

## **Statute of *Communio in Christo***

“Love of neighbour means living in God.” (Mother Marie Therese)

### **1. Name and legal form**

(1) The union founded by Mother Marie Therese (born as Josephina Theresia Linssen, 1927 - 1994) bears the name of “Ordo Communio in Christo” (in the following *Communio in Christo*). Through a decree of the Bishop of Aachen it has received a legal personality as a private association (*consociatio privata*) according to can. 322 CIC. At a given time, it will seek the recognition as a new form of the consecrated life in the sense of can. 605 CIC.<sup>1</sup>

(2) The works of the *Communio in Christo* (Sozialwerk *Communio in Christo* e.V. as the body responsible for the social institutions; *Communio in Christo* e.V. as body responsible for further social works) are bodies responsible of their own and therefore legally independent of the private association *Communio in Christo*.

### **2. Aims and way of living**

(1) The *Communio in Christo* is a union of Christians with the goal through the practically-lived love of God and the love of neighbour to serve the realization of the resolutions of the Second Vatican Council and in the sense of the spiritual heritage (*patrimonium spirituale*) of Mother Marie Therese - in cooperation and in suitable cases through unions with other ecclesiastic associations, institutions of the

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<sup>1</sup> Mother Marie Therese understood her foundation as the foundation of a religious “Order”. The *Communio in Christo*, its members and its direction, remain called-upon to continue to vigorously pursue the recognition as a new form of the consecrated life in the sense of can. 605 CIC. Substantial thereby is the rule referred to by Mother Marie Therese as the “Ordensregel der *Communio in Christo*”. (the rule of the order *Communio in Christo*).

consecrated life and further societies.<sup>2</sup> Thereby it is important to secure that the partners of the union are not supposed to lose their spiritual characteristic. This follows the postulate of the foundress according to which the *Communio in Christo* is supposed to be a way for all as an image of the “people of God on the march” (cf. II. Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*). If possible, the *Communio in Christo* strives to establish new houses, possibly also in cooperation with other organisations and institutions.

(2) The *Communio in Christo* as a private association (cf. No. 1 para. 2) as well as the individual members are also bound to lead a life in practically lived charity as the imitation of Christ after the word and example of Jesus.

### **3. The seat**

The *Communio in Christo* has its seat in Mechernich in the diocese of Aachen.

## **4. Membership**

### **4.1. Substantiation of membership**

(1) Any Christian who has completed the eighteenth year of life can become a member of the *Communio in Christo*.

(2) With the consent of his International Council the Superior General will issue rules that determine the spiritual and mental preparation of new members of the private association *Communio in Christo*.

(3) Membership is substantiated by the taking the vows. After taking the vows, the new member will be entered into the list of members drawn up and kept at the motherhouse.

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<sup>2</sup> Mother Marie Therese often spoke of “das Zusammenwirken von Priestern, Schwestern und Laien” (the combined action of priests, sisters and laity).

(4) Internal members live in the community in Mechernich or in other communities; they take the four vows of charity, obedience, chastity, and humility (as a special form of poverty) within the meaning of can. 1192 § 1, second half sentence CIC. They have to follow the order of life of the society *Communio in Christo*.

(5) External members will only take such a vow of charity and orient themselves by the spiritual heritage of the foundress.

(6) Members of institutions of the consecrated life or societies of the apostolic life can – through taking the private vow of charity - join the association *Communio in Christo*. For this purpose, they need the consent of their superiors. Secular clerics can take the vows according to 4.1 par. (4) (cf. can. 278 § 2 CIC). They are supposed to inform their bishop about it. The vow-taking does not have any effect on their affiliation with their already existing association and they are not called upon to end it. The incardination relationship will not be affected in any case.

#### **4.2. Termination of the membership**

(1) The membership ends through resignation or expulsion from the *Communio in Christo*.

(2) The resignation will be declared in writing to the superior general; the necessary dispensation from the vows will be given by the local ordinary or someone instructed by him to give it. (cf. can. 1196 CIC)

(3) In case of an expulsion of a member that has guiltily and grievously offended against the interests of the *Communio in Christo* or persistently fails to fulfil his/her commitments towards it, the superior general with his chapter has to raise the facts, to give the member concerned the possibility to state his/her point, and finally to come to a decision regarding the expulsion.

(4) In no case, the previous member can make any claims against the *Communio in Christo* on account of work rendered or in connection therewith.

## **5. Direction**

The *Communio in Christo* is headed and led by a superior general (5.2). Further organs are the general assembly (5.1) as well as the chapter (5.4)

### **5.1 The General Assembly**

(1) The general assembly consists of all members of the *Communio in Christo*.

(2) It is the task of the general assembly to preserve the spiritual basis of the *Communio in Christo*, to handle important matters, to accept the report of the Superior General about his term of office and the state of the *Communio in Christo*, to elect the Superior General and the Deputy Superior General as well as to decide on changes of the statute.

(3) Every six years, the Superior General convenes the general assembly. The invitation will be made at least eight weeks before the fixed date; notice of the order of the day must be given two weeks before the fixed date at the latest. In urgent cases, and with due discretion, the superior general is entitled to shorten the notification periods for the written summons or the invitations after due consideration and at the best of his judgement down to one week.

(4) With the approval of the chapter, the superior general can convene an extraordinary general assembly; upon demand of the chapter, he is bound to do so.

(5) Any lawfully convened ordinary statutory or extraordinary general assembly – irrespective of the number of persons present – constitutes a quorum.

(6) The general assembly resolves with a simple majority of the votes cast. Statutory amendments require a three-quarters majority of votes. In general, abstentions and spoilt votes count as votes abstained.

(7) Voting by letter is permissible. This includes the sending of the scanned copy of a letter signed in the original. With the invitation, the possibility of making a vote by letter has to be pointed out. Upon a written notice of the member, he/she has to be informed of the exact subject matter of the voting for approval respectively rejection.

## 5.2 The Superior General

(1) The superior general is a sign of the unity of the *Communio in Christo*, which is led by him.

(2) The superior general visits the individual institutions every three years personally or through an authorized representative.

(3) The superior general represents the *Communio in Christo* judicially in and out of court. For the handling of current business transactions, he can appoint an administrator/manager.

(4) The Superior General needs the consent of the chapter

- for real-estate deals,
- for deals having real-estate similar rights as their object,
- for the discontinuation, the sale, and essential changes of business enterprise connected with the *Communio in Christo*,
- for the hiring and removal from office of a manager,
- as well as for the convocation of an extraordinary general assembly.

(5) The superior general and his deputy must be Catholic priests, who identify themselves with the aims of the *Communio in Christo*.

(6) The tenure of office of the superior general is six years.<sup>3</sup> A re-election is possible. Until the end of the election of his successor the superior general remains in office.

(7) A prerequisite for the candidature for the office of superior general is the procuring of the consent of the superior of the respective candidate.

(8) The election of the superior general takes place in accordance with the following rules:

a. In case of the end of his tenure or his announced resignation the election assembly has to be initiated by him personally three months before the election assembly at the latest. Should the superior general be unable to do so, this task will be due to the deputy superior general, alternatively the chapter.

b. While executing the election, they should use some suited third persons (for instance members of the chapter).

c. As a rule, the election of the superior general takes place within the course of a regular general assembly.

d. If possible, the invitation will have to be made within three months before the end of the tenure of office of the hitherto incumbent; in case of an unexpectedly arisen vacancy at least three months before the election date.

e. Entitled to vote are all participants of the general assembly if the taking of the vows and the entry into the list of the members kept in the motherhouse at the point of time of the dispatch of the invitation (decisive is the date of the invitation letter) date back at least one year.

f. The election is possible only on the strength of election proposals. Election proposals can be made by all members. Irrespective of this right of proposal, in the run-up to the giving of the election proposals, an understanding with the community in the “motherhouse” in Mechernich, the International Council, and the Chapter should be attempted.

g. The election proposals are to be made in writing and in accordance with these regulations, addressed to the authority that has begun the election procedure. It has the supervision of the election but is, however, supposed to make use of the help of other persons, too. However, it does remain personally responsible.

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<sup>3</sup> On 06.01.1985, the first superior general, Fr. Karl-Heinz Haus, was appointed for life by the foundress.

h. In case of a properly performed invitation, the election assembly constitutes a quorum.

i. The election is performed as vote by secret ballot. Every one of those entitled to vote has one vote, even if the the right to vote is based on several reasons.

j. The highest number of the votes made for a candidate is sufficient. Abstentions and spoilt votes count as votes not given. For the voting by letter, 5.1 par. 7 of this statute is applicable. If a person entitled to vote uses this possibility, the election proposals are to be made accessible for him/her in time.

(9) In the same way and under the same conditions, the deputy superior general is to be elected.

(10) In case the superior general is unable to come, the deputy superior general will act for him.

(11) If the superior general for personal reason is no longer able to carry out the functions of his office or if violating in a serious way the interests of the *Communio in Christo*, he personally or the deputy superior general or the chapter can initiate an election based on a unanimous resolution. The persons mentioned above and, in the order, above-mentioned – are bound to do this if a quarter of all the members entered on the membership list of the *Communio in Christo* demand it by letter.

(12) For the election and removal from office of the deputy superior general the above-mentioned is applicable analogously.

### 5.3. The Chapter

(1) The chapter of the *Communio in Christo* performs the functions of an advisory and supervisory body.

(2) The chapter consists of four regular members:

- the superior general as chairman and
- three nominated members, among them another member of the *Communio in Christo*.

(3) For every regular member a substitute will be appointed, entrusted with an advisory function, unless subsequently and expressly awarded with the voting right.

(4) The members and their deputies must follow the Christian, the majority the Catholic profession. They are supposed to be familiar with the tasks of the *Communio in Christo* and have some knowledge of applied economics and the law.

(5) The superior general appoints the three regular members and their substitutes.

(6) The tenure of the three regular members and their substitutes is six years. Several tenures are possible. The regular members and their substitutes remain in office until the chapter has been newly constituted.

(7) The superior general can – for important reasons – recall a member or a substitute from the office at any time; for this purpose he needs the consent of 2/3 of the regular members and their substitutes; the member to be removed from office has the right of comment but no vote.

(8) A regular member respectively his substitute can resign from his/her office through written declaration to the superior general.

(9) The chapter is supposed to meet four times a calendar year. To the sessions, the superior general calls all of the regular members and their substitutes stating the themes to be dealt with and under observance of a suitable deadline.

(10) The chapter constitutes a quorum if three of the four regular members are present. The presence of the substitutes is recommended.

(11) The chapter makes its decisions with a simple majority of the votes. Abstentions and invalid votes are counted as spoiled votes. If a regular member is absent – irrespective of the regulations under par. 13 – in his place his substitute present will vote. In case of a parity of votes, the superior general's vote can count double if he considers it expedient.

(12) The chapter's decisions are to be taken down on record by the keeper of the minutes appointed at the beginning of each session and in duplicate to be made available for every regular member and every representative of the chapter.

(13) If the subject under consideration is concerned with religious issues only those members of the chapter have the right to vote who are members of the *Communio in Christo* or clergymen. If a member does not fulfil this criterion, in his stead his substitute can vote if he fulfils this criterion. It is not permissible to split up homogeneous circumstances of life into separate items on the agenda to decide on, which are subject to a prohibition to decide by vote in the sense of this rule.

(14) If a decision concerns a regular member or an acting representative personally or professionally, the person in question does not take part in the consultation and the voting; beforehand, he must be given a possibility to state his point of view.

(15) In accordance with the will of the foundress Mother Marie Therese, the chapter also bears the responsibility for the social institutions of the *Communio in Christo* in accordance with its statute.

(16) The chapter guarantees the scrutiny of the *Communio in Christo's* rendering of accounts as well as the routine check of the economic conditions. In every session of the chapter, the management has to render a full account on the present economic situation inclusive of the presentation of documents and data. About the respective annual closing of accounts, a resolution is to be made by the chapter under the terms of the worldly law. The chapter has a claim for disclosure of all documents suitable for giving information about the economic situation of the *Communio in Christo*.

(17) The chapter elects two auditors. They audit the correctness of the bookkeeping and in case of doubt, they report to the chapter. They officially ask the chapter for the conferment respectively the refusal of the accounts of the superior general and his administrator.

(18) If the chapter arrives at the conclusion that serious faults have been found in the rendering of accounts, the superior general has to summon an extraordinary meeting.

(19) The chapter can give itself a rule of procedure.

#### **5.4 The International Council**

(1) The superior general is obligated to establish an international council – representing the international commitment of the *Communio in Christo* – which is to serve the consultation of the superior general in the spiritual guidance.

(2) The International Council consists of at least six persons to be chosen, if possible, from countries, in which the *Communio in Christo* is developing activities.

(3) The members are appointed by the superior general for six years; several tenures of office are possible.

(4) The International Council can give itself a statute and/or a rule of procedure.

#### **5.5 The Scientific Council**

(1) For the deeper study of religious or worldly matters, the superior general can establish a Scientific Council.

(2) The Scientific Council can give itself a statute and/or a rule of procedure.

## 6. Ecclesiastic Supervision

(1) Under the terms of the general canon law, the supervision over the “Ordo Communio in Christo!” befits the Bishop of Aachen (cf. cc. 305 § 1, 323 CIC).

(2) The Bishop of Aachen has to supervise the pertinent use of the means of the private society *Communio in Christo*; for this purpose he receives its annual closing accounts for his information (cf. 325 CIC).

## 7. Winding-up Resolution of the Society

(1) With a majority of  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the votes, the general assembly can decide to dissolve the “Ordo Communio in Christo”.

(2) In case of the dissolution, any property assets will fall to the *Sozialwerk Communio in Christo e.V.*, Mechernich. The legal successor has to use the assets transferred to it solely for tax-privileged purposes in the sense of this statute.

(3) Should the legal state of the *Communio in Christo* change (especially due to the recognition as a new form of consecrated life according to can. 605 CIC), it will keep any possibly remaining transitory goods.