

STATUTES

of the Apostleship of Prayer

(1968)

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PREAMBLE

The Second Vatican Council laid strong stress on the fact that all the faithful are called to the apostolate. In order to fulfill this function, they are invited to take up external works and are urged to foster in themselves a vital union with Christ, and to nourish it in a special way through the liturgy and meditation on the Word of God. By performing their work according to the will of God, they can grow in that union. To this end the Council also gives special recommendation to associations which foster closer unity between their members' everyday lives and their faith, and also exhorts the laity to try with constancy to acquire the particular spiritual characteristics of their sodality or association. Just as former Statutes were repeatedly adapted to the needs of their own times, it was thought opportune to draw up new ones which would contain the teaching and spirit of Vatican II, and so adapt the Apostleship of Prayer to contemporary needs.

I. What the Apostleship of Prayer is

Through baptism all the faithful share in the function of Christ as priest, king, and prophet, and are appointed by God to apostolic activities in accord with their particular vocation. Within this universal apostolic vocation, the Apostleship of Prayer is a union of the faithful who, by their daily oblation unite themselves with the Eucharistic Sacrifice, in which the work of our redemption is continuously accomplished and, by this vital bond with Christ, upon which the fruitfulness of the apostolate depends, cooperate in the salvation of the world.

Christ spread his kingdom by teaching and performing works of mercy. At the same time, even from the very beginning he offered his life to the Father for mankind, prayed for them, consummated the offering of himself through the paschal mystery, and so redeemed the world. In the same way every external apostolate ought to be joined with prayer and sacrifice, so that it may contribute to the building up of the Body of Christ in the power of the sacrifice of the cross.

But this union with Christ the High Priest necessarily requires an intimate bond with him through personal love. Therefore the Apostleship of Prayer has given singular importance to the devotion to the Sacred Heart of

Jesus. Through it the faithful may reach more deeply into the mystery of the love of Christ and so also share more profoundly in the paschal mystery of the Lord. Through it they are better able to respond to that love with which our Savior sacrificed himself for the life of the world and from his transfixed Heart gave life to the Church (Jn 19,34).

II. The Apostleship of Prayer Program for the Spiritual Life

For the exercise of their apostolic vocation, the Apostleship of Prayer offers the faithful a program of apostolic spirituality whose center is the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

1. The Sacrifice of the Mass and the Daily Offering.

Since the Eucharistic Sacrifice is the source and apex of the whole preaching of the Gospel, and the whole power of the Church's activity flows from it, the spirituality of the faithful should also be shaped by it. The Eucharistic Sacrifice should penetrate and form their lives and lead them to a conscious and vital participation in this mystery.

The Apostleship of Prayer insists, therefore, upon the daily offering, or oblation, by means of which a member offers himself through Christ to God — that is to say, offers all his prayers, actions, works, sufferings and joys — for the needs of the Church and indeed for the salvation of the whole world. This offering is described by the Council as follows:

Besides intimately associating them [the laity] with his life and his mission, Christ also gives them a share in his priestly function of offering spiritual worship for the glory of God and the salvation of men. For this reason the laity, dedicated to Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit, are marvelously called and equipped to produce in themselves ever more abundant fruits of the Spirit. For all their works, prayers, and apostolic endeavors, their ordinary married and family life, their daily labor, their mental and physical relaxation, if carried out in the Spirit, and even the hardships of life, if patiently borne — all of these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Pet. 2,5). During the celebration of the Eucharist, these sacrifices are most lovingly offered to the Father along with the Lord's body. Thus, as worshipers whose every deed is holy, the laity consecrate the world itself to God (LG 34,60).

This spiritual oblation, which pertains to the exercise of the common priesthood of the faithful, is at the same time also the exercise of their prophetic function, since it requires them to bear witness by their life, charity, labor, and apostolic activity.

By living this daily oblation, the faithful bear witness to Christ before men and give testimony to the truth. This testimony of one's life, flowing from faith, hope, and charity, is the beginning of and the condition for all apostleship, and nothing can be found to put in its place.

Since, however, the Lord instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice as a banquet, members, following the guidance of Vatican II, are not only to share in the Eucharistic Sacrifice frequently, and every day if possible, but should in it also receive the Body of the Lord, which is the sacrament of holiness, the sign of unity, and the bond of charity.

2. The Devotion to, or the Spirituality of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Christ not only gave up his life for us out of love (I Jn 3,16), but also takes us up into the mysteries of his life and makes us a people set apart and a royal priesthood (1 Pt 2,9). We ought, therefore, to return him love for love. Since the Church teaches us that Christ's love is most particularly expressed through his Heart, and invites us to pay devotion to that love, symbolized in the Heart of Christ as the source of salvation and of mercy, the Apostleship of Prayer strongly urges its members to make themselves familiar with the practice and spirituality of devotion to the Heart of Jesus. They will respond to the Lord's love by consecrating themselves to him and practicing and fostering the forms of this devotion approved by the Church. They should imitate the example of Christ's love for his brethren and return the love of him who loved us with a human heart with the charity which is poured into our hearts by the Spirit.

3. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Members of the Apostleship of Prayer are devoted with filial love to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of the Church, who is so intimately associated with the work of the redemption. They follow her example who devoted herself completely as handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son. They should, therefore, make their offering of themselves to God through her who is our Mediatrix with her Son. They should recite the rosary, or at least one decade, daily, and earnestly commend the cares of the Church to her motherly heart. They should generously cultivate devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and particularly in the liturgy, always remembering that a close union between the faithful and Christ is in no way hindered by the influence of his Mother, but is rather nourished by it.

4. Thinking with the Church.

For the Church to carry out its task of uniting all men with Christ and among themselves, and to complete its work of building up his Body by the

Eucharistic Sacrifice, all members must stir up in themselves and in others the desire to think with the universal Church and to share its concerns. For this purpose members make a daily offering for those intentions which the Supreme Pontiff proposes for the Apostleship of Prayer each month, or in urgent cases commends to the prayers of the faithful.

They will also readily include in their offering those intentions for which the bishops of their region request prayers.

5. Careful Attention to Prayer.

Members are today aware that the human race is experiencing a new historical age, and is being shaken by profound and rapid changes and by deep disquiet. Therefore there is the greatest need of fervent and ceaseless prayer, that the world, liberated by the crucified and resurrected Christ, may, once the power of the Evil One has been broken, be transformed in accord with God's plans and reach its perfection.

Therefore members obey the Lord's command « to pray continually and never lose heart» (Lk 18,1), and take seriously all things connected with cultivating the practice of prayer. Following the example of the Church, which continually takes up the bread of life from the table both of the Word of God and of the Body of Christ, members highly esteem the reading of Sacred Scripture and meditate on it. They cultivate sound mental prayer and various other forms of prayer, which they are free to choose for themselves. They should make days of recollection and retreats, which are excellent schools of prayer and of union with God in action, and they should foster these things in others.

III. The Activity of the Apostleship of Prayer in Modern Pastoral Work

The Apostleship of Prayer offers services to pastors of souls and to the faithful, by which they form themselves for the apostolate and exercise it, and are also able to help any of the faithful to prepare themselves for the Christian life and the apostolate.

1. Training Promoters.

Many of the members, known as promoters (the term varies according to local custom), are to be given special formation in the spiritual life in order to spread the Apostleship of Prayer and the apostolic spirit. The Apostleship of Prayer gives courses for biblical, spiritual, apostolic, liturgical, and ecumenical formation, in accord with the Council's Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, Chapter 6. Thus formed by the deep spirituality of the Heart of Jesus, they should penetrate further into the mystery of

Christ and learn to unite prayer and action, so as to be able not only to exercise the apostolate by the witness of their lives, but also to enable them to speak in such a way as to bring non-believers to Christ and to encourage the faithful to live lives of greater fervor.

2. Forms of Exercising the Apostolate.

All members, but especially promoters, should foster every thing connected with the spirit and program of the Apostleship of Prayer among those with whom they live, and make use of every means — including modern means of social communication — day by day to augment the practice of prayer and to deepen Christian life among the faithful. Priests and lay apostles should note that this spiritual program offers them a simple and effective means of helping themselves and others to lead good Christian and apostolic lives.

IV. The Structure of the Apostleship of Prayer

1. The Apostleship of Prayer has its own structure, which is, however, to be adapted to various circumstances.

2. The Director General of the Apostleship of Prayer is the Father General of the Society of Jesus, who may delegate this function to another chosen by himself. He is aided in the exercise of this office in the various regions by National or Regional Secretaries, who are in charge of a whole country, or of a certain region, or of some works of the Apostleship of Prayer. They are appointed by the Director General, who takes account of whatever may be legitimately prescribed in respect to such appointments by the ecclesiastical authorities of the various countries.

3. One Diocesan Director is appointed in each diocese. If it seems opportune because of special conditions, there may be several. They should be priests, and be appointed by the Local Ordinary after notifying the National Secretary. The Diocesan Director sets up local centers and appoints local directors, who may be parish priests or other priests, or also religious, or lay people of either sex.

4. Both the Diocesan Director or Local Director and the National or Regional Secretary is to have a Lay Council, according to the circumstances of time and place, and according to local norms.

5. For a person to become a member of the Apostleship of Prayer, he is required either to be inscribed, or to give some other external sign to the local Director or to his delegate in order to show his desire for membership. The National Secretary, after hearing the opinions of those concerned, shall

decide what means are to be chosen for this. In regard to promoters, however, the Directors are to take care that at least that form of organization required for exercising an orderly apostolate be kept in force among them.

6. To preserve unity of action and greater apostolic effectiveness, it is the duty of the National Secretary to see to the publication of periodicals, leaflets, and brochures for promoting the Apostleship of Prayer. The periodicals, under whatever title they may be published, should always fulfill the purposes of the Apostleship of Prayer and, at least on an inside page, indicate that they are periodicals of the Apostleship of Prayer.

V. Sections of the Apostleship of Prayer

For the adaptation of the Apostleship of Prayer to the circumstances of the Church and of individual groups, it should contain special Sections, for example, those for youth, for men, for the sick, for Christian unity, and so on, which should be given titles of their own and be regulated by their own rules. New Sections, which do not go beyond the borders of their own countries, may be set up by the National Secretary, with the consent of the Local Ordinary. Other Sections which do go beyond those borders, require approval from the Secretary General's office.

VI. Approval of the Statutes

Since the Statutes have been approved by the Holy See, they cannot be altered except by that same Authority. However, accommodations likely to be useful under certain local conditions, may be made with the approval of the Director General.

Approved by the Holy See on March 27th, 1968.

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER INDULGENCES

According to the Apostolic Constitution *Indulgentiarum doctrina* of January 1, 1967, the Sacred Penitentiary has granted the plenary indulgences indicated in the following list. This is the text of the communication:

February 19, 1968

The Sacred Penitentiary, by express and special Apostolic Authority, graciously permits a plenary indulgence to be gained by the above named members, provided that, having duly fulfilled the usual conditions of confession, communion, and prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father, they make or renew, at least privately, the promise to observe faithfully the statutes of the association:

1. on the day of their reception, and on the day of their consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus;

2. on the feasts of St. Francis Xavier (principal patron), the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Christ the King, the Immaculate Conception of the B. V. M., the Apostles Peter and Paul, and once a year on the day the same consecration is renewed.

This concession is to be valid in perpetuity.

All the other plenary indulgences heretofore granted to the Apostleship of Prayer are suppressed. Special attention is called to the words that are now commonly used in the formula of concession: « provided that... they make or renew, at least privately, the promise to observe faithfully the statutes of the association ».

As for partial indulgences, all that have been granted in the past are still in force until the new list of indulgences mentioned in the Apostolic Constitution above is published. After its publication, only those will be in force which are contained in the forthcoming list.

Letter of Approbation for the New Statutes

SECRETARY OF STATE
OF
HIS HOLINESS
PAUL VI

N. 115475

Vatican Palace,
March 27th, 1968

Very Reverend Father
PETER ARRUPE, S. J.
General of the Society of Jesus

Very Reverend Father,

I am pleased to inform you that His Holiness has given the closest attention to the new Statutes of the Apostleship of Prayer, which you and your associates recently drew up and reverently submitted to him.

His Holiness was aware, of course, of the lively zeal which the Society of Jesus has constantly shown in fostering and propagating this association. This, however, has been made even more manifest in these new Statutes, which have given the Holy Father reason for greater esteem and benevolence towards this great family of people devoted to prayer, which without a doubt is to be numbered among the most salutary institutions which have arisen in the Church and are working for the Church.

After the conclusion of the Ecumenical Council, from which such a rich abundance of doctrine and directive principles flowed into the Church, it was fitting that the Apostleship of Prayer should draw from this preeminent source an increased abundance of life. Actually this is what you have opportunely and wisely done in drawing up new Statutes, with the intention of renewing them according to the doctrine and spirit of the

Council and adapting them more closely to the present circumstances of the Church. The Vicar of Christ, readily recognizing this, not only authoritatively approves these rules, but also desires to bestow well-deserved praise upon you and your co-workers, through whose efforts they were drawn up.

His Holiness has by no means failed to note the importance of these new Statutes for more amply nourishing the spiritual and apostolic life of the members. Although it is not his intention to go into detail, nevertheless he cannot refrain from expressing open and particular praise for the close union with the Eucharistic Sacrifice which the members of the Apostleship of Prayer are asked to foster by means of the daily spiritual offering of themselves, so that the Sacrifice of the Mass may become the foundation and center of their lives. No one will fail to see how well this corresponds to the desire so insistently expressed by the Council (cf. Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 48; Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 11, 34; Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, 2, 5).

Not less praiseworthy is the fact that the Apostleship of Prayer also stresses the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which Pius XII of venerable memory treated eloquently and at length, with admirable learning and piety, in the Encyclical Letter, *Haurietis aquas*, of May 15, 1956, on the occasion of the centenary year of the extension to the universal Church of the liturgical Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (cf. A. A. S. 48, 1956, pp. 309-353). Eucharistic devotion, through which the whole life of the faithful is formed and disposed for perfect participation in the Sacred Liturgy, according to the mind of the Supreme Pontiff as expressed in the Apostolic Letter *Investigabiles divitias* (Feb. 6, 1965), is richly nourished by devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, that is, by knowledge of, devotion to, and imitation of the Divine Savior's love, «who loved his own, who were in the world, to the end » (John, 13,1). Members also in the devotion to the Sacred Heart — according to the Lord's promise, «If you abide in me... ask whatever you will, and it shall be done to you » (John, 15,7 — uncover for themselves and others those unfathomable riches « of the mercy and grace » of Christ (Ephesians 3, 8; Preface of the Sacred Heart of Jesus). In this way they infuse greater fecundity into their prayers and apostolic activity, and «contribute efficaciously to the renewal of the thoughts and actions of the world, in conformity with the exhortations of the Vatican Ecumenical Council II» (Discourse of Paul VI to the General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, Nov. 17, 1966).

The Apostleship of Prayer, therefore, while retaining its original form but adapting it to the needs of our times, guides its members towards a solid and genuine piety, since it teaches them to turn their whole lives into prayer and expiation. To accomplish this more surely, the Holy Father is pleased to recall those helps which the Council urgently recommends: greater devotion to the Holy Spirit, who lives in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful as in a temple (cf. ICor., 3,16; 6,19), prays in them, and gives witness to their adoption as sons (cf. Gal. 4,6; Rom. 8,15-16 and 26); and active participation in the Sacred Liturgy, through which the Church maintains her inexpressible dialogue with Christ and with God, and, as she celebrates the sacred mysteries, thence draws an abundance of divine graces and brings from it the efficacy of her prayer.

All this increases the joyful hope of spiritual profit, which the Supreme Pontiff places in this almost numberless multitude of suppliants, who under the guidance of the Vicar of Christ and closely united with him, continue each day to offer to God their prayers, works and sufferings for the needs of the Church. It is with even greater solicitude that he commends this devoted association to all the children of the Church in whatsoever state of life they may be. Other assistance of such strength and accessibility to all can scarcely be found for preparing and encouraging the faithful to think with the Church, to pray continuously, to be devoted to the apostolate, and to be mindful at all times of that point of doctrine which is of the greatest importance in carrying out the apostolate: « neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the growth » (cfr. I Cor. 3, 7).

The Holy Father prays most fervently that the Apostleship of Prayer may grow in numbers and in virtue, and, while he earnestly begs of God an abundance of divine grace for the success of the works of this society, as a pledge of divine help he most willingly in the Lord imparts to its moderators and members the Apostolic Blessing.

In conveying all this to you, I beg you to accept the expression of my highest esteem, and I remain,

Most devotedly yours,
Cardinal H. J. CICOGNANI