

A way for all

Profile and way of life of the Ordo Communions in Christo (CiC)

Amendment to the Statutes approved by the Church on 13 October 2018 and the Rule of Mother Marie Therese and as a template and guideline for new memberships and communities worldwide and their local statutes

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I. SPIRITUAL AND OTHER BACKGROUNDS

The foundation of the Ordo Communio in Christo is a spiritual way for all Christians, families, bishops, priests, deacons, religious and lay-faithful.

- 1. Communio Theology [Statutes 2. (1), (2)]:** The foundress, Mother Marie Therese, wanted this to be understood for the first time as an order for all classes of the Church under one leadership. She saw in this the equality of all people who live in communion with Christ, to her it was a confirmation of the Second Vatican Council.
- 2. Everyone is invited [Statutes 2. (1), (2)]:** Just as the family was understood as the early Christian domestic church, the Communio in Christo is a “church in miniature”, a small bed in the garden of the great Universal Church as a tangible image of the great communion with Christ, to which every person without exception is invited. Members of other orders, congregations, and associations can also come together here, as well as other denominations. “...the people of God during its sojourn on earth”, as it is expressed in the Council Decree “Lumen Gentium” (LG 68.) - or, as Mother Marie Therese put it as “a people on the way of love”. (Rule of the Order, p. 61) The profile and way of life of the Ordo Communio in Christo are a supplement to the ecclesiastically acknowledged Statutes and a guideline for new memberships and communities throughout the world.
- 3. Role of the laity [Statutes 2. (1), (2)]:** Vatican Council II emphasized very strongly the vocation of the laity to the apostolate. The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity “Apostolicam actuositatem” outlines the various goals and areas of the lay apostolate. The laity are an essential part of the Church. They not only have a complementary role in the Church but make the largest part of the people of God and just as important as the other groups that hold an official position in the Church. The Ordo Communio in Christo is an essential part of the Church. The vocation of the laity in the Communio in Christo can be recognized in the vows, and also in the vocation to higher and leading duties in the Ordo.
- 4. Vow of charity [Statute 4.1. (3)]:** The guiding principle of action is consistent charity, to which the members commit themselves in a vow given into the hand of the Superior General or his delegate. (§ 4.1.(3) sentence 1 in conjunction with § 5.2. (3) of the Statutes) This vow is an unconditional requirement for the membership in the Ordo Communio in Christo. There is no other, second or higher form of membership.
- 5. Evangelical Counsels [Statutes 4.1. (3) to (6)]:** Evangelical Counsels: Those who wish and choose for themselves can also voluntarily commit themselves to the Evangelical Counsels, regardless of their way of life. Up to now, in the tradition of the Communio in Christo, all those who have joined a community of the Ordo Communio in Christo have committed themselves to the three Evangelical Counsels of humility, chastity and obedience as laid down by the foundress Mother Marie Therese. There is no intention to change this unless personal reasons are in the

way, for example when it is about families or married lay-faithful. A decision is the responsibility of the Superior General.

With the consent of the Superior General, a community can also accept members who have taken but one vow.

With the consent of the Superior General, the community may also accept (permanent) guests who are not members of the Ordo.

Joining a community of property as it is the case in the Motherhouse in Mechernich in the legal form of a *Gesellschaft bürgerlichen Rechts* (GbR) (civil law partnership) according to German law is also voluntary and is not mandatory. The community of property is required to examine the request for admittance with an open mind. In case of doubt, the Superior General may act as a mediator.

6. **Poverty has been replaced by humility [Statutes 4.1. (4)]:** The evangelical council of “poverty” is missing in the tradition of Mother Marie Therese and has been replaced by “humility” The foundress saw humility as a more comprehensive form of poverty. Nevertheless, she wrote: My particularly binding wish is that all members of the Communio in Christo live at subsistence level.”

Mother Marie Therese describes her basic attitude towards possessions and money with the words: “I am convinced that in order to concentrate fully on the goals and spiritual tasks, it is necessary for the Ordo and its leadership to be absolutely free of material worries. It is my wish that . . . members are separated from possessions. This is what I mean by humility: total dependence.”

The Motherhouse in Mechernich should be seen as a “model house“ in economic matters; it is an example for future communities. All the properties and care facilities there are not owned by the Ordo Communio in Christo, but by a registered association. The Superior General is only a born member of this association “Sozialwerk e.V.” but not its managing director.

In addition, the community has a joint account in the Motherhouse, into which the income of all community members is collected and from which each member receives an appropriate monthly allowance, the amount of which is determined by the community after consultation with the Superior General. All other financial means required for the living expenses of all are taken from the joint account and made available by the leader.

Members of the Ordo Communio in Christo have different lifestyles and their approach to money is to be defined differently.

- Members living as a family should use their income independently but lead a modest life.
- Members living alone should use their monthly income independently but lead a materially modest life.
- The members living together in a Communio in Christo community as a community of property pay their monthly income into a joint account from which the living expenses of all members of the community are paid. The leader of this community should perform the service of managing the common money for the community. It is recommended that the communities elect their leader every four years. In principle, in the communities of property, a second person should be entrusted with the accounting of income and expenditure.

The members living in a community of property should decide together on major expenses. The community of property also decides on the monthly allowance that the leader should pay to each member. The exact amount of this monthly sum is determined by joint agreement between the leader and the members of the community of property. At the end of one year, the members of the community of property have the opportunity of adjusting the amount of the monthly allowance, as needed. In case of disagreements the General Superior shall decide.

All members who live as a community of property and also as a community are entitled to 30 days' vacation per year outside the community's place of residence. It is recommended that either the leader of the community or the person concerned themselves inform the Superior General about a stay abroad.

If a member decides to leave the Communio in Christo community as a community of property, the rules for those living alone apply from then on.

- 7. Ordo Communio in Christo [Statutes 1. (1), (2) and 3]:** The formation of the Ordo took place in three stages: 1. The foundation of six so-called “Uniones” (Unions) by Mother Marie Therese from 1977. 2. The foundation of the Communio in Christo as an “order” in 1984. 3. The canonical recognition of the Ordo Communio in Christo as “consociatio christifidelium privata” 2018.

1977

Between 1977 and 1981, Mother Marie Therese founded six so-called “Uniones” (Unions): in Holzheim near Mechernich on September 1, 1977, the Union of “Atoning Love” for priests and laity, September 1, 1978, the Unions for priests (“Unio sacerdotalis vivere in Deo”) and for sisters (“Unitas reparationis”), on September 1,

1979, the “Union for the Sick and Suffering”, on August 30, 1980 the Youth Union “Our Future” and in Steyl on September 13, 1981, the “Collective Community Effata”. Mother Marie Therese had initially assumed that the Effata foundation under the motto “On the way as one people” had fulfilled her founding mission inspired by the mystical encounter with God.

1984

In fact, all the “Uniones” that had been brought into being up to that point merged into the “Communio in Christo” founded by Mother Marie Therese on December 8, 1984. This community of all people of good will and desire, united in Christ through love of neighbor, turned out to be the goal of a mystical development that Mother Marie Therese experienced under the influence of the Holy Spirit, similar to the development of an egg to a caterpillar, to a pupa, to a finished butterfly. For Mother Marie Therese, the separate unions were preliminary stages of the Communio uniting all with Christ.

2018

Communio in Christo was recognized as Ordo Communionis in Christo on October 13, 2018, by Bishop Dr. Helmut Dieser (Diocese of Aachen, Federal Republic of Germany) in accordance with can. 32 of Canon Law (Codex Iuris Canonici) as an ecclesiastically acknowledged association of faithful (Latin “consociatio christifidelium privata”).

- 8. Unity of the Church [Statutes 2. (1), (2)]:** Mother Marie Therese sought “the unity of the Church through the realization of the decrees of the Council”. She meant unity in aiming at and striving for love of God and love of neighbor, as she interpreted it in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. All levels of the Church were to realize the most important commandment, the commandment of love. All levels of the Church means basically all Christians, whether ordained (deacons, priests and bishops), those living in special Christian forms of life (religious and married couples) and the great people of the laity. The Foundress wanted the directives of the Second Vatican Council, as formulated in the decree on the lay apostolate “Apostolicam actuositatem” Chapter I, 2, to take shape in this Ordo. “There is a diversity of ministry in the Church, but a unity of mission.”
- 9. Guiding principle: Caritas est vivere in Deo [opening words of the Statutes]** (“Love of neighbor is living in God”). Wherever and however: The highest rule of the order is practicing charity towards everyone. This attitude is the spiritual “habit” of the members. It is the response to God's love and the fulfillment of all laws.

II. RULES AND FORMATION

1. **The basic rule [Statutes 2. (1), (2)]:** of the Ordo Communio in Christo is the following of Christ as set forth in the Bible. Excerpts at one's own discretion from the Holy Scripture are obligatory daily reading for members, interested persons (so-called postulants) and candidates (so-called novices). This also applies to self-chosen passages from Mother Marie Therese's work, for example "The Imitation of Christ as a Rule".
2. **Ora et labora [Statutes 2. (1), (2)]:** The members lead a spiritual life in contemplation through personal and joint prayer and at the same time an active life in family, profession, community and in active charity to those in need.
3. **Spiritual life [Statutes 2. (1), (2)]:** If possible, members of the Ordo Communio in Christo and those preparing to join should attend the Eucharistic celebration daily, and in any case on Sunday, as well as pray Lauds and Vespers. The recitation of the rosary is recommended.
4. **Preparation and Entry [Statutes 4.1. (1) to (6)]:**
 - a. **Interested candidates** (postulants) prepare themselves for six months under the guidance of a mentor, and then as candidates (novices) for at least another full year, also under the guidance of a mentor. The mentoring can also take place over long distances by phone/e-mail, etc. A spiritual connection and accompaniment should also be provided on site, as well as the opportunity for confession and regular participation in Holy Mass.
 - b. **Those interested** in joining the Ordo Communio in Christo should apply to the Superior General with the following application for an initial period of accompanied preparation (e.g. postulancy):

APPLICATION FOR ENTRY INTO THE CIRCLE OF INTERESTED PERSONS:

Moved and guided by the love of God and inspired by the spirituality of the foundress Mother Marie Therese and the Ordo Communio in Christo, after prayer and careful consideration, I ask of my own free will to be admitted to the circle of interested persons of the Ordo Communio in Christo. I also ask for being granted all necessary assistance.

I assure you that I wish to maintain the closest possible contact with my mentor and to respond to his/her suggestions and requests with all my heart.

If for any reason I am not accepted as an interested person of the Ordo Communio in Christo, I would also willingly accept and respect this decision.

Place and date

Signature of the interested person

The Superior General decides on admission.

- c. Those interested prepare to join the Ordo CIC for six months, during which they get to know and practice the spirituality of the Communio in Christo. They are given a mentor at their side. (see above)

- d. After six months, interested persons are admitted as candidates by the Superior General upon application and after hearing their mentor. If possible, admission to the minimum one-year candidate period takes place at a Holy Mass, at which, if desired and/or necessary in a social and ecclesiastical context, the candidate is also vested.

APPLICATION FOR ENTRY INTO THE CIRCLE OF CANDIDATES:

Moved and guided by the love of God and inspired by the spirituality of the foundress Mother Marie Therese and the Ordo Communio in Christo in Christ, after prayer and careful consideration, I ask of my free own will to be admitted to the circle of candidates of the Ordo Communio in Christo to be accepted. I also ask for being granted all the necessary assistance.

I assure you that I wish to maintain the closest possible contact with my mentor and to respond to his/her suggestions and requests with all my heart.

If for any reason I am not accepted as a candidate of the Ordo Communio in Christo, I would also willingly accept and respect this decision.

Place and date

Signature of the interested person

- e. The candidates then continue their spiritual journey and their active life of charity. The Ordo Communio in Christo invites the candidates to spend at least 14 days in a community - preferably in the Motherhouse in Mechernich. If possible, this takes place during the candidate's half-year, but also during the first six months of the year of interest, if it cannot be organized otherwise.

- f. After a total of at least one and a half years of preparation, candidates submit a written application to the Superior General for admission to the Ordo Communio in Christo. After hearing the candidate and the mentor, he decides on the admission or, in case of doubt, an extension of the preparation period.

APPLICATION FOR ENTRY INTO THE ORDO COMMUNIO IN CHRISTO:

Moved and guided by the love of God, convinced by the spirituality of the foundress Mother Marie Therese and the Ordo Communio in Christo, enthusiastic about their co-responsibility for the renewal of the Church in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council and its resolutions and grateful for the spiritual guidance of my mentors, I ask of my own free will and after careful consideration to become a member of the Ordo Communio in Christo by taking the vows of charity (and the vows of humility, obedience and chastity).

I promise to live, pray and work according to the rules, statutes and profile of the Ordo Communio in Christo to the best of my knowledge and belief.

If for any reason I am not accepted as a member of the Ordo Communio in Christo, I would also willingly accept and respect this decision.

Place and date

Signature of the candidate

5. Vows and admission [Statutes 4.1. (1) to (6)]:

- a. The basis and starting point of all vows is that of charity. A further indispensable prerequisite is the absolute voluntariness of taking the vows.
- b. The vows are made in accordance with the respective version of the Statutes in the hand of the Superior General or a person directly authorized by him, signed in written form, sealed and permanently stored in the archives of the Ordo Communio in Christo in the Motherhouse.

Text of the vow:

I, (name), make this vow to the glory of God:

I am firmly resolved to follow Christ throughout my life as a member of the Ordo Communio in Christo.

Therefore, before the brothers and sisters present here, I pledge into your hands, Your Superior General (or authorized representative), to live forever a life of consistent charity (optionally also in chastity, humility and obedience) according to the Rule of the Order written by the foundress Mother Marie Therese, the Statutes and profile of the Ordo Communio in Christo and the decrees and constitutions of the Second Vatican Council.

I place myself wholeheartedly at the disposal of the Ordo Communio in Christo in order to attain perfect charity in the service of God and the Church through the grace of the Holy Spirit and with the assistance of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph.

Mechernich (or other place), (date)

Signature of the new Ordo member, of the Superior General or one of his delegates, and two additional witnesses.

(The Superior General may agree to textual changes resulting, for example, from a denominational affiliation other than Roman Catholicism, provided that the spirit of the Ordo Communio in Christo is not thereby impaired.)

Text of the annual renewal of vows:

I remain firmly committed to following Christ throughout my life as a member of the Ordo Communio in Christo.

Therefore I vow again of my own free will (if necessary before the brothers and sisters present here into your hands, Rev. Superior General - or authorized delegate) - to live a life of consistent charity (if necessary also in chastity, humility and obedience) in accordance with the Rule of the Order written by the foundress Mother Marie Therese, the Statutes and Profile of the Ordo Communio in Christo and the Decrees and Constitutions of the II. Vatican Council.

I place myself wholeheartedly at the disposal of the Ordo Communio in Christo in order to attain perfect love in the service of God and the Church through the grace of the Holy Spirit and with the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph.

- c. After taking their vows, the new members of the Ordo Communio in Christo return to their place in the Church and in the world and dedicate their lives to God and their neighbor in the spirit of the Communio in Christo. If possible, they remain connected with the head of the Ordo and the Motherhouse in Mechernich throughout their lives and strive to lead a life in the spirituality of Mother Marie Therese and active charity. It should also be their aim to pass on the spirituality of

the Communio in Christo to others and to form local groups of the Communio in Christo all over the world.

- d. After taking their vows, members can also join a community, if that is their wish, either a community of the Communio in Christo or other orders, congregations, or secular institutes, in order to live and work there in the spirit of consistent charity, the Rule of Mother Marie Therese and the profile of the Ordo Communio in Christo. If possible, they also remain connected with the leadership of the Ordo Communio in Christo and the Motherhouse in Mechernich throughout their lives and endeavor to lead a life according to the spirituality of Mother Marie Therese. It should also be their aim to pass on the spirituality of the Communio in Christo to others and to form local groups of the Communio in Christo all over the world.
- e. As a membership of the Ordo Communio in Christo does not demand a particular way of life, members are free to change their way of life, for example to train as a permanent deacon or priest or to marry, even after taking their vows and joining. In accordance with § 41. (6) sentence 4 of the Statutes, membership does not affect membership of the previous association, nor is it intended to do so.
- f. The Superior General may also admit members of other communities and from other life contexts, including members of other denominations. Former members of religious orders and congregations require a certificate of good conduct from their diocesan bishop or home pastor.
- g. Members of the Ordo Communio in Christo should meet twice a year at local or diocesan level, meditate on the Rule of the Imitation of Christ, pray and celebrate Holy Mass. If possible, vows should also be renewed once a year into the hands of a member appointed by the Superior General.

III. ATTIRE, LEADERSHIP, RELIGIOUS LIFE

1. **Attire [Statutes 4.1. (1) to (6)]:** When Mother Marie Therese founded the Ordo Communio in Christo, she did not impose a dress code on priests, deacons, laity and members of other communities. All wear the attire customary in the country. Members can wear the Communio Cross on the lapel on the heart side of their clothing as a distinguishing mark.

For the sisters of the Ordo Communio in Christo, who live as a community in the Motherhouse in Germany, Mother Marie Therese deliberately chose simple black dresses without a veil in keeping with the dress code of the time. She said: “My veil is charity”. Since then, the attire of the sisters in the Mechernich community has been a

simple black (as the official color) and white or grey (as the color of the work clothes) half-length robe without a veil.

The sisters also wear the cross of the order on a gold-colored chain and a gold-colored ring. At the time, Mother Marie Therese deliberately dispensed with the veil in order to show the world through her sisters that the distinguishing mark of the community should lie in the attitude of its members. The focus is on the concrete testimony of life, which is based on love for God and for people.

The dress code of the Communio in Christo is based on this attitude and on the spirituality of the founder, a spirituality that should not only characterize religious community life, but also religious single life. However, this dress code is adapted to the respective cultural and social conditions in the countries where the members live and work. This also includes the exceptional authorization to wear veils granted by the Superior General under certain conditions. Patterns and color specifications are provided by the Superior General / Motherhouse.

The Communio sisters living as singles may either choose their clothing according to the respective national customs or wear civilian clothing. Exceptions granted by the former Superior General remain valid. Clothing and veils from terminated previous affiliations to spiritual communities must definitely be removed.

The design of the Communio ring, the cross and the chain should be standardized throughout the world. Their patterns are provided by the Motherhouse. The color (gold or silver) of the Communio ring, the cross and the chain will be determined by the Superior General after consultation and according to national customs. Since in many countries the gold color is not customary for religious living in poverty, it is advisable to choose the silver color there.

In principle, communion with Christ (Communio in Christo) is a way for everyone. They live a life of charity as a fulfillment and response to God's love. Therefore, this communion is also present in an invisible way in all countries and cultures. In the people who live it. Their attitude is their "habit", as Mother Marie Therese said. Wherever possible and sensible, members should therefore refrain from wearing clothing that is reminiscent of a traditional religious habit.

- 2. Leadership [Statutes 5. and 5.2]:** The Ordo Communio in Christo is headed by the Superior General, elected by the members in accordance with the approved Statutes, and – in case of his absence – by his deputy. Other bodies are the general assembly and the chapter. The Chapter of Communio in Christo exercises the functions of a council and supervisory body. In addition, the Superior General appoints a circle of advisors around him, currently the International Council.

At the head of the group of families, lay-faithful, religious and clerics in their respective communities, according to their particular needs and ideas of the foundress, there is a person in charge who is elected by the respective group for four years. The election must be confirmed by the Superior General. In the Motherhouse in Mechernich, the current Superior General represents the community. In the community in Potta/India, the first Superior General Karl-Heinz Haus appointed Father John Joseph Mathai as Superior and representative of the community for his lifetime.

For important reasons, especially if the person responsible violates the Statutes or for important moral reasons, he/she can be dismissed by the Superior General. For the spiritual life of families, lay people, clergy and religious in the Motherhouse or in other communities, a priest is appointed as spiritual advisor (spiritual father) by the Superior General according to the respective needs.

- 3. Renewal of religious life [Statutes 2. (1), (2)]:** The Council Decree “Perfectae Caritatis” (PC) on the contemporary renewal of religious life states in Art. 2b that “the spirit and actual intentions of the founders are to be faithfully researched and preserved”, therefore all the indications and directives laid down in their works are considered rules for all members.

All of Mother Marie Therese's theological works are inspired by the Gospel and are in accordance with the teachings of the Church. They are therefore a guide and binding recommendation for all members when it comes to confirming their Christian life.

These works are a harmonious development of the Council's ideas and at the same time build a synthesis of all the Council's texts, which is necessary for the practical activity of the Church in the modern world.

This is linked to the hope that people who unite in communion with Christ and live and work in his spirit will contribute to the recovery and healing of his entire Church.

The Ordo Communio in Christo sees itself neither as an elitist association, nor as an order among orders. Just like all previous foundations of the “Uniones” of Mother Marie Therese in this one foundation of the Communio in Christo on December 8 1984, all orders and congregations can recognize themselves in the spirit of the one communion with Christ and find fulfilment in a federation without giving up their respective identities.

This means that a federation under the umbrella of the Ordo Communio in Christo considers the spiritual, cultural and existential needs of the original communities and their members. The Ordo Communio in Christo expressly advises against leaving the original community.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS ACCORDING TO MOTHER MARIE THERESE [STATUTES 2. (1), (2)]:

- a) The basis and principal norm of religious life is “the following of Christ as set forth in the Gospel” (Art. 2,a in the Council Decree “Perfectae caritatis”).
- b) The Ordo Communio in Christo sees its practical activity in the service of God for people who are in a special and existential situation of need: e.g. the elderly, the sick, those in need of care, the mentally and socially vulnerable, etc.
- c) The strength for this difficult work is drawn from the Gospel, prayer and spiritual life. Above all, the contemplative-active character of the Ordo Communio in Christo is characterized by consistently lived charity according to the motto “Caritas est Vivere in Deo” (love of neighbor is living in God). Consistent charity is a spiritual attitude worth striving for, in which we encounter God.
- d) It is recommended that members acquire a thorough knowledge of the foundress’ writings because they show the right way to the realization of apostolic tasks in the modern world.
- e) In the conciliar decree “Apostolicam actuositatem”, the goals for the laity are the same as those set out for priests in the decree on the ministry and life of priests “Presbyterorum ordinis”; the only difference is in the forms of the apostolate of the two groups. As a sign specially suited to our times clergy and laity should make Christ, who lives in his faithful, visible through the witness of their whole life, arising from faith, hope and charity (ref. AA Ch. IV, 16).
- f) Mother Marie-Therese understood her foundation as an event of the Holy Spirit and interpreted it as an “order”, which she wanted to be assigned to the Pope. However, her concept of an order transcends the use of words in canon law. The members of the Ordo Communio in Christo and their leadership are called upon to vigorously continue to pursue recognition as a new form of consecrated life in the sense of can. 605 CIC.
- g) Father Karl-Heinz Haus, the first Superior General of the Ordo Communio in Christo, counted Mother Marie Therese's Rule among the religious rules of great founders such as Basil, Benedict, Francis and Ignatius, among others. It has a special feature, namely that it is based on the events of the Second Vatican Council. It bears the title “The Imitation of Christ as a Rule” and is the basic rule of Mother Marie Therese.

V. VALIDITY:

The profile and way of life of the Ordo Communio in Christo were put into force as a supplement to the ecclesiastically acknowledged Statutes and Rule of Mother Marie Therese and as a model and guideline for new memberships and communities worldwide and their local statutes with the possibility of further development.



Fr. Jaison Thazhathil
Superior General

Mechernich, 31 January 2024