

# ***NORMS OF LIFE OF THE THIRD ORDER***

of the DISCALCED AUGUSTINIANS



Rome – 2020



## ORDINE DEGLI AGOSTINIANI SCALZI

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Prot. Reg. V; fol. 221/05

TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE ORDER.

### DECREE OF PROMULGATION OF THE *NORMS OF LIFE OF THE THIRD ORDER*

My heart and that of our entire religious family are filled with satisfaction in promulgating the new *Norms of Life of the Third Order*, because they will certainly favor a greater involvement of many lay people in living and bearing witness to our spirituality as Discalced Augustinians.

They are the result of an accurate work of elaboration carried out with patience and competence by the Director General of the Third Order Secular, Fr. Dennis Duene RUIZ, taking into account the provisions of the *Code of Canon Law* and of the Church's guidelines on the vocation and mission of the laity in the life of the Church.

In addition to the new *Norms of Life*, the manual also contains the *Rule* of the Holy Father Augustine, a rich source of an authentic spirituality which, undoubtedly, constitutes its soul and motivates its apostolate.

The *Norms* trace a serious and experienced path of lay holiness and provide for a consecration of life that commits the members to the search for holiness lived in the world for the construction of the Kingdom of God, following the charism of the Discalced Augustinians and cultivating what can favor growth in the love for God, neighbor and the Order.

In fact, the bond that binds the Fraternity to the local religious communities of the Discalced Augustinians is very evident and strong, receiving support and formation, offering in turn a specific spiritual and also material collaboration according to the different local contexts. There are many prayer and formation meetings as well as the initiatives indicated and other recommended ones to be followed in order to be in fact active members of the Fraternity.

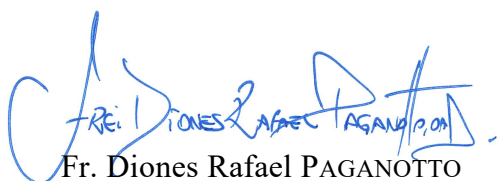
Therefore, according to the provisions of n. 134 of our *Constitutions* and n. 312 of the *Code of Canon Law*,

I PROMULGATE

the new *Norms of Life of the Third Order*, attached to this *Decree*.

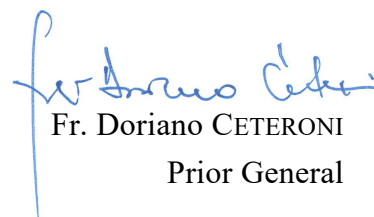
Rome, December 12, 2020,

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.



Fr. Diones Rafael PAGANOTTO

Secretary General



Fr. Dorian CETERONI  
Prior General

## PRINCIPAL ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AA	<i>Apostolicam Actuositatem (Conciliar Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity)</i>
Can.	Canon
cf.	confront
Const.	<i>Constitutions of the Discalced Augustinians</i>
Contr. Faust.	St. AUGUSTINE, <i>Contra Faustum</i>
De Civ. Dei	St. AUGUSTINE, <i>De Civitate Dei (On the City of God)</i>
De Doctr. Chr.	St. AUGUSTINE, <i>De Doctrina Christiana (On the Christian Doctrine)</i>
De S. Virg.	St. AUGUSTINE, <i>De Sancta Virginitate (On Holy Virginity)</i>
De Trin.	St. AUGUSTINE, <i>De Trinitate (On the Trinity)</i>
DV	<i>Dei Verbum (Dogmatic Constitution on the Divine Revelation)</i>
GS	<i>Gadium et Spes (Dogmatic Constitution on the World in the Contemporary World)</i>
In Ep. Jo.	St. AUGUSTINE, <i>In Epistolam ad Parthos Tractatus (Commentary to the Letter to Parthos)</i>
In Jo.	St. AUGUSTINE, <i>In Johannis Evangelium Tractatus (Commentary on the Gospel of John)</i>
In Ps.	St. AUGUSTINE, <i>Enarrationes in Psalmos (Expositions on the Psalms)</i>
n.	number
nn.	numbers
OT	<i>Optatam Totius (Conciliar Decree on Priestly Formation)</i>
PO	<i>Presbyterorum Ordinis (Conciliar Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests)</i>
Reg.	St. AUGUSTINE, <i>Regula (Rule)</i>
SC	<i>Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy)</i>
Serm.	St. AUGUSTINE, <i>Sermones (Sermons)</i>
Sol.	St. AUGUSTINE, <i>Soliloquia (Soliloquies)</i>

\* The abbreviations of the biblical books follow those proposed by the Bible of the NABRE (2011).

## PART I.

### THE *RULE* OF SAINT AUGUSTINE<sup>1</sup>

#### Section 1. INTRODUCTORY COMMENT TO THE *RULE*

This brief commentary on the *Rule* of the holy father Augustine tries to grasp its inspiration and doctrinal content to highlight how it is an effective norm of life, not only for the Discalced Augustinian religious who live the life of apostolic fraternity in the monasteries, but also for the brothers and sisters of the Secular Order.

The first impression that the reading of the *Rule* arouses is that of being in front of a work written by a man who, in the search for the most authentic needs of the person, finds true wisdom and tries to encapsulate its principles in a short and balanced way. By the exemplary model of life of the first community in Jerusalem, Augustine reaffirms the inspiring principles that are always valid for those who respond to the call of God by conforming to Christ in continuous conversion and in the commitment of evangelical witness.

In the *Rule*, Augustine re-proposes the Gospel as the supreme norm of life so that in it his spiritual children should try to see, understand and live the spirit of Christ by referring to his wonderful experience.

The Augustinian *Rule* is short, but rich in content; its precepts, not many but essential, give religious life a sure and strong orientation. The result is a spiritual framework that is both deeply human and authentically evangelical.

#### Charity

It is easy to condense the Gospel message into the new commandment of love and Augustine embodies this basic principle in his *Rule* to say clearly that charity is the end, the means and center of religious life.

Some affirmations of the *Rule* are illuminating by the way: “First of all love God and then your neighbor [...] have one soul and one heart only reaching out to God [...]. Let the only one that persists remain: charity” (Reg 1; 3; 31).

In these meager and sculptural phrases Augustine outlines in substance the purpose of religious life, not only of the monk, but also of those who, while remaining in the world, want to express themselves in harmony with the principles of Christian life: the fullness of the love of God and of neighbor.

The holy father Augustine is deeply aware that the cornerstone of the Christian life is the perfection of charity and even if he inserts other prescriptions and directives in the *Rule*, these are only a means to achieve the true end.

It is evident that in order to achieve the goal of religious and Christian life, there are indispensable means and Augustine suggests them with wise graduality.

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<sup>1</sup> Obs. The text of the critical edition is that proposed by Fr. Luca Verheijen, OSA (La règle de saint Augustin, Paris 1967, I, pp. 417-437) with the addition of two variants that belong to the commonly accepted text: no. 1 and the words: “Quod si aliquis rem sibi collatam celaverit, robti iudicio contemnetur” in no. 32. To make reading and quotation easier, chapter titles and progressive numbering of the text were added.

Living unanimously and having only one heart reaching out to God is the most exact way to get to the heart of charity in its essential prerogatives: a constant push towards God, a living awareness of the presence of God in the community, a profound sense of the Church.

They are expressions that would require a long comment and it is therefore convenient to state only their fundamental principle in the construction of the building of love.

The true life of communion and love extends according to the *Rule*, to the gospel principle of fraternal correction, which constitutes the sincere spirit of help of the brother to the brother to draw ever closer to God in the unity of love.

Speaking of community life for the monks, Augustine also insists on the diversity of situations, gifts and functions to be linked to the unity of love: it is a very valid principle in any context of spiritual affinity, which it does not pretend, as in life of the Secular Order, the system of common life in the strict sense, but openness to participation, dialogue, service, the spiritual union of hearts.

Another means of arriving at charity is the brake on private love, which the holy father Augustine inculcates in putting common things before one's own and which, in the context of the life of an Augustinian Secular Fraternity, could be made explicit in this way: renouncement of selfishness, to one's own advantage, to live: not exclusively for oneself, but for others, and this, both in relationships between persons and persons, as in relationships between a group and another group, the refusal of individual and collective selfishness.

Other means of achieving the goal of charity for Augustine are the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, obedience and a peculiar spirit of humility.

### **Chastity**

If chastity in religious life, as stated in the text of the *Perfectae Caritatis* (Reg. 12,1) recalls "to all the faithful that marvelous union worked by God and which is fully manifested in the future century, for which the Church has Christ as her Spouse", the dimension of this virtue wants to emphasize to all the faithful the essential movement of life and Christian holiness: the love of Jesus above all other reality.

This is the authentic sense that guides the soul of Augustine and which becomes the criterion for living the spirit of charity also for the Secular Augustinians: their conjugal love must be great, generous, indissolubly loyally faithful, capable of truly translating the demanding love of Christ and the Church.

### **Poverty and Obedience**

In the same ascent to evangelical perfection, the values of poverty and obedience are outlined, signs of preferential love for the Lord. This love, voluntarily embracing poverty and obedience goes to the limit; it does not hesitate to sacrifice certain human values and to call into question the very possession of goods and the free disposal of oneself.

If the Discalced Augustinian religious tends to achieve this goal in the life of consecration, the Secular Augustinian must draw the most obvious teaching: to escape the temptation of attachment to earthly goods and creatures, to perceive the relative value of the world and the absolute value of Christ and his love.

### **Humility**

Humility assimilates perfectly to Christ, meek and humble of heart, who relieves oneself from the dominion of pride, source of sin and rebellion.

The humble man easily finds the way that leads to the love of God: he recognizes his nothingness in front of the Creator, he repudiates the spirit of ambition and vainglory, he does

not seek and dodges positions and honorific positions, concentrates all his commitment in the service of God and of brothers & sisters.

The *Rule* also proposes some norms as indispensable means of support on the path to perfection: prayer, asceticism, study and work.

### **Prayer**

As for the value of prayer, Augustine specifies its need and its interiority.

Prayer is necessary because man alone cannot accomplish anything, but by entrusting himself to God in the prayer of praise, thanksgiving, adoration and supplication, he obtains what is indispensable for perseverance in faithfulness and salvation.

The note of the interiority of prayer wants to underline the constant attitude of the human heart towards God: Man feels a need, deeply rooted in his being, that he is made for God, who seeks God, who loves Him and wants to possess Him.

### **Asceticism**

Asceticism or penitential practice, highly recommended by Augustine in the *Rule*, is the way necessary for an authentic spiritual purification. In order to dominate the passions of the old man and conform himself to the suffering Christ, the way of penance is always actual and demanding. It is no coincidence that the spirit of the Reform of the Discalced Augustinians accentuates its value and the Second Vatican Council recommends it and reminds it to religious and lay people: "Let everyone remember that [...] with penance and spontaneous acceptance of the efforts and penalties of the life, with which they conform to the suffering Christ, they can reach all men and contribute to the salvation of the whole world" (AA 18).

### **Study and Work**

The study and work recommended by Augustine in the *Rule*, if they are necessary for the spiritual and cultural toning of his monks, constitute a necessity also for those who share their spirituality in the secular condition.

The study refers both to secular subjects because it is a source of culture and progress and of the formation for the apostolate, which "presupposes an integral formation suited to the disposition and conditions of each. The lay person, in fact, knowing the contemporary world well, must be a member of his own society and at the level of its culture" (AA 29).

"In addition to spiritual formation, a solid doctrinal preparation is required [...] according to the diversity of age, condition and talent. Nor should the importance of general culture be neglected together with practical and technical training" (AA 29).

Studies, in the mind of Augustine and the Church, has a specific reference to the knowledge of scripture to "learn the sublime science of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3,8). The laity must remember that "ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ" (St. Jerome).

Heartfelt is in this regard the recommendation of Vatican II: "the faithful must wholeheartedly come closer to the reading of Sacred Scriptures [...] may it be through pious reading, both by means of initiatives suitable for this purpose and other aids [...] Remembering, however, that reading the Holy Scripture must be accompanied by prayer, so that the conversation between God and man can take place" (DV 25).

Work must be seen as a means of sanctification and collaboration at the completion of divine creation. Even more it should be known that, as the Second Vatican Council recalls, "[...] by offering his work to God, man associates himself with the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, who has given work a very high dignity, working with His own hands at Nazareth" (GS 67).

The work, in a correct Christian conception, becomes a work of contribution to the building up of society and an instrument of apostolate and Christian presence in the living environment and in the various domestic, social and professional activities (cf. AA 13).

### **Epilogue**

As one can see, everything flows, according to the spirit of the *Rule*, into the need of the apostolate: Augustine reminds his children of the commitment of Christian witness because the authenticity of love is found in the apostolic service for the building up of the Kingdom of God. While giving these norms, Augustine, taking up a theme so dear to the apostle Paul, underlines, in the conclusion of the *Rule*, that one should not be slaves of the law, but free under grace. It is an important affirmation that wants to make his spiritual children understand the functionality of the *Rule* itself: it is necessary to grasp the spirit of the law, to penetrate its meaning, to discover the reason why it was given. The law will be authentically observed if the behavior of the recipients satisfies that intention of love that gave rise to the pre-inscriptions of the *Rule*.

## **Section 2. THE *RULE* OF SAINT AUGUSTINE**

### **Chapter 1 Purpose and Basis of Common Life**

- 1) Before all else, dear brothers, love God and then your neighbor, because these are the chief commandments given to us.
- 2) The following are the precepts we order you living in the monastery to observe.
- 3) The main purpose for you having come together is to live harmoniously in your house, intent upon God in oneness of mind and heart.
- 4) Call nothing your own, but let everything be yours in common. Food and clothing shall be distributed to each of you by your superior, not equally to all, for all do not enjoy equal health, but rather according to each one's need. For so you read in the *Acts of the Apostles* that they had all things in common and distribution was made to each one according to each one's need (Acts 4:32,35).
- 5) Those who owned something in the world should be careful in wanting to share it in common once they have entered the monastery.
- 6) But they who owned nothing should not look for those things in the monastery that they were unable to have in the world. Nevertheless, they are to be given all that their health requires even if, during their time in the world, poverty made it impossible for them to find the very necessities of life. And those should not consider themselves fortunate because they have found the kind of food and clothing which they were unable to find in the world.

### **Chapter 2 Humility, Respect and Love**

- 7) And let them not hold their heads high, because they associate with people whom they did not dare to approach in the world, but let them rather lift up their hearts and not seek after what is vain and earthly. Otherwise, monasteries will come to serve a useful purpose for the rich and not the poor, if the rich are made humble there and the poor are puffed up with pride.
- 8) The rich, for their part, who seemed important in the world, must not look down upon their brothers who have come into this holy brotherhood from a condition of poverty. They should seek to glory in the fellowship of poor brothers rather than in the reputation of rich relatives. They should neither be elated if they have contributed a part of their wealth to the common life, nor take more pride in sharing their riches with the monastery than if they were to enjoy them in the world. Indeed, every other kind of sin has to do with the commission of evil deeds, whereas pride lurks even in good works in order to destroy them. And what good is it to scatter one's wealth abroad by giving to the poor, even to become poor oneself, when the unhappy soul is thereby more given to pride in despising riches than it had been in possessing them?
- 9) Let all of you then live together in oneness of mind and heart, mutually honoring God in yourselves, whose temples you have become.

### **Chapter 3 Prayer**

- 10) Be assiduous in prayer (Col 4:2), at the hours and times appointed.
- 11) In the Oratory no one should do anything other than that for which was intended and from which it also takes its name. Consequently, if there are some who might wish to pray there during their free time, even outside the hours appointed, they should not be hindered by those who think something else must be done there.

12) When you pray to God in Psalms and hymns, think over in your hearts the words that come from your lips.

13) Chant only what is prescribed for chant; moreover, let nothing be chanted unless it is so prescribed.

#### **Chapter 4    Moderation and Self-Denial**

14) Subdue the flesh, so far as your health permits, by fasting and abstinence from food and drink. However, when someone is unable to fast, he should still take no food outside mealtimes unless he is ill.

15) When you come to table, listen until you leave to what is the custom to read, without disturbance or strife. Let not your mouths alone take nourishment but let your hearts too hunger for the Word of God.

#### **Chapter 5    Consideration and Discretion**

16) If those in more delicate health from their former way of life are treated differently in the matter of food, this should not be a source of annoyance to the others or appear unjust in the eyes of those who owe their stronger health to different habits of life. Nor should the healthier brothers deem them more fortunate for having food which they do not have, but rather consider themselves fortunate for having the good health which the others do not enjoy.

17) And if something in the way of food, clothing, and bedding is given to those coming to the monastery from a more genteel way of life, which is not given to those who are stronger, and therefore happier, then these latter ought to consider how far these others have come in passing from their life in the world down to this life of ours, though they have been unable to reach the level of frugality common to the stronger brothers. Nor should all want to receive what they see given in larger measure to the few, not as a token of honor, but as a help to support them in their weakness. This would give rise to a deplorable disorder - that in the monastery, where the rich are coming to bear as much hardship as they can, the poor are turning to a more genteel way of life.

18) And just as the sick must take less food to avoid discomfort, so too, after their illness, they are to receive the kind of treatment that will quickly restore their strength, even though they come from a life of extreme poverty. Their more recent illness has, as it were, afforded them what accrued to the rich as part of their former way of life. But when they have recovered their former strength, they should go back to their happier way of life which, because their needs are fewer, is all the more in keeping with God's servants. Once in good health, they must not become slaves to the enjoyment of food which was necessary to sustain them in their illness. For it is better to suffer a little want than to have too much.

#### **Chapter 6    Safeguarding Chastity**

19) There should be nothing about your clothing to attract attention. Besides, you should not seek to please by your apparel, but by a good life.

20) Whenever you go out, walk together, and when you reach your destination, stay together.

21) In your walk, deportment, and in all actions, let nothing occur to give offense to anyone who sees you, but only what becomes your holy state of life.

22) Although your eyes may chance to rest upon some woman or other, you must not fix your gaze upon any woman. Seeing women when you go out is not forbidden, but it is sinful to desire them or to wish them to desire you, for it is not by the sense of touch or passionate feeling alone

but by one's gaze also that lustful desires mutually arise. And do not say that your hearts are pure if there is immodesty of the eye, because the unchaste eye carries the message of an impure heart. And when such hearts disclose their unchaste desires in a mutual gaze, even without saying a word, then it is that chastity suddenly goes out of their life, even though their bodies remain unsullied by unchaste acts.

**23)** And whoever fixes his gaze upon a woman and likes to have hers fixed upon him must not suppose that others do not see what he is doing. He is very much seen, even by those he thinks do not see him. But suppose all this escapes the notice of man - what will he do about God who sees from on high and from whom nothing is hidden? Or are we to imagine that he does not see because he sees with a patience as great as his wisdom? Let the religious man then have such fear of God that he will not want to be an occasion of sinful pleasure to a woman. Ever mindful that God sees all things, let him not desire to look at a woman lustfully. For it is on this point that fear of the Lord is recommended, where it is written: An abomination to the Lord is he who fixes his gaze (Pr 27:20)

**24)** So, when you are together in church and anywhere else where women are present, exercise a mutual care over purity of life. Thus, by mutual vigilance over one another will God, who dwells in you, grant you his protection.

## **Chapter 7   Fraternal Correction**

**25)** If you notice in someone of your brothers this wantonness of the eye, of which I am speaking, admonish him at once so that the beginning of evil will not grow more serious but will be promptly corrected.

**26)** But if you see him doing the same thing again on some other day, even after your admonition, then whoever had occasion to discover this must report him as he would a wounded man in need of treatment. But let the offense first be pointed out to two or three so that he can be proven guilty on the testimony of these two or three and be punished with due severity. And do not charge yourselves with ill-will when you bring this offense to light. Indeed, yours in the greater blame if you allow your brothers to be lost through your silence when you are able to bring about their correction by your disclosure. If your brother, for example, were suffering a bodily wound that he wanted to hide for fear of undergoing treatment, would it not be cruel of you to remain silent and a mercy on your part to make this known? How much greater than is your obligation to make his condition known lest he continue to suffer a more deadly wound of the soul.

**27)** But if he fails to correct the fault despite this admonition, he should first be brought to the attention of the superior before the offense is made known to the others who will have to prove his guilt, in the event he denies the charge. Thus, corrected in private, his fault can perhaps be kept from the others. But should he feign ignorance, the others are to be summoned so that in the presence of all he can be proven guilty, rather than stand accused on the word of one alone. Once proven guilty, he must undergo salutary punishment according to the judgment of the superior or priest having the proper authority. If he refuses to submit to punishment, he shall be expelled from your brotherhood even if he does not withdraw of his own accord. For this too is not done out of cruelty, but from a sense of compassion so that many others may not be lost through his bad example.

**28)** And let everything I have said about not fixing one's gaze be also observed carefully and faithfully with regard to other offenses: to find them out, to ward them off, to make them known, to prove and punish them - all out of love for man and a hatred of sin.

**29)** But if anyone should go so far in wrongdoing as to receive letters in secret from any woman, or small gifts of any kind, you ought to show mercy and pray for him if he confesses this of his

own accord. But if the offense is detected and he is found guilty, he must be more severely chastised according to the judgment of the priest or superior.

## **Chapter 8 The Care of Community Goods**

**30)** Keep your clothing in one place in charge of one or two, or of as many as are needed to care for them and to prevent damage from moths. And just as you have your food from the one pantry, so, too, you are to receive your clothing from a single wardrobe. If possible, do not be concerned about what you are given to wear at the change of seasons, whether each of you gets back what he had put away or something different, providing no one is denied what he needs. If, however, disputes and murmuring arise on this account because someone complains that he received poorer clothing than he had before, and thinks it is beneath him to wear the kind of clothing worn by another, you may judge from this how lacking you are in that holy and inner garment of the heart when you quarrel over garments for the body. But if allowance is made for your weakness and you do receive the same clothing you had put away; you must still keep it in one place under the common charge.

**31)** In this way, no one shall perform any task for his own benefit but all your work shall be done for the common good, with greater zeal and more dispatch than if each one of you were to work for yourself alone. For charity, as it is written, is not self-seeking (1Cor 13:5) meaning that it places the common good before its own, not its own before the common good. So, whenever you show greater concern for the common good than for your own, you may know that you are growing in charity. Thus, let the abiding virtue of charity prevail in all things that minister to the fleeting necessities of life.

**32)** It follows, therefore, that if anyone brings something for their sons or other relatives living in the monastery, whether a garment or anything else they think is needed, this must not be accepted secretly as one's own but must be placed at the disposal of the superior so that, as common property, it can be given to whoever needs it. But if someone secretly keeps something given to him, he shall be judged guilty of theft.

## **Chapter 9 Treatment of the Sick**

**33)** Your clothing should be cleaned either by yourselves or by those who perform this service, as the superior shall determine, so that too great a desire for clean clothing may not be the source of interior stains on the soul.

**34)** As for bodily cleanliness too, a brother must never deny himself the use of the bath when his health requires it. But this should be done on medical advice, without complaining, so that even though unwilling, he shall do what has to be done for his health when the superior orders it. However, if the brother wishes it, when it might not be good for him, you must not comply with his desire, for sometimes we think something is beneficial for the pleasure it gives, even though it may prove harmful.

**35)** Finally, if the cause of a brother's bodily pain is not apparent, you make take the word of God's servant when he indicates what is giving him pain. But if it remains uncertain whether the remedy, he likes is good for him, a doctor should be consulted.

**36)** When there is need to frequent the public baths or any other place, no fewer than two or three should go together, and whoever has to go somewhere must not go with those of his own choice but with those designated by the superior.

**37)** The care of the sick, whether those in convalescence or others suffering from some indisposition, even though free of fever, shall be assigned to a brother who can personally obtain from the pantry whatever he sees is necessary for each one.

**38)** Those in charge of the pantry, or of clothing and books, should render cheerful service to their brothers.

**39)** Books are to be requested at a fixed hour each day, and anyone coming outside that hour is not to receive them.

**40)** But as for clothing and shoes, those in charge shall not delay the giving of them whenever they are required by those in need of them.

## **Chapter 10 Asking Pardon and Forgiving Offenses**

**41)** You should either avoid quarrels altogether or else put an end to them as quickly as possible; otherwise, anger may grow into hatred, making a plank out of a splinter, and turn the soul into a murderer. For so you read: Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer (1Jn 3:15).

**42)** Whoever has injured another by open insult, or by abusive or even incriminating language, must remember to repair the injury as quickly as possible by an apology, and he who suffered the injury must also forgive, without further wrangling. But if they have offended one another, they must forgive one another's trespasses for the sake of your prayers which should be recited with greater sincerity each time you repeat them. Although a brother is often tempted to anger, yet prompt to ask pardon from one he admits to having offended, such a one is better than another who, though less given to anger, finds it too hard to ask forgiveness. But a brother who is never willing to ask pardon, or does not do so from his heart, has no reason to be in the monastery, even if he is not expelled. You must then avoid being too harsh in your words, and should they escape your lips, let those same lips not be ashamed to heal the wounds they have caused.

**43)** But whenever the good of discipline requires you to speak harshly in correcting your subjects, then, even if you think you have been unduly harsh in your language, you are not required to ask forgiveness lest, by practicing too great humility toward those who should be your subjects, the authority to rule is undermined. But you should still ask forgiveness from the Lord of all who knows with what deep affection you love even those whom you might happen to correct with undue severity. Besides, you are to love another with a spiritual rather than an earthly love.

## **Chapter 11 Governance and Obedience**

**44)** The superior should be obeyed as a father with the respect due to him so as not to offend God in his person, and, even more so, the priest who bears responsibility for you all.

**45)** But it shall pertain chiefly to the superior to see that these precepts are all observed and, if any point has been neglected, to take care that the transgression is not carelessly overlooked but is punished and corrected. In doing so, he must refer whatever exceeds the limit and power of his office, to the priest who enjoys greater authority among you.

**46)** The superior, for his part, must not think himself fortunate in his exercise of authority but in his role as one serving you in love. In your eyes he shall hold the first place among you by the dignity of his office, but in fear before God he shall be as the least among you. He must show himself as an example of good works toward all. Let him admonish the unruly, cheer the fainthearted, support the weak, and be patient toward all (1Thes 5:14). Let him uphold discipline while instilling fear. And though both are necessary, he should strive to be loved by you rather than feared, ever mindful that he must give an account of you to God.

**47)** It is by being more obedient, therefore, that you show mercy not only toward yourselves but also toward the superior whose higher rank among you exposes him all the more to greater peril.

## **Chapter 12 Observance of the *Rule***

**48)** The Lord grant that you may observe all these precepts in a spirit of charity as lovers of spiritual beauty, giving forth the good odor of Christ in the holiness of your lives: not as slaves living under the law but as men living in freedom under grace.

**49)** And that you may see yourselves in this little book, as in a mirror, have it read to you once a week so as to neglect no point through forgetfulness. When you find that you are doing all that has been written, give thanks to the Lord, the Giver of every good. But when one of you finds that he has failed on any point, let him be sorry for the past, be on his guard for the future, praying that he will be forgiven his fault and not be led into temptation.

## **PART II.**

### **OUR SPIRITUAL IDENTITY**

#### **Section 1. SPIRITUALITY**

1) The Third Order of the Discalced Augustinians is one of the secular associations under the General Direction of the Office of the Secular Discalced Augustinian Fraternities (SDAF) tightly joined, in many ways, to the Religious Order of the Discalced Augustinians. It shares with it, although in the specific lay vocation, the common vocation to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity by following the *Rule*, the example and the spiritual teachings of the Holy Father Augustine, the spirituality of the Order and its charism: “Joyfully serving the Most High in the spirit of humility”.

2) Following the example of St. Augustine and the spirit that the Order of the Discalced Augustinians has inherited from him, the Discalced Augustinian tertiaries, in the ordinary life of the world, want to tend, while trusting in the grace of God, to the perfection of Christian life by seeking and enjoying God in the communion of brethren, in a spirit of profound humility and by proclaiming His Kingdom with the strength of witness.

3) Their norms of life are modelled according to the *Rule* of the Holy Father Augustine and to these Statutes of the Third Order of the Discalced Augustinians. In them they find inspiration for their lives and nourishment for their spirituality.

4) Certain of having been created in the image and likeness of God, they live in the faithfulness to the commitment of:

- a. keeping clear the image imprinted in them, renewing themselves in a constant journey of conversion;
- b. living their baptismal consecration by entrusting their lives to God;
- c. edifying themselves in love and seeking the Kingdom of God by handling the temporal goods and by orienting them to Him.

5) As they are grafted in Christ through baptism and united in His body, which is the Church, their lives are in profound communion with Christ, the way and the end of their journey of faith: in Him they find the Way, the Truth and the Life that lead them to the Father; in His Church they express the joy of the new life, since, as members of the “Whole Christ”, they work in order to build the city of God and to express, in the communion of charity, the reunion of the whole human community in Christ.

6) An important dimension of their spiritual life is the call to interiority in order to contemplate the richness of God’s mystery.

Meditation, cultivated and looked for in order to flee from the tumult of worldly life, helps them concentrate on the absolute values of the spirit, opens them to the dialogue with God, makes them docile to the action of the Spirit, prepares their hearts to the fruitful reception of the seed of the Word of God.

7) The richness of interior life, although it leads them primarily to the contemplation and praise of God, is also the source of a fruitful apostolate.

Remembering that “the necessity of charity demands just action” (cf. De Civ. Dei 19,19), the Discalced Augustinian tertiaries, “inasmuch as they share the priestly, prophetic and royal office of Christ” (cf. AA 10), take part actively in the life and action of the Church:

- a. in order to bring their neighbors to the praise of God through all values;
- b. in order to be living members in the fabric of the local Church and to radiate charity in the universal Church;
- c. in order to spread the truth of the Gospel in the society, the promotion of unity in charity among Christians and in the world, and to offer to the needy the service of love by means of the works of mercy and charity (cf. AA 19);
- d. in order to be a ferment of Christ's presence in their families, in the professional field, in the social environment, in the world of labor and in the schools, in harmony with the necessities of the times and the directives of the Church.

**8)** Faithful to the principle of the *Rule*: "Be united in mind and heart intent upon God" (Reg., 3), following the example of the first community in Jerusalem and looking to the fullness of the common life expressed in the monastic Augustinian ideal, they consider charity as the heart of their lives and of their apostolate. Charity:

- a. is the root by which every form of goodness grows (cf. In Jo. 7-8);
- b. places the perfection of justice in loving one's neighbors (cf. De Trin. 8,8,12);
- c. opens the soul to spiritual and material sharing;
- d. cultivates dialogue and spiritual friendship;
- e. tends to form "one soul, the only soul of Christ" expressing the unity of hearts and the missionary dimension of apostolate according to the Holy Father Augustine's earnest invitation: "If you love God, bring everyone to God's love" (cf. In Ps. 33s.2,6).

**9)** The love of God and neighbor is the constant goal that directs all their lives in the different orientations of action. It is not by chance that the Holy Father Augustine reminds: "Love and do what you want; if you are silent, keep silent out of love; if you speak, speak out of love; if you correct, correct out of love; if you forgive, forgive out of love. May the root of love be in you: from this root nothing grows but what is good" (In Ep. Jo. 7,8).

**10)** Love, although it includes the human and spiritual values of friendship, is founded in God. In their neighbors they recognize the divine presence and they mutually honor it because, by grace, they have become temples of the living God (cf. Reg. 9). To this Augustine's recommendation points: "Love your neighbor and see inside yourself the source of your love for in your neighbor: there you will see God" (In Jo. 17,8).

**11)** Supernatural love entails for them the prophetic witness in defending the life and rights of the weak, in the commitment for the construction of justice and peace, aspiration and supreme good of every man (cf. De Civ. Dei 19,11-12; Contr. Faust. 22,27).

**12)** According to the example and the doctrine of St. Augustine and in tune with the spirit of the Reform of the Discalced Augustinians, they intend to live in a peculiar attitude of humility. Humility:

- a. is the pivot of the whole spiritual life: since pride has wounded us, humility heals us (cf. Serm. 123,1,3);
- b. is the ladder that leads to the apex of charity, in fact, "nothing is more excellent than the way of love, but only the humble walk along that way" (In Ps. 141,7);
- c. assimilates to Christ who proclaims: "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart" (Mt. 11:29);
- d. gives the true knowledge, which consists in knowing that "man by himself is nothing, and everything he is, is from God and oriented to God" (In Ps., 70,s.1.1);
- e. guards charity, because without humility there is no charity, there is no love, there is no peace (cf. In Ep. Jo., Prol.);
- f. makes people more willing to serve God and the brethren through the example of Christ, who came not to be served, but to serve (cf. Mt. 20:27-28).

**13)** By adhering to Christ and to His mystical Body in the common joy of the new canticle, they intend to seek and honor God, to work for the good of all in the spirit of humble service and of brotherly friendship, to show, through their lives, the meaning of ecclesial communion.

## **Section 2. EVANGELICAL COUNSELS**

**14)** Holiness in the Church is manifested in the fruits of grace that the Holy Spirit produces in the faithful and is expressed in different forms (cf. LG 39). In a singular way, it is manifested in the practice of the counsels that are called evangelical (cf. LG 39). The love of God, “poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us” (Rom 5:5), makes lay people capable of truly expressing, in their lives, the spirit of the beatitudes (cf. AA 4). In the specific dimension of humility, characteristic of the Reform, the Discalced Augustinian tertiaries, docile to the action of the Holy Spirit and in conformity with each one’s state of life, intend to express the aspiration to the fullness of charity in the spirit of chastity, poverty and obedience (cf. AA 4).

**15)** In the commitment of following Christ who is chaste, poor, obedient and humble, they take the Holy Father Augustine, the faithful disciple of Christ who, illuminated by the grace and by the Word, consecrated himself to the service of God and of His Kingdom, as a guide and a model.

**16)** They incorporate themselves with joy within the Third Order brethren who, in a more generous response to the impulse of the Holy Spirit, consecrate themselves to God in celibacy or virginity, although remaining in their condition of seculars, and profess the vows of poverty, obedience and humility as well.

### **Chapter 1 Chastity**

**17)** The virtue of chastity basically expresses the unconditional love towards God, the love towards Jesus above all other realities.

For this reason, in the full dignity of their baptismal consecration and in the fidelity to the state of celibacy, virginity or marriage, they choose, with the help of God, to live the virtue of chastity as a testimony to the preferential love that they have for Christ.

**18)** Fully convinced of their human fragility, they feel the necessity, in order to live chastely, of:

- a. trusting in God’s providence;
- b. using prudence and vigilance and not presuming of their own strength;
- c. practicing mortification and the guarding of the senses;
- d. avoiding reading books, watching shows or frequenting environments that could compromise fidelity.

### **Chapter 2 Poverty**

**19)** The spirit of evangelical poverty conforms them to Christ who made Himself poor for their sake and warns them not to set their assurances and hopes in material things, but in the heavenly realities.

**20)** By detaching their hearts from the things of this world, they affirm their incapacity to satisfy the desires of man and they seek more easily the Kingdom of God and the works of justice.

**21)** In living the spirit of Augustinian poverty, the Discalced Augustinian tertiaries commit themselves to:

- a. refusing the logic of consumerism, evident expression of a hedonistic and materialistic mindset;
- b. avoiding every kind of wastefulness and luxury in the purchasing and use of goods;
- c. being aware of and understanding the necessities of the brethren in need, in order to share with them the goods given by God and to express the solidarity of fraternal love;
- d. removing all forms of egoism in order to facilitate the increase of charity in the hearts of the brethren (cf. De Doctr. Chr. 3,10,16).

### **Chapter 3 Obedience**

**22)** Following the example of Jesus, who always oriented His life towards the will of the Father: “My food is to do the will of My Father”, Christian obedience expresses the communion of love with God. Obedience, “mother and guardian of all virtues” (cf. De Civ. Dei 14,12), is therefore the response of love and service to God in the Spirit of Christ and in the bosom of the Church.

**23)** They must express the practical form of obedience:

- a. in listening to the Word of God, which nourishes their faith and makes them perceive more easily the will of the Father;
- b. in the acceptance of the directives of the Pope and the Bishops, and in the full communion with them, since in them is present, in the midst of the believers, the Lord Jesus, who, by means of their ministry, preaches the Word of God, administers the sacraments of faith, incorporates new members, guides and instructs the people of God in its pilgrimage towards the heavenly home (cf. LG 21);
- c. in the exercise of their baptismal priesthood, which is lived by offering the spiritual sacrifice of one’s obedient love to God;
- d. in fulfilling faithfully and generously their responsibilities towards one’s family as parents, spouses and children;
- e. in the faithful and joyful observance of the precepts of the *Rule* and of their Statutes;
- f. in the respect and love towards the Superiors and Directors of their Communities, towards the priests who are the ministers of God and towards the shepherds who preside in charity;
- g. in the loyalty towards the just laws of the civil community and the authorities legitimately constituted.

### **Chapter 4 Humility**

**24)** In order for them to follow Christ and clothe themselves with the same sentiments, it is necessary to learn from Him the spirit of humility: “... He emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave...” (Phil. 2:7). The disciples should always show the imitation and the witness to Christ’s humility and follow closely this renouncement of the Savior (cf. LG 42) in order to merit to participate in His glory. Conscious therefore of the importance that Christ ascribes to the poverty of spirit and willing to live this peculiar attitude of humility, they intend to express in their lifestyle:

- a. detachment from the spirit of the world and from all its vanities;
- b. association with the mystery of the cross and of the suffering of Christ;
- c. generous availability to serve their brothers and sisters in humility;
- d. the necessity of a constant and renewed commitment in the path of conversion.

### **Section 3. SPIRITUAL LIFE**

**25)** The baptismal consecration makes them participate in the divine life and makes them property of the Lord: "... you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people that God has acquired for Himself, in order that you may proclaim His wonderful deeds..." (cf. 1Pet. 2:9).

**26)** The supernatural life, to which the Lord has called them, constitutes the greatest gift of God's gratuitous love. The grateful response to the love of the Father is manifested primarily in expressing with all their life the unceasing worship of God.

**27)** Following the example of the Holy Father Augustine, who addresses God with the ardent request: "Immutable God, let me know myself, let me know You" (Sol. 2,1,1), they believe that the way to the knowledge and love of God is expressed in retreating into the interior self, in the contemplation of the divine realities and in a constant union with God in prayer.

#### **Chapter 1 Liturgical Life and Prayer**

**28)** To praise God, as the Holy Father Augustine teaches, is the greatest human deed (In Ps. 44,9). In the Church, this praise is expressed in a wonderful way during the liturgical worship, since "it is a sacred action surpassing all others; no other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree" (cf. SC 7).

**29)** By participating in the liturgical celebrations with a proper disposition, they reproduce in them what the sacred rites contain and signify. In this way, as members of the whole redeemed city, they offer to God a "universal sacrifice through the High Priest, who even offered Himself for us in His passion, that they might be the body of so great a Head" (cf. PO 2; De Civ. Dei 10,6).

**30)** The center of all liturgical worship is the Eucharist: in it is "the sacrament of piety, the sign of unity and the bond of love; whoever wants to live can find where to live and of what to live" (In Jo. 26,13). By participating assiduously and with faith in the Eucharistic banquet, they realize in themselves the formation of the one Christ; there they find strength for their daily commitment to Christian life, they confirm visibly the bond of peace and of their communion.

**31)** The love towards Jesus present in the Eucharist constitutes a constant dimension of their lives, which is also expressed by the frequent visit to the Most Holy Sacrament, by the spiritual communion and by the Eucharistic adoration.

**32)** Needing the mercy of God, they feel the necessity to approach the sacrament of confession with true contrition of heart in order to reconcile themselves with God and with their brothers and sisters (Can. 664).

**33)** By means of the liturgy of the other sacraments and sacramentals, they sanctify their lives in virtue of the divine grace that flows from the Paschal mystery (cf. SC 61).

**34)** Convinced that community prayer expresses the union of souls and hearts and that the dialogue with God is the culmination of the dialogue with our brothers and sisters, they feel the need to pray in a communitarian manner during their meetings, and, in communion with the faithful, in the parochial and Augustinian churches.

**35)** They must give preference to the prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours as an expression of the communitarian nature of the Church, remembering the exhortation of the Holy Father Augustine: "When you pray to God in psalms and hymns, meditate in your hearts what you utter by your voices" (Reg. 12).

**36)** Spiritual life is not limited to the participation in the sacred liturgy. It is also necessary to enter the room of one's heart in order to pray to the Father in secret (cf. Mt. 6:6).

37) In the spirit of the Augustinian tradition, they should not disregard the Chaplet of the Sacred Cincture (Coronilla), which consists in the recitation of thirteen Our Father and Hail Mary and of one Hail Holy Queen while meditating devoutly on the thirteen articles of our Profession of Faith.

## **Chapter 2 The Word of God**

**38)** The Church considers the Sacred Scripture as the supreme rule of faith.

The Sacred Scripture immutably communicates the Word of God Himself and makes resound, in the words of the prophets and of the apostles, the voice of the Holy Spirit. It is necessary, therefore, for the Christian religion to be nourished and ruled by the Sacred Scripture. In the Sacred Books the Lord encounters His children and enters into conversation with them; in the Word of God so much efficacy and power are inherent, that it becomes the support and vigor of the Church and, for the children of the Church, firmness of faith, food for the soul, pure and perpetual source of spiritual life (cf. DV 21).

**39)** Following the pressing invitation of the Church and accepting the example of the Holy Father Augustine, the Discalced Augustinian tertiaries engage in the study of the Sacred Scriptures in order to learn “the sublime knowledge of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:8). “The ignorance of the Scriptures is, in fact, ignorance of Christ” (St. JEROME, *Commentary on Isaiah*, Prol.; DV 25).

**40)** The reading and meditation of the Sacred Scripture is their preferred study, since it is permeated with charity; all its teachings lead us to Christ (cf. In Ps. 137,9); in it almost every page does not speak but of Christ and of the Church (Serm. 46,33).

**41)** Following the example of the Holy Father Augustine, who teaches how to talk with the interior Master, they are fully aware that the reading of the Sacred Scripture should be accompanied by prayer, so that the dialogue between God and man may take place, inasmuch as “they talk to Him when they pray, they listen to Him when they read the word of God” (cf. In Ps. 85,7; DV 25).

**42)** In order to fully nurture their interior life, they practice, possibly every day:

- a. meditation or spiritual reading;
- b. examination of conscience;
- c. thanksgiving for all the benefits received.

## **Chapter 3 Marian devotion**

**43)** Remembering that the profound devotion towards Our Lady has always been a characteristic of the Order, they venerate with filial love the Blessed Virgin Mary, who has been given by Jesus as a mother and a teacher of interior and apostolic life. Let them look at her, a wonderful model of faith always ready to accept integrally the Word of God, in order to learn the docility in responding to the Christian vocation. Let them learn from her how to live according to the Gospel (cf. OT 8), how to know and to love intensely the mystery of Christ and of the Church. Let them remember the greatness of her mission in favor of the people of God, concisely described by the enlightening words of the Holy Father Augustine: “[Mary] cooperates with love to the birth of the believers in the Church” (De S. Virg. 6). Trusting in her, the favored daughter of the Father, mother of God and temple of the Holy Spirit, they recognize her as a sublimely and singularly unique member of the Church- her image, and a very excellent model of faith and charity (cf. LG 53).

**44)** In the spirit of the Discalced Augustinian tradition, they contemplate in Mary the Mother of Grace and of the faithful, the perfect model of the Church, and they present her to the

Christian people with the special title of Mother of Consolation, as a sign of hope and consolation for the pilgrim people of God (cf. LG 68). They cultivate their devotion to her especially in the daily recitation of the Holy Rosary and by means of other Marian devotions proper to their tradition.

## **Chapter 4 Devotions of the Order**

**45)** They nurture also a particular devotion to St. Joseph, patron of the Order and of the Church, to the Holy Father Augustine, to the Holy Mother Monica and to the Saints of the Order.

## **Chapter 5 Penitential practices**

**46)** Faithful to the penitential character of the Order and to the spirit of the *Rule*, they love and practice mortification in order to participate willingly in the sufferings of Christ, to subdue their concupiscence and to remove egoism. Beside the fasting and abstinence prescribed by the Church, they practice fasting in the vigil of the feast of Our Lady of Consolation and of the Conversion of our Holy Father Augustine.

**47)** They also consider the fidelity to the *Rule* and to these Statutes, the trials and difficulties of life, the weight of age and all kinds of suffering, both physical and moral, as a genuine expression of penance (cf. *Paenitemini* III, a,b,c).

## **Section 4. FORMATION**

**48)** The work of spiritual, doctrinal and apostolic formation constitutes a task of primary importance within their Local Communities.

**49)** The integral human formation of the person is the foundation of an authentic Christian education. In this work of formation, the brethren should be guided in perfecting their character, in cultivating good human relations, in opening to the communitarian dimension, in attributing great importance to those virtues that are required in social relations, such as sincerity, sense of justice, faithfulness to one's words, gentleness in behaving and charity in conversing (cf. OT 11).

**50)** Spiritual formation should always tend, as to a constant reference point, to the primacy of interior life:

- a. to the participation in the Paschal Mystery of Christ, which must be deepened through meditation and sacramental life;
- b. to the living awareness of the mystery of the Church, in which they are called to form "the total Christ".

**51)** In the work of spiritual formation, the love and the spirit of the Order should be inculcated, together with the dimension of contemplative life and of personal and communitarian prayer.

**52)** Beside the spiritual formation, adequate doctrinal preparation is needed, according to the diversity of ages, conditions and degrees of learning (cf. AA 29).

While keeping in mind these demands, the following should be taken care of:

- a. Biblical, catechetical and liturgical instructions;
- b. guidance in the study and knowledge of St. Augustine's thought, of the great teachers of the Order, of our history and our spirituality;
- c. education to moral, social and professional consciousness.

**53)** While sharing in the Church's mission, their apostolic formation acquires a special character from the secular nature itself that is proper to the laity (cf. AA 29).

**54)** In the first place, they must learn to fulfill the mission of Christ and of the Church by living based on the faith in the divine mystery of Redemption, which reveals to them the infinite love of the Father. Moved by the Holy Spirit, who vivifies the people of God and leads all men to love God the Father and, in Him, the world and all men, they need to learn how to see, judge and do everything in the light of faith, and to enter, in this way, into the active service of the Church (cf. AA 29).

## **Section 5. APOSTOLATE**

**55)** The source of apostolic activity as Discalced Augustinian tertiaries springs from their intimate union and personal dialogue with God. Only by getting closer to God, who is love, and by adhering to Christ, sent by the Father, that their apostolic action becomes fruitful: "Whoever remains in Me and I in him bears much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing" (Jn. 15:5).

**56)** Animated by the love of God and of their neighbor, they live constantly heading towards the building up and expansion of the Kingdom of God. This inculcates in them the precept of charity and the exhortation of the Holy Father Augustine: "If you love God, draw everybody to God's love... draw as many as you can, by exhorting, by enduring, by praying, by dialoguing, by explaining, with gentleness, with amiability" (In Ps. 33,s.2,6-7).

**57)** The first form of apostolate consists in the testimony of Christian life and in doing good works with supernatural spirit. The example of life has the power to attract men to the faith and to God. This is confirmed by the words of the Lord: "Let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Mt. 5:16).

**58)** They place particular attention in showing the coherence of their lives with their faith, their honesty in everything they do, their solidary participation in the various conditions of life and of work, and in the aspirations of their brethren. This facilitates their apostolic action and prepares the hearts of all to the action of saving grace (cf. AA 13).

**59)** Their apostolate, besides being a testimony, is the proclamation of Christ by word and by the exercise of charity. They must, therefore, try to spread the message of the Gospel in the society in order to bring the non-believers to the faith and in order to instruct, confirm and lead their brothers and sisters in the faith to a more fervent life (cf. AA 6).

**60)** Charity, the heart of the Augustinian life, is expressed in the works of justice and mercy. In their brothers and sisters, particularly in those who are sick and in need of material and moral help, they encounter Christ Himself: "Whenever you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of Mine, you did it to Me" (Mt. 25:40). Let them always keep these words in mind and let them listen to the invitation of the Holy Father Augustine: "Turn your attention to Christ lying by the way; look at Christ who is hungry, who is shivering with cold, who is in need and is a stranger" (Serm. 25,8).

**61)** Without underestimating the personal initiatives in the field of charitable action, let them try, for greater efficacy and for a solidary expression of the entire community, to coordinate the interventions in agreement and under the guidance of those in charge.

**62)** Their apostolate, although they recognize some preferential objectives in relation to the characteristics of their spirituality, is extended to the various needs of the Church and of the times.

- 63)** Their apostolic action should keep in mind, according to the indications of the Church, the various fields to which it must be extended: the ecclesial community, the family, the youth, the social environment (cf. AA 9).
- 64)** The first field of apostolate for the Discalced Augustinians tertiaries, should be their families and the Local Community to which they belong.
- 65)** Considering the outstanding ecclesial consciousness, wonderfully expressed in the doctrine of the Holy Father Augustine, and what is prescribed by Canon 311, their apostolic presence should not be confined to internal activities, but must also be radiated to the local Church and parish life. The love towards the local Church reveals, in fact, their ecclesial dimension, it incites them to know it, to perceive its needs, its problems, its perspectives, and to follow the orientations of its pastor.
- 66)** Their apostolic commitment takes particular care of the promotion of religious, priestly and missionary vocations, and expresses awareness of the needs of the universal Church by helping the missions and the poor Churches.
- 67)** Let them also bear in mind that the condition of sickness, accepted and lived as an act of offering to the Lord, is a fruitful act of apostolate, since it conforms them to the suffering Christ and contributes to the salvation of the whole world (cf. AA 16).
- 68)** According to their capabilities and competence, they take part, both as individuals and as an association, in the initiatives for socio-economic development by advocating justice, human promotion and social peace (cf. AA 7).

## **PART III.**

### **OUR ORGANIZATION**

#### **Section 1. RELATIONS WITH THE ORDER OF THE DISCALCED AUGUSTINIANS**

##### **Chapter 1 General Organization**

**69)** The Third Order of the Discalced Augustinians, which wants to be a ferment of Christian life among the faithful, shares the spirituality and the apostolic action of the First Order. It belongs, therefore, to the Discalced Augustinian Family (cf. Const. 2), enjoys the spiritual benefits granted to it and participates in the merits done by the religious of the same Family.

**70)** It is regulated by its own Statutes, enjoys its own autonomy, it is connected in deep communion with the Superiors and the religious of the Order of the Discalced Augustinians, and it is vitally inserted in the local Church.

**71)** The communion with the Order of the Discalced Augustinians is expressed:

- a. by fraternal relations of collaboration, which permit the common growth and the reciprocal spiritual enrichment;
- b. by the theological, spiritual and pastoral assistance guaranteed by the religious of the First Order;
- c. by the obedience to the directives of the Prior General, of the Major Superiors within the limits of their jurisdiction, and of the Directors at the various levels.

**72)** The Major Superiors are the persons responsible for and the promoters of the Third Order. For the good of the whole Augustinian Family and the adequate expression of the charism of the Order, they should encourage the religious to work for the growth of the Third Order and assist it spiritually. They should watch, with charity and prudence, over the progress of the various communities of the Third Order itself.

**73)** It is the duty of the Prior General, with the opinion of his Council, to nominate the General Director of the Secular Discalced Augustinian Fraternities to which the Third Order belongs and is under its general direction. Within the limits of his jurisdiction, the Major Superior provides, with the opinion of his Council, for the nomination of the Provincial Director. The Local Director, in the spirit of the Order's tradition, is the local Prior of the religious house to which the community of the Third Order refers. He can delegate this task, if he deems it convenient, to another religious priest of his community.

##### **Chapter 2 Canonical Erection**

**74)** For the canonical erection of a Third Order community, the following is required:

- a. the written request of the Major Superior, within the limits of his jurisdiction, with the opinion of his Council;
- b. the approval and the decree of erection on the part of the Prior General except as provided by Canon 312, §1,1.

## **Section 2. AUTHORITY IN THE COMMUNITY**

**75)** The Third Order is articulated, at the various levels, in:

- a. Local Community;
- b. Provincial Community.

**76)** The Local governance of the Third Order resides in the office of the Local Prior/Prioress assisted by his/her Council in each Local Community and by the spiritual guidance of the Local Director.

**77)** The Provincial governance of the Third Order resides in the office of the Provincial President assisted by his/her Council and by the guidance of the Provincial Director appointed by the Prior Provincial.

## **Section 3. LOCAL COMMUNITY**

### **Chapter 1 Local Community**

**78)** The Local Community refers to a religious house of the Discalced Augustinians. It is spiritually guided by the Local Director, lives in the spirit of the Augustinian *Rule* and under the obedience to the prescriptions of these Statutes, follows the directives of its Council presided by the Prior/Prioress of the same Community. The Prior/Prioress is elected every three years according to nn. 101-109.

### **Chapter 2 Local Council**

**79)** The Council of the Local Community is constituted by the Prior/Prioress of the Community, by the Vicar, by the Master/Mistress of Formation, by the Secretary, by the Treasurer and by the Local Director, who is a member of it by right. A Local Council's term is three years.

**80)** The Prior/Prioress of the Local Community is the first person responsible for the brethren, presides in charity and coordinates the internal and external activities. He/she is competent to:

- a. convoke and preside over the ordinary gatherings of the community;
- b. convoke and preside over the Local Council, except as provided by nn. 101-109;
- c. provide, with the approval of the Council, for the appointment of tasks and particular offices within the community;
- d. represent the community in the ecclesial organizations to the hierarchy of the Church and of the Order;
- e. take care of the relations with other associations and fraternities;
- f. substitute for the Local Director, in his absence, in giving teachings and reflections;
- g. stimulate adequate interventions within the community to help economically and spiritually the brethren who are in need;
- h. admit the postulants to the Investiture and to the Novitiate with the opinion of the Council, except as provided by n. 101;
- i. admit the novices to the Promise with the consent of the Council, except as provided by n. 101;
- j. ordinarily preside over the Rites of Investiture and of Promise;
- k. convene a Local Assembly at the end of a three-year term for the election of a new Council under n. 79;
- l. dispense, for serious and valid reasons, individual brothers or sisters from some precepts of the *Rule* and of the Norms of Life with the consent of the Council; and to

- m. dismiss from the community of brethren, after repeated admonitions and for serious reasons, those who have made themselves unworthy, provided that the decision has the consent of the Council and is ratified by the President of the Provincial Council to be forwarded to the Prior General.

**81)** The Vicar is the closest collaborator of the Prior/Prioress. He/she:

- a. executes diligently any piece of work and assignment that the Prior/Prioress deems convenient to entrust to him/her in relation to his/her competences;
- b. substitutes temporarily for the Prior/Prioress in case of his/her absence and, in case of death, until the expiration of the three-year term.

**82)** The most delicate office of the community is that of Master/Mistress of Formation. From his/her skills and living witness, in harmony with the spirit of the Order, much of the spiritual growth of the novices depends and, as a consequence, of the whole Community. Whoever is chosen for that office should, therefore:

- a. be gifted with equilibrium and proven virtue; and
- b. should be knowledgeable about the Augustinian spirituality.

In the work of formation, the Master/Mistress is helped and supported by the Local Director. Together with him he/she imparts the Modules of Formation for the instruction and Christian formation of the novices by inculcating in them the spirit of the Order and the knowledge and love towards the *Rule* and the Statutes. The Modules of Formation are prepared by the Office of the General Director in coordination with the General Director for Studies and Formation and approved by the Prior General.

**83)** The Secretary has the function to record, in a special register, all the resolutions passed by the Council. Commissioned by the Prior/Prioress or by the Council, he/she:

- a. prepares and sends the Letters of Convocation of the Council meeting;
- b. shall specify the agenda in order to allow the members of the Council to attend with the proper preparation, so that they may tackle the issues or problems that must be discussed; and
- c. draws up and sends the Acts to the brethren.

The Acts and Convocation Letters are to be countersigned by the Prior/Prioress. When the three-year term of the offices and of the Council comes to an end, he/she, commissioned by the Council itself, prepares and sends the Letter of Convocation of the Local Assembly to all the professed brethren, at a month before the arranged date. He/she should take note, in the register, of the dates and names of the brethren who have undergone the Investiture and have made their Profession.

**84)** The Treasurer:

- a. keeps and draws up diligently the register of the administration;
- b. notes down the receipts and the expenditures, the sources and motives of the offerings;
- c. keeps the cash, administers and protects the assets of the community under the supervision of the Council;
- d. provides for the works of charity, for the purchases and payment orders, for the needs of the community and the decorum in worship upon order of the Prior/Prioress, with the consent of the Council; and
- e. gives an account of his/her management every Local Chapter and submit the registers of the administration to the revision and signature of the members of the Council.

**85)** The Local Director, designated in accordance with n. 73, is the spiritual guide of the Community. In relation to the great responsibility of his task, he must possess the necessary qualities, namely: familiarity with the spirituality of the Order, spirit of piety and deep interior

life, prudence and tact in social relations, zeal and charity in promoting the spiritual development of the community and its apostolic undertakings. It is his duty:

- a. to instruct the brethren about the truths of faith and to introduce them to the Augustinian spirituality; and
- b. to deepen in the meetings, with special meditations and conferences, the knowledge of the *Rule* and of the Norms of Life.

**86)** The Council of the Community, made up of six members in accordance with n. 79, constitutes the governing body. It is ordinarily chaired by the Prior/Prioress or, in his/her absence, by the Vicar. A Council meeting is valid if at least half plus one of the Councilors are present. Any resolution, in order to be valid, must have obtained at least a majority of the Councilors present.

**87)** The competences of the Council are:

- a. to discuss all the issues of the life of the Community;
- b. to promote evangelical perfection by means of suitable initiatives according to the spirit of the Order;
- c. to promote communion and the spirit of brotherhood in the common search for God and in the mutual edification;
- d. to schedule days dedicated to study and to spiritual retreat;
- e. to check the management of the cash and the work of the Treasurer; and
- f. to authorize any kind of expenditure for the life of the community and for the works of charity.

**88)** The dimension of common life is expressed:

- a. in assiduously participating in the Local Chapters of the Community, to be held at least once a month;
- b. in spiritual friendships and brotherly communion, to be cultivated also outside the meetings and the commitments closely related to the internal organization;
- c. in the spirit of collaboration with the activities of apostolate and with the various initiatives promoted by the Council;
- d. in the community participation in the liturgical celebration on the feasts of the Conversion of our Holy Father Augustine and of Mary, Mother of Consolation and other Augustinian Saints, and
- e. in the presence at the most important moments in the life of the community, such as the Rites of Investiture and of the Profession of the brethren, the meetings at various levels, the days of spiritual retreat planned by the Council, the outings and the pilgrimages.

**89)** Every Local Chapter of the Community should basically include the following moments:

- a. communitarian prayer with the recitation of the canonical Hour suitable to the time or with the Chaplet of the Cincture;
- b. instruction or meditation given by the Local Director, or reading and commentary of biblical, conciliar, Augustinian texts, or on the Augustinian spirituality;
- c. community reflection with personal contributions;
- d. announcements related to the life of the community or to the resolutions passed by the Council;
- e. a period of silence for the examination of conscience and the thanksgiving for the benefits received; and
- f. a final prayer with the commemoration of suffrage for the souls of the deceased brethren.

90) At the discretion of the Local Director and of the Local Council, the Eucharistic celebration or the penitential liturgy can sometimes be included in the program of a meeting.

### Chapter 3 Admission

91) In order to join the Third Order of the Discalced Augustinians, the candidates must be at least sixteen years old and evaluated as fit by the local Council.

92) The suitability of candidates can be deduced from the following assessments. They must have:

- a. an adequate affective/emotional maturity;
- b. moral consistency in line with the moral teachings of the Church; and
- c. the right intention to live tending towards evangelical perfection in one's state of life and according to the *Rule* and spirituality proper to the Third Order of the Discalced Augustinians.

93) Those who have publicly rejected the Catholic faith, those who have turned away from ecclesiastical communion and those who are bound by excommunication, inflicted or declared, cannot be admitted to the Third Order (Can. 316,§1).

### Chapter 4 Formation

94) Before being admitted to the Novitiate with the Rite of Investiture, the candidates are subject to a reasonable period of observation of not less than six months.

95) With the Rite of Investiture, a two-year formation or Novitiate under the guidance of the Master/Mistress of Formation and of his/her Assistant begins. The years of formation could not be extended.

96) Spiritual formation should require for novices two monthly meetings and instructions separately. They are to be taught about the spirit, the laws and the commitments proper to the Third Order of the Discalced Augustinians.

97) Before being admitted to the Profession, the novices should attend a Spiritual Retreat of at least two-full days.

98) The Rite of Investiture is to be carried out in private form, that is, within the community and according to the Ritual of the Third Order. The Rite of Profession should be preferably carried out in public form, with the following formula:

*I brother (sister) .....*

*trusting in the grace of the Holy Spirit and invoking the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Consolation, and of the Holy Father Augustine, solemnly renew my baptismal promises; I also freely profess the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, obedience and humility in my lay state, to commit myself to God in a special way to reach the fullness of the Christian life, following the spirituality proper to the Rule of the Holy Father Augustine and the Norms of Life of the secular Third Order of the Discalced Augustinians.*

99) In the Rite of Investiture, the Sacred Cincture is given, which later can be replaced by the medal of our Holy Father Augustine or by the distinctive mark of the Third Order.

100) In the Rite of Profession, the *Rule* of our Holy Father Augustine is given together with the Norms of Life of the Third Order.

## **Chapter 5 Elections**

**101)** Whenever a new Local Community is established, the Local Director entrusts the provisional offices, at his own discretion, to professed brethren whom he judges competent and prepared. Before a congruous number of professed brethren (at least ten) has been reached, the Local Director is the only responsible person for the admission of candidates to the period of probation, to the years of formation and to the Profession.

**102)** After reaching the number of ten professed brethren, the Local Director summons them to the first Local Assembly and provides, in accordance with n. 107, for the formation of the Council.

**103)** Only professed brethren can be elected as Councilors. The election shall be valid if all having the right to vote have been summoned in writing, under n. 83, and if the majority of the vocals have expressed their vote.

**104)** Only the professed brethren present in the Assembly have the right to vote and it is therefore not allowed to be delegated by any absentee.

**105)** Before the voting process begins, it proceeds to the community prayer with the invocation of the Holy Spirit. Soon after, the outgoing Prior/Prioress reads the report prepared by him/her with the Secretary. The report, drawn up in writing, shall summarize the moral and economic status of the community and of its apostolic works. A brief admonition from the Local Director shall follow the reading of the report.

**106)** Under the chairmanship of the Local Director, assisted by two scrutineers chosen by acclamation, the Assembly, convened under n. 83, except as provided by n. 101, proceeds to a secret-ballot election of the Prior and the other Offices of the Council.

**107)** All those present who are entitled to vote, in accordance with n. 103, write on a ballot paper the name, fold the ballot in accordance with the formalities agreed upon and place it in the urn in the presence of the President and of two scrutineers.

**108)** Immediately after, it proceeds to count the votes. The President shall verify whether the number of ballots corresponds to the number of voters. If the number of ballots is greater or less than the number of voters, the vote is null and void and must be repeated. If the number is right, the President opens the ballots in the presence of the two scrutineers and counts the votes. The professed member who will have obtained the relative majority of votes shall be considered elected. If more than one candidate will have obtained an equal number of votes, those who are older by date of profession shall be considered elected. In the event of equal seniority in the profession, the criterion of seniority according to age must be applied.

**109)** The offices of Prior, Vicar and Master of Formation, Treasurer and Secretary shall be assigned by means of elections.

## **Section 4. PROVINCIAL COMMUNITY**

### **Chapter 1 Provincial Assembly**

**110)** To each Religious Province of the Order of the Discalced Augustinians corresponds a Provincial Community with its respective Council and headquarters.

**111)** The Provincial Assembly is constituted by the:

- a. Provincial Director;
- b. Priors/Prioresses;
- c. Masters/Mistresses of Formation; and the
- d. Local Directors of each Local Community present within the jurisdiction of the Religious Province.

**112)** The presence of the Provincial and Local Directors are not elective.

**113)** The faculties and tasks of the Provincial Council are:

- a. to elect the President , the Secretary and two assistants for the works of the Assembly;
- b. to report, examine and discuss the moral and financial status of all the elected Offices and Appointments both at the Provincial and Local levels.
- c. to discuss the different topics regarding the life and growth of the Third Order
- d. to study well the best ways to attain the goal of the Third Order in its actual state;
- e. to take into consideration the eventual proposals and declarations of the participants for the good of the Third Order;
- f. to elect the Provincial President and Vice Provincial President by secret ballot. Only the Priors/Prioresses of the Local Communities can be elected to these offices.

The majority required for the election is absolute. In case of a tie, the oldest candidate by profession shall be elected. If the date of their profession is the same, the criterion of seniority according to birth is applied. The office of Secretary and Treasurer is appointed by the President with the consent of the Provincial Assembly.

### **Chapter 2 Provincial Council**

**114)** The Provincial Council is formed by the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and the Provincial Director.

**115)** The duties of the Provincial Council are:

- a. to develop, in accordance with the directives of the Office of the General Director, the annual working plans;
- b. to promote, by means of Conferences and other appropriate initiatives, the Augustinian spirituality;
- c. to supervise the progress of the various Local Communities;
- d. to organize meetings for study and spiritual formation;
- e. to take care of the formation of the formators of the Local Communities of the Province;
- f. to foster the communion among the different Local Communities and Fraternities;
- g. to impose taxes to the Local Communities in order to constitute and sustain a fund by which the various activities may be financially supported.

**116)** The Provincial Council expires every three years and is renewed in accordance with n. 111 and n. 113.

**117)** The duties of the President of the Provincial Council are:

- a. to convene and chair the Provincial Assembly every three years for the election of new officers;
- b. to convene the Provincial Council at least twice a year and preside over it;
- c. to perform the pastoral visit to the local communities of the Province;
- d. to participate, whenever he/she deems it convenient, in the meetings of the Local Communities of the Province;
- e. to prepare and send Annual Reports on the life of the Third Order to all Local Communities, to the Provincial Director and to the General Director.
- f. to maintain contacts and relations with the Office of General Director.

**118)** The Vice President substitutes the President in case of absence and in accordance with the faculties delegated to him/her by the latter. In case of the death of the President, the Vice President takes over the Presidency in full until the end of the three-year term and in his/her place a new Vice President is elected under n. 113.

**119)** The Secretary of the Provincial Council draws up the official Acts, takes care of the correspondence according to the directives of the President and, at least a month before the arranged date, commissioned by the President himself/herself, sends the Letter of Convocation of the Council Chapter. He/she keeps and updates the Provincial Archive with its documents, Registry of Deliberations and Minutes.

**120)** The Provincial Treasurer keeps and manages the cash of the Provincial Council under the supervision of the members of the Council itself.

**121)** The Provincial Director is appointed by the Major Superior of the Religious Province.

His most important duties are:

- a. to support and coordinate whatever has been planned by the Provincial Council for the updating of the formation and the spiritual formation of the brethren; and
- b. to cultivate relations with the Local Directors of the Province and to coordinate activities with them through meetings at the Provincial level.

## **Section 5. GENERAL DIRECTOR**

**122)** The General Director is appointed by the Prior General with the opinion of the General Definitory (Const. 196,c). He is the main animator and promoter of the Third Order.

It is, therefore, his duty:

- a. to supervise the spiritual formation of the brethren and eventually proposes appropriate initiatives;
- b. to prepare the Modules of Formation elaborated with the help of the General Director for Studies and Formation and duly approved by the Prior General.
- c. to work for the growth by imparting the necessary informations and updates of the Third Order;
- d. to encourage the fraternal communion among the different groups under the Secular Discalced Augustinian Fraternity, and between these and the religious Order of the Discalced Augustinians;
- e. to perform a regular encounter to the different fraternities at the Provincial level;
- f. to convoke a Special General Assembly as necessity requires;
- g. to animate and coordinate the activities of the Provincial Directors; and
- h. to convene regular meetings of the Directors at the General level.

## Section 6. FRATERNAL CORRECTION

**123)** Fraternal correction is a way for them to exercise, according to the clear indications of the Gospel and of the *Rule* of the Holy Father Augustine (cf. Mt. 18:15-18; Reg. 26-28), burning charity towards our brethren.

**124)** Mindful of biblical wisdom, which indicates the extreme weakness of human nature and the need for a continual conversion to the spirit of the Gospel, they believe that it is essential to make a tireless effort of self-renewal. They cannot operate effectively in the building of fraternal charity without putting first into their hearts the intimate conviction that springs from the Gospel: “[...] how can you say to your brother: ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye’, while in your eye there is a beam? Hypocrite, take the beam out of your eye first, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye” (Mt. 7:4-6).

**125)** When, in good conscience, serious flaws are noted in some brethren, it is an obligation to intervene, in secret and with great prudence and discretion, in order to warn and correct him/her. This form of intervention should be animated by a spirit of deep humility and love for the good of the individual and of the whole community.

**126)** It is the duty of those in charge, at the different levels, to monitor the conduct of the brethren and intervene with due prudence, so that, within each community, serious deficiencies and forms of behavior that are not favorable to the evangelical witness and to the Augustinian spirit may be avoided.

**127)** Whenever, because of the repeated refusal of warnings and admonitions, the pertinacity in his/her own reprehensible behavior is observed in a confrere or consoeur guilty of serious misconduct, it is necessary to take appropriate measures suggested by love, which is also expressed through the virtue of Christian fortitude. According to the judgment of the local Council responsible in the events, it is necessary to move gradually from an official reprimand to a temporary suspension from the Chapters and finally to the expulsion of the guilty member, in accordance with n. 79m.

**128)** If, because of a serious fault of any confrere or consoeur, the immediate danger of a scandal that could harm the reputation of the community to which he/she belongs looms up, the Local Prior, after having gathered all the necessary evidences and/or witnesses, should immediately dismiss the culprit from the Third Order. This decision, however, is to be approved by the Local Council and ratified by the President of the Provincial Council as soon as possible.

**129)** Those who have publicly rejected the Catholic faith, those who have turned away from ecclesiastical communion and those who are bound by excommunication, inflicted or declared, are to be dismissed, except for the right to appeal to the Holy See (Can. 316,§2).

**130)** We should not forget that the precept of charity commands us to open our hearts to forgiveness and mercy. If the scandal ceases and the dismissed member repents and asks, after a sincere conversion, to be readmitted to the Third Order, the local Council shall attentively consider the case and, after a reasonable period of trial, shall decide, by secret ballot, if it is convenient to grant readmission. If the vote is positive with the majority of at least two-thirds, a notice is to be sent to the Council of the provincial community, which shall pronounce conclusively, by a relative majority, on the readmission or non-readmission of the applicant.

## **Section 7. CHARITY TOWARDS THE DEPARTED**

**131)** The charity that unites us while we are still alive must be also shown in generously offering suffrages for the souls of our deceased brethren.

**132)** In the local community in which the death of a member happens, a vigil in the presence of the dead body should be possibly held and the community as such should participate in the funeral.

**133)** The Prior/Prioress of the Local Community must immediately communicate the news to the brothers/sisters of the same community and to the President of the provincial community.

**134)** For each deceased brother or sister, on the occasion of his/her death, a Mass is to be celebrated as soon as possible, to which the members of the family of the deceased person should be invited; also, collective participation on the part of the local community should take place.

**135)** In the first meeting subsequent to the death of a member, there should be a special commemoration and prayer of suffrage with the community recitation of Psalm 130 (*“De profundis”*, “Out of the depths”).

**136)** The participation in the Mass is strongly recommended on the three anniversaries provided by the Liturgical Calendar of the Order for the deceased of the Augustinian Family (the 16th of January, the 10th of October and the 6th of November).

## **EPILOGUE**

*May the Lord grant you to observe all these precepts in a spirit of charity as lovers of spiritual beauty, giving forth the good odor of Christ in the holiness of your lives, not as slaves under the law, but as free men under grace (Reg. 48).*

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