7; (22) *OnPr* 7; cf *2Let* 7-10; (23) *LG* 67; (24) *2Let* 1; (25) *2Let* 4; (26) *2Let* 8; (27) *SC* 13; (28) *Jn* 16:13; (29) *1Cor* 2:12; (30) *Rom* 12:2; cf *3Let* 6; (31) *C1927*, 378; (32) *C1927*, 634; (33) cf *OnPr* 12-14, 15, 21; (34) *C1927*, 429; (35) *Lk* 18:1.

Chapter VII

Penance and Mortification

59. *Penance.*

We are aware that we live the gift of our vocation
in the weakness of our human nature¹.

Therefore, we entrust ourselves
to the action of the Holy Spirit,
who, step by step, transforms us
into the image of the Son²,
we convert ourselves every day to the Lord,
and carry our cross along with him³.

60. *Penitential Journey.*

Purification of the heart
is enlightened by God's Word
that is welcomed in frequent prayer in front of the Crucified.
In this way, we can obtain the gift
of doing penance in this world
as a pledge of eternal mercy⁴.

Through the voluntary practice of mortification
we manifest our commitment to convert ourselves to God,
which has its climax
in the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance.

61. *Spirit of Our Penance.*

Our kind of life
requires neither great austerity
nor excessive mortification,

but it leads the religious on the way of the Lord
in true humility,
perfect obedience,
and evangelical renunciation of oneself⁵.

62. Community Commitment.

Every community
is called to practice penance
by living in poverty,
withstanding worldly allurements,
helping the needy,
and sharing in the sufferings
of those who are oppressed by injustice.

63. Penitential Practices.

Our religious are to faithfully observe
the penitential forms established by the Church.
In accordance with the spirit of the liturgy,
they are to live Lent as a time of conversion
in prayer, fast, and charity,
and to spend their Fridays in special penance.
They are to engage in the concrete forms of mortification
established by the community
for both Fridays and Lent.
Moreover, they are also to fast
on the days preceding the solemnities
of our Founder and Mary, Mother of the Orphans,
as well as the starting day of the General Chapter.

Typical Expressions of the Somascan Tradition.

Our religious are to practice penance:

A. *Through fidelity to the commitments of their vocation.*

Our religious are to practice the virtue of penance most of all through fidelity to the commitments of their vocation, through active dedication to their daily duties, in that spirit of sacrifice that leads them to become servants of all, so as to win all to Christ⁶.

B. *In daily life.*

Our religious are to practice penance through sobriety in eating and simplicity in dressing, willingly accepting whatever the community provides. They are to love silence which fosters the union with God and respect for the brothers. They are also to watch their tongue⁷. Their behavior is to draw inspiration from modesty, benignity, and humility⁸. They are to apply themselves intensely to study and manual work.

C. *During moral and physical trials.*

Also, they are to practice penance by accepting with faith every moral and physical trial, such as illness, old age, discomfort, difficulties, troubles, persecution for the sake of the Gospel and its righteousness. They are to join their sorrows to the passion of Christ, offering them to the Father in a spirit of expiation, and invoking the divine mercy upon themselves, the Congregation, the Church, and mankind.

D. *In the last moments of their life.*

Our religious are to unite themselves in a particular way to Jesus the Savior, who elected us and is faithful in love, by offering the last moments of their life. They are to accept their death with faith, comforted by the certainty that they will be with the Lord forever⁹.

64. *Example of St. Jerome.*

We are to live intensely the spirit of penance
drawing inspiration from the good example of St. Jerome.
Through voluntary mortification,
he persevered in the conversion to the Lord
and won from God
the grace to perform according to the divine will¹⁰.

So he lived, no longer for himself¹¹,
but for Christ and his poor.
If we progress in the virtue of penance,
in the footsteps of our Founder and Father,
we too will obtain perseverance in our vocation
and will be made sharers in the Lord's glory.

(1) *2Cor* 4:7; *Gal* 5:16-17; *Rom* 7:23; (2) *2Cor* 3:18; (3) *Mt* 16:24; (4) *6Let* 13; (5) *C1927*, 5; (6) *1Cor* 9:19; (7) *C1927*, 587; (8) *C1927*, 603; (9) *1Thess* 4:17; (10) *5Let* 5; (11) *2Cor* 5:15.

Chapter VIII

Apostolic Mission

I - Apostolate in the Congregation.

65. Apostolic Nature of the Congregation.

Our Congregation
is directly ordered to apostolic mission.
Her life and structures are permeated
by the spiritual and functional needs that flow from it¹.
Each religious is part of it
and consecrates his own energies to it,
whatever the situation he may be in
or the kind of activity
obedience assigns him to.

66. Apostolic Mission in the Church.

Our Congregation
shares in the apostolic mission of the Church
through a spirit of humble and active collaboration
and by promoting initiatives consistent with her charism.

67. Apostolic Activities and Our Charism.

The Congregation
views the service to Christ present in the poor
as a characteristic component of her apostolic mission²
and finds constant inspiration

for it in her Founder and tradition,
which is authoritatively recognized by the Church.
Each community,
in its various areas of apostolate,
is to engage itself for the poor
and needy youth,
make its acquaintances and collaborators
sensitive to their needs,
and cooperate with the initiatives
of the Church and society.

68. Unity of the Congregation in the Apostolic Mission.

In order to be capable of carrying out her mission everywhere,
our Congregation
presents particular unity.
Such unity is manifested also in her structures
and requires apostolic mobility and availability
of all its religious.

69. Community Dimension of Our Apostolate.

Apostolic activities are community oriented in our houses.
All religious
are called to render the Congregation's charism
alive and effective
by the richness of gifts they received from the Lord.
It is the Superiors' duty
to discern with spirit of humility and love
the personal gifts of their brothers
and to promote them
for the good of their community and the Congregation.

A. Planning and Evaluation.

The common responsibility in apostolic activities entails planning and evaluation by both the community and the individuals. The purpose of planning is to formulate a project which meets the needs of the apostolate, as well as to promote its orderly implementation. Planning implies dialogue as a means to know the Lord's will, and must be carried out in accord with the instructions of the Congregation. A frequent and periodical evaluation requires that each religious inform the community of his work and be ready to receive and give suggestions and collaboration. Such an evaluation allows to verify the fitness of the plans, ensures their execution, and stimulates everybody to attend to their assigned job in a constant and committed way.

B. Non-Community Activities.

Before committing to apostolic activities that are not part of the common programme, our religious are to seek the permission of the Superior³, who will take care to inform the community. Whenever these activities become stable in nature, it is necessary to get the authorization of the major Superiors.

C. Apostolate in Institutions not Belonging to the Congregation.

In order to perform apostolic activities in institutions not belonging to the Congregation, a suitable agreement is to be drawn, which must be approved by the competent major Superior with the deliberative vote of his Council, and ratified by the Superior General with the deliberative vote of his Council.

70. One Mission, Different Ministries.

United by religious consecration
as priests or laymen,
we participate in one and the same apostolic mission
but with different ministries,
and cooperate as educators of faith
in the common service of charity.

71. Example of St. Jerome.

The Congregation

suggests to her religious some of those attitudes
which inspired St. Jerome and his first companions.

She urges all its sons

to witness through their deeds

their faith and hope in the Lord⁴,

to serve the least and the needy with humility and fervor,

to welcome them with simple and benign heart⁵,

and to prefer those areas

where poverty is more critical.

She also encourages them to offer

the living nourishment of God's Word and Sacraments

to those to whom she is sent,

to help them grow in faith

through suitable catechesis,

to gradually introduce them

to personal and community prayer,

to foster their Christian testimony

and apostolic commitment in the Church,

and to cultivate

the seeds of a religious or priestly vocation

in those who manifest the signs

of the Lord's call.

72. *Effectiveness of Our Apostolate.*

The more we are united to the Lord Jesus⁶

and docile to the Holy Spirit⁷,

the more effective will be our apostolate.

Therefore, our religious are to allow themselves

to be led exclusively by the love of Christ

and by their zeal for their brothers,

working in the spirit of obedience

and in radical detachment

from earthly things and personal interests.

II - Service to Orphans and Needy Youth.

73. *Institutions for Orphans and Needy Youth.*

Born to serve the orphans,
our Congregation
perseveres with love and care
in this mission,
which is a precious inheritance of our Founder Saint⁸.
Our Congregation
attends to the care of orphans and needy youth
through suitable institutions,
which she supports even at the cost of heavy sacrifices.

A. *Meeting Local Needs.*

In starting or developing any charitable work, religious are to see if it meets the local needs. They are to adjust structures and methods to concrete situations. They are to pay attention to the need of continual updating.

B. *Other Forms of Apostolate.*

Different forms of apostolate may be undertaken at the service of needy youth. They must be approved by the competent major Superior with the deliberative vote of his Council. Whenever a religious has to work in other ecclesial or social bodies, Superiors are to assess every aspect, and, before giving authorization, are to require adequate guarantees. The religious is to attend to his job with a spirit of obedience and in constant union with his community.

74. *Educational Style of Our Founder.*

In our work as educators
we take constant inspiration

from the example of St. Jerome.
Becoming a child with the children,
he lived among them
as a lovely and tender father⁹
in order to better know, train,
and help everyone
in their preparation for their life.
He laid the foundations of his educational work
on the knowledge
and practice of the Christian doctrine.
He pointed out study and work
as the reliable and dignified tools
for an integral formation of the individual.

A. *Educational Environment.*

Institutions which welcome youth deprived of family support are to offer a family environment. They are to express that particular love that brings about self-confidence and mutual trust; they are to prepare youngsters for their future, fostering their personal propensities; they are to train them to be responsible and available to others, especially to the little ones. In accordance with our tradition, religious are to attach importance to those moments in which educators and youngsters together enhance their human and Christian growth¹⁰. Such institutions are to guarantee to their students educational continuity in the same environment.

B. *Evangelical Inspiration.*

Those who are called by obedience to perform this ministry are to dedicate themselves to it with ardent love¹¹, mindful of the words of Christ: "As often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me¹²." They are to remember that the care of orphans is one of the highest works of mercy and nothing can edify one's neighbour more than that.¹³ In their educational activity they are to draw constant inspiration from the Gospel.

C. *Lay Collaborators.*

Following St. Jerome's example, in our service to the needy youth we are to stimulate

*the cooperation of lay people*¹⁴. Such cooperation can be accomplished in different ways, but it should especially aim at making it easier and safer for the youngsters to be integrated in family and society.

III - School and Youth Ministry.

75. Commitment for the Christian Formation of Youth.

Our Congregation
devotes itself to the formation of youth
through teaching,
educational institutions,
and youth ministry.

It carries out this ministry
by offering to young people a proposal of Christian life
and by preparing them to promote
the good of mankind and the Church.

A. Community Environment.

*Our educational action is to aim at building up an environment which is inspired by mutual acceptance and common responsibility, and at fostering a relationship of lively friendship among people with different characters and from different conditions, involving youngsters, educators, and parents in the formation program*¹⁵.

B. Commitment for the Poor According to Our Tradition.

Following St. Jerome's example, we are to train our young people to be sensitive and committed to the needs of the poor. Our institutions are to encourage them to take part in initiatives in favor of the poor and to gradually take responsibilities.

C. Educational Institutions.

Our institutions meant to welcome the young are to be also open to those who are in

particularly troublesome situations. Our institutions are to establish friendly relationships with them, based upon respect and dignity.

D. School as a Cultural and Educational Environment.

Our schools are to provide the cultural, technical, and pedagogical values necessary to develop the students' intellectual abilities and the ability to judge rightly; they are to foster a sense of values in the students and prepare them for life and a career¹⁶.

E. Religious Assigned to Schools.

Our teaching religious are to be aware that the important mission assigned to them requires qualities of mind and heart, accurate preparation, and constant renewal¹⁷. They are to possess the required knowledge, hold proper certifications, and enhance every day their experience in the art of educating. Above all, they are to remember that the most valid lesson is the everyday example of their lives¹⁸.

F. Lay Teachers.

The lay teachers who cooperate with us are to be chosen as much as possible among those who share our school philosophy. Besides cultural, professional, educational skills, and training, they are to stand out for their testimony of life. Our religious are to plan and implement adequate initiatives to foster their Christian formation and active cooperation.

G. School Structures.

Our schools are to be provided with adequate structures and educational aids which are necessary to achieve their scientific and professional goals. Also, they are to promote all those co-curricular activities which guarantee the students' progress and formation.

H. Alumni.

We are to continue the formation of our students also after graduation through friendship, advice, and the Alumni Association. Especially, we are to make them sensitive to the needs of the poor and to stimulate them that in their social and professional activities they may shape a society inspired by justice and love.

IV - Parish Ministry.

76. *Parishes Entrusted to the Congregation.*

In special circumstances, the Congregation undertakes parish ministry for the good of the Christian people, in order to build communities of faith and love, according to her charism.

A. *Parish Acceptance and Parish Priest Appointment.*

The assignment of a parish to the Congregation takes place through a special agreement between the bishop and the competent major Superior with the deliberative vote of his Council, ratified by the Superior General with the deliberative vote of his Council. The presentation of the parish priest to the local Ordinary for the appointment pertains to the Provincial Superior with the deliberative vote of his Council and confirmation of the Superior General. The presentation of the parish priest to the bishop, the starting date of his ministry, his obligations and rights, and the procedures to be followed in case of vacancy of the parish, are regulated by canon law and the instructions of each diocese.

B. *Duties of the Parish Priest and His Religious Community.*

The parish priest is to guide his parish community by coordinating the various ministries according to the guidelines of the bishop. United in brotherly love and common goals, the other members of the religious community share the pastoral responsibility with him. The local Superior is to assign the different tasks to the religious in accordance with the parish priest. The parish priest and his collaborators are bound to the duties of community life¹⁹.

C. *Characteristics of Our Parish Apostolate.*

Following the spirit of our tradition, religious involved in parish activities are to love the

poor intensely, are to become a source of charity toward the needy in the local Church, and are to participate in initiatives in favor of the poor. They are to take care of youth, fostering any activity meant to form them in a Christian way, especially catechesis. Finally, they are to assist the sick with goodness and care, frequently visiting them, and bringing them the comfort of the Sacraments²⁰.

D. Participation of the Lay Persons.

Religious are to urge the collaboration of lay persons so that, conscious of their Christian vocation, they may take part in the salvific mission of the Church and assume responsibilities and proper tasks.

E. Non-Parish Churches, Shrines, and Retreat Centers.

Our ministry in non-parish churches must be integrated in the parish pastoral life in brotherly cooperation with the local clergy. In the shrines entrusted to the Congregation, the apostolate is to be performed with zeal and is to be faithful to the features for which God raised them in the Church, as a sign of his merciful and sanctifying presence. The retreat centers are to be schools of prayer where the word of God is listened to, and are to promote an intense Christian life that takes inspiration from our Congregation's charism.

V - Priestly Ministry.

77. Mission and Spiritual Needs.

By virtue of the Sacrament of Order,
our priests
are sent to proclaim the word of God
and to celebrate the sacred mysteries.
For their ministry to be fruitful,
they are to persevere in prayer,
to know and love, as fathers in the spirit,
those whom they are called to serve,²¹

and to practice in their life
what they preach to their faithful²².

A. Ministry of the Word of God.

In order to carry out the Lord's command to preach the Gospel, our priests are to become familiar with the Scriptures and the teachings of the Fathers and the Church²³. They are to propose clearly and simply the truths of Christian life taking examples and suggestions from the life of the Saints²⁴. In publishing writings about religion and morals, our religious are to be granted permission by their major Superior.

B. Ministry of the Sacraments.

They are to administer the Sacraments with spirit and love²⁵. With particular care they are to prepare the faithful for the Sacrament of Penance. They are to welcome everyone with care, goodness, patience, and counsel them to walk in the Lord's way.

C. Pastoral Care.

Urged by the love of Christ and seeking only the honor of God, they are to devote their time and energies first of all to those who are entrusted to them²⁶. They are not to neglect anything to avoid that the fire of the Spirit cool down in them²⁷.

(1) PC 8; (2) 6Let 6; (3) C1927, 483; (4) 2Let 7-10; (5) OnPr 9; (6) 1Let 5; (7) 3Let 7; (8) C1927, 913; (9) Molf 490; (10) Ord 30; (11) C1927, 914; (12) Mt 25:40; (13) C1591, 18; (14) C1555, 7; (15) GE 5; (16) GE 5; (17) GE 5; (18) C1927, 912; (19) C1927, 542; (20) C1927, 548; (21) Ord 22; (22) Ord 22; (23) C1927, 560; (24) Ord 22; (25) Ord 22; (26) Ord 22; (27) 1Let 19.

Chapter IX

Admission to the Congregation and Religious Formation

I - Pastoral Care of Vocations.

78. Commitment to Vocations.

The Congregation welcomes vocations
as a gift of the Lord.

She promotes and fosters with care
their growth and formation,
so that St. Jerome's charism may develop
to the advantage of the Church and the poor.

To obtain this grace from the Lord,
all our communities and individual religious
are to commit themselves to the pastoral care of vocations
through prayer to the Lord of the harvest ¹,
the testimony of joyfully living
their vocation in brotherly communion ²,
the proposal of our vocation,
and the care of those who are attracted to it.

A. Religious Assigned to the Pastoral Care of Vocations.

In order to stir each one's responsibility in the promotion of vocations and so that it may be carried out in a planned way, the major Superiors are to choose suitable religious for this duty. They are to carry out this activity carefully and discreetly under the coordination of a promoter general appointed by the Superior General with the consultative vote of his Council.

B. Initiatives.

In the pastoral care of vocations, our religious are to cooperate with the initiatives taken either by the Congregation or the local Church. In particular way, they are to enhance the Christian formation of the young in order to help them discern and follow the Lord's call generously.

C. Minor Seminaries.

Adolescents who manifest some inclination to our life and good attitudes can be welcomed to suitable institutions or minor seminaries, until the time they reach sufficient maturity to be admitted to the postulancy.

D. Goal and Environment.

The goal of the minor seminary is to direct adolescents toward a generous service to Christ and the brothers, while gradually discovering their vocation in an environment in accord with the needs of their age. Superiors are also to bear in mind the need of a gradual experience of human realities³, so that their personalities may develop properly, especially on the affective level.

E. Spiritual Formation

Through an adequate spiritual direction, adolescents are to be led to follow Christ with generosity of spirit and purity of heart⁴. They are to be initiated in reading of and meditation on the Word of God, in Eucharist and Penance, in personal prayer, in filial devotion to the Virgin Mary, and in the service to their neighbor.

II - Formation of Religious.

79. Goal of the Somascan Formation.

Through her formative work,
our Congregation
intends to help the candidates to religious life

to recognize their vocation as a gift of God,
and to mature their own offering to Christ
in the spirit of St. Jerome
with a free and radical response.
To achieve this goal, the candidates are gradually initiated
in the life of the Congregation
through the practice of the Evangelical Counsels,
community life,
and experience of our apostolic activities.

80. *Religious in Charge of Formation.*

Formation to religious life
is carried out in accordance with the instructions
of the Constitutions and Rules and of the Chapters,
through the work of the major Superiors,
and the religious specifically appointed to this task.
The Superior General,
who has the primary responsibility for formation,
and the other major Superiors
are to take care above all of the selection and preparation
of the religious to be entrusted with this task.
The Superiors are to verify their work during the various stages
and to follow the candidates' progress during formation.
Religious in charge of formation
are to keep suitably updated,
be convinced and enthusiastic about their own vocation,
act with prudence and wisdom
in unity of spirit and action with their Superiors,
be faithful to the magisterium of the Church,
and instil such faithfulness in the soul of the candidates.

81. *Formation Curriculum.*

The stages of our religious formation are:

postulancy, novitiate, and post-novitiate.

III - Postulancy.

82. Goals.

The candidates who have expressed the desire to undertake our life are welcomed to postulancy.

Its goal is to verify their aptitudes and prepare them to pass from the life of the world to the radical availability to God.

It takes place in communities expressly designated for this in accordance with the instructions of the major Superiors. Postulancy ends with the beginning of novitiate.

A. Duration and Characteristics.

During postulancy, which lasts as a rule twelve months, the postulant is to be discreetly encouraged to approach the goal, spirit, and apostolic mission of the Congregation, so that he may be properly prepared for the novitiate.

B. Formation work.

The formation work of the postulancy is to be entrusted to a religious who acts under the supervision of the Superior and in accordance with his confreres. It is to be carried out according to proper rules which take into account the characteristics of the places and candidates, especially if they are belated vocations.

C. Studies before Novitiate.

Education and cultural training during the period before novitiate is to be in compliance with the school programs and systems of the various countries and, as far as possible, it

is to end with the appropriate degrees.

IV - Novitiate.

83. Goals.

Novitiate marks the beginning of the life in the Congregation. Its goal is to help the candidate to deepen his knowledge of God's call, and to initiate him into our way of religious life. In addition, it allows for the verification of his intentions and suitability.

84. Establishment.

It pertains to the Superior General with the deliberative vote of his Council to establish, erect, suppress the novitiate or transfer it to other places.

As an exception, the Superior General, with the deliberative vote of his Council, may authorize the candidate to validly accomplish the novitiate in a house other than the one established, under the guide of a skilled religious, who will carry out the task of Master.

85. Master of Novitiate.

The Master

is directly in charge of the formation of the novices. He is appointed by the Superior General with the deliberative vote of his Council upon proposal of the competent major Superior. He must be a priest in perpetual vows. It is his duty to take care of the novices' religious formation, in accordance with the goals of the Congregation, to stimulate them to an intense love for the way of life they have chosen, to instruct them in the Constitutions and Rules, and to help them overcome the obstacles hindering their progress in virtue.

A. *Assistant Master.*

The Master may be helped by an assistant and use the cooperation of experts, in accordance with the major Superiors.

B. *Superior, Master, and Novices.*

Unity of minds and hearts is to reign among Superior, Master, and Novices. The Master gives an account of his formative work exclusively to the major Superiors, to whose instructions he has to conform his actions. For the community life, he is to depend on the local Superior, with whom he is also to arrange the activities which the novices participate in.

C. *Concern of the Superiors.*

Major Superiors are to follow the formation of the novices through personal contacts and through the reports periodically sent by the Master.

D. *Cooperation of the Religious.*

All the religious are to cooperate in the formation of the novices through the testimony of their life, and through prayer. The religious of the community where the novitiate is placed are to be particularly conscious of their involvement.

E. *Relationships with the Religious.*

Because of its distinctive character, the novitiate requires a certain separation between the novices and the other religious of the community. Relations with them, with religious of other communities, and with outsiders are to be governed by the Master.

86. *Formation of the Novices.*

The novice is to be led
to the practice of the human and Christian virtues,
and introduced to the way of perfection
by true humility,
ardent love,
and self-denial.
He is to be trained
in the reading and meditation of the Word of God,
in the study of spiritual life,
and initiated in the doctrine and practice
of the Evangelical counsels.
He is also to be educated
in the spirituality, history,
and characteristics of the Congregation,
and trained in her way of life⁵.

A. *Studies and Apostolate.*

During novitiate, the normal course of studies is suspended. With the approval of the competent major Superior, some forms of apostolate may be encouraged to an extent and in ways that the Master deems appropriate.

87. *Admission to Novitiate.*

The admission of the postulant to novitiate
pertains to the competent major Superior.

A. Procedures.

Whoever desires to be admitted to the novitiate is to send an application to the competent major Superior. The local Superior is to send to the latter a report with useful data and information. In doing that, the local Superior must make sure that the conditions required by canon law for a valid and licit admission are met, and obtain the consultative vote of the community of postulancy. Documents related to the admission are to be kept in the Province Archives; a copy is to be sent to the Superior General and to the novitiate's house.

B. Requirements.

The candidate to novitiate must have the required age, physical health, maturity, aptitude to withstand our life and contribute to the Congregation's mission. In addition, Superiors are to ascertain the reasons which lead the candidate to enter our religious family.

C. Beginning.

Novitiate begins with the welcoming of the novice into the religious community, his being entrusted by the Superior to the Master and the handover of the crucifix. When the Master deems it appropriate, the novice is to attend a convenient period of spiritual exercises.

88. Duration.

The novitiate lasts twelve months.

Any periods of absence,
continuous or interrupted,
that exceeds three months,
renders it invalid.

Absences that exceed fifteen days
must be made up.

89. *Dismissal.*

A novice may freely leave the novitiate.
However, before making this decision,
he is to seek the advise of prudent persons.
When someone is deemed unsuitable for religious life
and does not offer clear signs
of good nature and perseverance,
he is to be dismissed
after having been previously examined and heard.
The right to dismiss pertains to the novice's major Superior.

90. *Conclusion.*

The novitiate ends with the temporary profession.
In case any doubt persists
about the novice's suitability,
the competent major Superior
may authorize an extension of up to six months.

A. Privileges of the Novice.

The novice enjoys the benefits and spiritual graces granted to the Congregation. "In articulo mortis" (in danger of death) he may profess; such a profession, however, has no legal value.

V - Religious Profession.

91. *Temporary Profession.*

The temporary profession
of the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience
makes one an effective member of the Congregation

and binds him to observe the Constitutions and Rules, and all the other norms.

92. *Admission to Temporary Profession.*

The novice who desires to profess the temporary vows sends a written application to the competent major Superior. The latter, after obtaining the consultative vote of the Council of the Superior of the community concerned, receiving the required documents, and obtaining the deliberative vote of his Council, admits him to the profession. Such decision is confirmed by the Superior General.

93. *Duration.*

Temporary profession is made for three years. It can be renewed for a second three-year period, and, if circumstances require it, even for a third one. However, its total duration can not exceed the period of nine years.

94. *Acts Required before Profession.*

Before the temporary profession, the novice is to hand over the administration, use, and revenue of his goods, according to the provisions of canon and proper law. In addition, he is to declare in writing that he professes his vows freely.

A. *Alteration of the Dispositions about Goods.*

In order to modify the dispositions concerning the handover of the administration, use and revenue of his goods, a just reason and the permission of one's major Superior are needed.

95. *Renewal of the Profession.*

In order to renew his temporary profession, a religious sends a written application to the competent major Superior.

The latter, after obtaining the consultative vote of the Council of the Superior of the community concerned, receiving the required documents, and obtaining the deliberative vote of his Council, admits him to the profession.

Such a decision is confirmed by the Superior General.

96. *Perpetual Profession.*

By perpetual profession, a religious consecrates himself, forever, to serving God and the Church, becomes a member of the Congregation once and for all, renounces to own his material goods, and acquires obligations and rights according to the canon and proper law.

The religious who desires to profess perpetual vows sends a written application to the competent major Superior.

The latter, after obtaining the consultative vote of the Council of the Superior of the community concerned, receiving the required documents, and obtaining the deliberative vote of his Council, admits him to the profession.

Such decision is ratified by the Superior General

with the deliberative vote of his Council.
The renunciation to own his goods,
before the profession takes place,
is to be made according to the provisions
of canon and proper law.

A. Regulations and Procedures.

Before perpetual profession, the religious is to attend a more intense spiritual preparation for an adequate period of time, according to the procedures established by the major Superiors. After profession, the major Superior is to notify the parish priest of the parish where the religious was baptized.

97. *Requirements for Admission.*

In order that the admission to both
the temporary and perpetual profession be valid and licit,
the requirements of canon and proper law
are to be met.

98. *Profession Formula.*

In the name of the Most Holy Trinity,
Father and Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.
Firmly willing
to offer myself totally to God,
who called me
to follow Christ more closely,
on the example of St. Jerome Emiliani,
I, ... ,
before you, Father ... ,
in complete freedom,
for three years (*or*: forever),
profess the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience.
I commit myself

to live in brotherly communion
and to accomplish the apostolic mission
according to the Constitutions of the Somascan Congregation.
May the almighty and merciful Lord,
in his infinite love,
accept this offering.
Through the grace of the Holy Spirit
and the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Orphans,
may he grant me the strength to be faithful.

A. *Rite.*

The rite of the profession is contained in our ritual. The Superior General or his delegate receives the religious profession.

B. *Preservation of the Acts of the Profession.*

The act of the profession is to be written in the Record Book of Professions or in the Community Journal. A signed copy of the profession act and the statement of the renunciation of administration and ownership of goods are to be sent both to the general and provincial Archives.

VI - Post-Novitiate.

99. *Goals.*

The goal of the post-novitiate is to help the religious to develop and consolidate their formation through the direct experience of the life and mission of the Congregation. It starts immediately after the novitiate and lasts for at least three years.

100. *Formation.*

The post-novitiate is to be a school of brotherly love and community life, where religious are trained in the faithful observance of the Constitutions and Rules. During this stage, studies are resumed and integrated with apostolic activities.

101. *Organization.*

The first period of post-novitiate is to last at least two years. It is to take place in a house expressly established for this purpose under the guidance of a religious assisted by his confreres in a spirit of common responsibility. It pertains to the Superior General, with the deliberative vote of his Council, upon the proposal of the competent major Superior, to establish the house of post-novitiate and to appoint the religious in charge. The same requirements for the Master of novices apply to this religious.

A. Studies and Apostolic Experiences.

During the post-novitiate, religious study philosophy and theology or other disciplines according to their tendencies and the Superiors' instructions. Such studies are to be integrated systematically with the knowledge of the Somascan spirituality and the Congregation's history. The apostolic experiences in which the religious are initiated are to be conducted in such a way that formation and studies are not hindered.

B. *Post-Novitiate Conclusion.*

At the end of the post-novitiate, the religious who is deemed suitable may make the perpetual profession. Superiors are to provide that those who do not make the perpetual profession continue their formation.

VII - Studies.

102. *Study and Formation.*

The study of both sacred and profane disciplines is a necessary means for an effective apostolate. Our religious are to consider study as an important component of their formation, and are to apply themselves to it with seriousness and commitment. It is the Superiors' duty to provide with concern all that is required for the religious' studies, so that they may attend to it with interest and profit⁶.

A. *Specific Preparation.*

Our religious, according to their dispositions and with the Superiors' approval, are to be initiated also into the studies required by the particular apostolic ministries to which they may be called.

B. *Updating.*

Not only during their formation but through their entire life religious are to strive to better their own education in order to work fruitfully for the Church and society of their times.

VIII - Sacred Orders.

103. *Formation of the Candidates.*

Religious called to the sacred Orders are to receive spiritual and intellectual preparation which is suitable to the exercise of their ministry. It is the duty of the major Superiors to establish the study house and to responsibly take care of it, employing religious who are sound in doctrine, pastoral experience, and spiritual formation.

104. *Studies toward Priesthood.*

Philosophical and theological studies are to be carried out in accordance with the instructions issued by the ecclesiastical authority. Special emphasis is given on pastoral training, which is to be particularly cared during the period of diaconal ministry and after priestly Ordination.

105. *Admission to Ministries and Sacred Orders.*

Admission to ministries and sacred Orders pertains to the competent major Superior of the candidate's structure, with the deliberative vote of his Council. The provisions of canon law in regards to requirements, candidate's age, intervals,

examinations, and spiritual exercises, are to be followed.

A. Superiors' Responsibilities.

Superiors are to use necessary prudence and care when presenting the candidates to the Orders to the Bishop. They are to be aware that the responsibility for the candidates' sufficient preparation rests upon them.

B. Procedures.

A religious aspiring to the ministries and sacred Orders is to send a written application to the competent major Superior. To the latter, the local Superior must also send a report which is accompanied by the consultative vote of the Council of the Superior.

C. Documents Related to Diaconate.

Before being promoted to the Diaconate, a religious must take and sign the oath prescribed by the Apostolic See. After Ordination, the major Superior is to inform the parish priest of the parish where the newly ordained was baptized. The same parish priest must be informed after priestly Ordination as well.

D. Filing Documentation.

A copy of the application, the report of the local Superior, the act of admission, the oath, and the document providing proof of the Ordination is to be preserved both in the General and Provincial Archives.

IX - Ongoing Formation.

106. Importance.

The Congregation offers to the religious opportunities for continuous renewal

in order to further
their vocational growth,
a serious and profound revision
of their consecrated life and apostolic mission,
and the commitment of their offering to God and the poor.

A. Responsibilities.

Religious are directly responsible for their own formation throughout their entire life. Superiors are to help them through appropriate initiatives and facilitate their participation.

B. Forms.

Ongoing formation takes place above all in the local community. Furthermore, toward a renewal inspired to the Congregation's charism, courses by expert people and spiritual exercises are to be organized. According to the times and procedures set up by the major Superiors, more intense reflection and thorough verification are to accompany particular events of religious life.

X - Association to the Congregation.

107. *Associates.*

Since manifold activities
are carried out in our houses,
the Congregation may associate priests and laymen
who manifest a fervent Christian life
and are suitable to living in our communities
and to assuming particular tasks⁷.
Association is granted by the Superior General
on the request of the competent major Superior.

108. *Obligations and Rights.*

After a proper probationary period,
anyone who is willing to be associated
to the Congregation
must bind himself by making a formal promise
and live according to our Constitutions and Rules.
The associate may profess
the private vows of chastity, poverty and obedience
before the local Superior.
The obligations deriving from the vows
last throughout the time he remains with us⁸.
He becomes a member of the community
and enjoys all the benefits of the Congregation,
except those deriving from the public profession of vows.

109. *Documents Related to Association.*

Before association, an act is to be signed
where the conditions required of individual cases
are to be expressed.

110. *Association of Individuals Who Went Through Novitiate.*

Those who at the end of the novitiate,
though deemed suitable to our life,
do not feel up to making the profession of vows,
may apply to join the Congregation
as associates.
Later, if they desire to make the profession,
they may be admitted in accordance with canon law.

111. *Termination of the Association.*

An associate
may freely leave the Congregation,
as well as be dismissed for just reasons.
With termination, all bonds
and acquired obligations cease immediately.

(1) *Mt* 9:38; *1Lct* 3; (2) *OT* 2; *PC* 24; (3) *OT* 3; (4) *OT* 3; (5) *ES* II, I, 16; (6) *C1927*, 802; (7) *C1927*, 347; (8) *C1927*, 351.

Chapter X

Suspension and Termination of the Obligations of Religious Life

112. Temporary Stay Out of Religious House.

Religious who have received the consent to live temporarily out of their religious house for particular reasons, are to be followed with care and love. The permission for the leave of absence from a religious house or the indult of exclaustation, as well as the juridical situation which is derived from them, are regulated by canon law.

113. Departure from the Congregation.

Should a religious encounter grave difficulties in following his vocation, he is to avail all the means to overcome them. The community is to facilitate his search of God's will through brotherly love and prayer. When the time of profession expires, a religious may freely leave the Congregation or he may not be admitted to renew his vows or make perpetual profession. If a religious in either temporary or perpetual vows leaves or is dismissed, the rules established by canon law are to be followed. Those who depart from the Congregation on their own initiative or are dismissed

must not be deprived of the friendship
and understanding of their brothers.

114. *Readmission to the Congregation.*

Norms for readmitting to the Congregation
those who, after having left,
apply to return,
are established by canon law.
It pertains to the Superior General
with the deliberative vote of his Council
to determine the procedures for readmission.

115. *Corrections and Sanctions.*

In the case of a serious public and ascertained offense,
the major Superior is to correct the religious
with love and responsibility,
after having listened to him
and obtained the consultative vote of his Councilors,
if circumstances warrant it.
When it is a matter of offenses
which attract sanctions provided by canon law,
while providing accordingly,
the Superior is to strive for the spiritual good of the confrere
and to see that the life of the community
does not suffer disruption.