



ASSOCIAZIONE **COMUNITÀ**
PAPA GIOVANNI XXIII
FOUNDED IN 1968 BY FATHER ORESTE BENZI



Foundation Charter, Statutes and Directory

Association
“Community of Pope John XXIII”

**FOUNDATION
CHARTER**

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on 25 March 2004*

I. THE CHARISM OF THE COMMUNITY

Following Jesus, poor and servant

The vocation of the Community consists in conforming one's life to that of Jesus (Rom 8:29), poor, servant (Phil 2:6-11) and suffering, who atones for the sin of the world (inner aspect of the vocation), and in directly sharing (for Jesus, with Jesus and in Jesus) the life of the least of those in society (visible aspect of the vocation).

Jesus, risen and glorious, fount of joy and peace, is the only begotten Son of the Father. He lives His relationship of Sonship with the Father fully and without conditions.

The unmistakable sign that He lives in the Father as His Son is His continuous fulfilment of the will of the Father (Jn 6:38, Heb 10:9, Jn 8:28-29, Mt 26:39, Mt 26:42, Jn 4:34, Jn 17:4, Jn 14:31, Jn 5:30). Jesus is free from Himself. He does not put anything before the Father, not even His own life, and the Father

makes Him His suffering servant, who atones for the sin of the world (Is 50:5-6, 52:13, 53:1-12).

Jesus became poor. He, “being in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped. But he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave (cf. Is 52:13-53:12), becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross” (Phil 2:6-11). He shared in the same human nature as any sinner (Rom 8:3). He was made completely like His brothers (Heb 2:17).

Although He was rich, He became poor for our sake, so that we should become rich through His poverty (2 Cor 8:9). Jesus chose to mix with the least of His brothers and sisters to the point of being cursed for our sake, dying outside the city walls (Gal 3:13, Heb 12:2, Is 50:5, Is 53:12, Lk 9:22, Rom 8:3, Heb 13:11-13).

He freely chose what we were forced to bear by condition (1 Pet 2:24, 2 Cor 5:21, Is 53:4, Mt 8:17, Rom 4:25). He welcomed all the poor who came to Him (Mt 8:16-17, Mk 1:32-34, Mt 11:4-5). Jesus identified Himself with all those in physical need (Mt 25:35-36).

Like Jesus, the members of the Community live out their charism by trying to fulfil the will of God throughout their lives, not doing anything on their

own initiative alone but always looking for what is pleasing to God. They do not put anything of their own above the will of God.

The members of the Community see Mary as their mother and try to develop a relationship of trust and love with her. She chose to be the Servant of the Lord by accepting what would happen to her according to the Angel's word. They see Saint Joseph as the silent mystery of the Incarnation, which is realised in Mary.

2. THE FIVE ELEMENTS OF THE VOCATION

1. Sharing the life of the least of those in society

Moved by the Spirit to follow Jesus, poor and servant, the members of the Community, in accordance with their vocation, commit themselves to directly sharing the life of the least of their brothers and sisters, sharing in their experiences and helping them bear their plight. They place their shoulder under their cross, accepting that they will be liberated by the Lord through them.

The least of one's brothers and sisters alter the way in which one manages one's family and profession, lives in a state of virginity or celibacy, exerci-

ses pastoral ministry and makes use of money and free time. The members of the Community, who have chosen this path of sanctification, identify, within their state and situation in life, the least of their brothers and sisters whom the Lord makes them meet and the way in which they are bound to them. They give account of this to the Community or directly to the President of the Community, who exercises the service of confirmation¹, in order to be sure that they are truly living out their vocation.

2. Living life as the poor

Those who have chosen this path of sanctification allow themselves to be conformed to the image of Jesus, poor and servant, and to be guided by the Holy Spirit to live life as the poor, as Jesus did. They cherish a living trust in the ‘Mother of the Poor’, Mary most Holy, certain that their hope of being totally conformed to the image of Jesus will not

¹ *Translator’s note.* ‘Confirm’ and its derivative forms are used throughout the text of this and the following documents to refer to the confirmation given by the authority of the Community that decisions taken regarding the vocation are prompted by the Holy Spirit and are in accordance with the will of God.

be disappointed. The members of the Community freely choose what the least of their brothers and sisters are forced to live; they do not keep anything for themselves which causes separation from them. The poor whom the Lord makes them meet alter their lives, upset their certainties and may even ask for a place in the family itself, at the table.

Members of the Community do not claim ownership of their lives but allow them to be determined by the needs of the least of their brothers and sisters, knowing well that it is the Lord who chooses these brothers and sisters and causes them to meet. In addition, they try not to be owners but faithful administrators of the graces and gifts the Lord gives them and allow the poor to enter their lives.

Members of the Community also regard themselves as administrators, not owners, of any money they come to possess. They keep for themselves only what is strictly necessary to live in poverty and give back the rest to the least of those in society in different ways. These ways depend on their state and situation in life and are decided together with their cell group and with the confirmation of the President of the Community, who leads the Community in the Lord. They can also choose to put their money together and take from it according to their needs if this helps them live more effectively

as the poor. They always look for the most radical ways to be truly and effectively poor.

The goods that the Community comes to possess must be used for the least of those in society. Members of the Community who are moved by the Spirit to go and look for the poor wherever they are can also choose to live in extreme poverty. All those who follow the path of sanctification of the Community look for the virtues connected with life lived as the poor: frugality, simplicity, courage of the truth, humility and sacrifice, in particular when made at a cost to oneself.

3. Creating space for prayer and contemplation

The members of the Community, who want to live the same filial relationship with the Father as Jesus did, in Christ and through the Holy Spirit, regard prayer and contemplation as the preferential way to deepen such a relationship and to deepen their love for God. They endeavour to make union with God a dimension of life and create space for the Lord inside themselves. They dedicate time to prayer and contemplation. Through the Word of God, the

daily Eucharist, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Liturgy of the Hours, Adoration and spiritual accompaniment, they sustain themselves on their path with the Lord.

The Community makes desert retreats available, in which every member of the Community must participate at least once a year. Other helpful ways to make progress in one's relationship with God are desert retreat hours and the monthly Adoration held during Community Days. In addition, knowing that they are only able to be truly present with the poor if they are truly present with the Lord, the members of the Community regularly spend the time they need with the Lord for their individual spiritual growth.

4. Allowing oneself to be led in obedience

The members of the Community recognise the service of confirmation and guidance exercised by the President of the Community as a gift present in the Church. This gift helps them live with one heart and mind and prevents them from running in vain. By submitting their lives to the authority of the

Community, its members aim to live out poverty in its most radical and unsettling way. Obedience is lived out in the Community as a guarantee of freedom from oneself, as a way of conforming oneself to the image of Christ – who made Himself obedient unto death, death on the cross – and as a way to avoid lording it over one’s own life and the lives of others.

The relationship between the members of the Community and this service of confirmation is realised in three ways:

a) Knowing that the Spirit is present in all members of the people of God and that He works for the sanctification and building of the Kingdom, the initiatives, inspiration and entire life of each member of the Community are submitted to the Community itself and to its authority. Individual members ask for confirmation of their decisions voluntarily so as to have the certainty of not running in vain.

b) Members of the Community who, moved by the Spirit, see total obedience as a way of living out the vocation more fully can take this vow.

c) Members of the Community willingly accept that those who exercise authority in the Community may take the initiative of making specific suggestions and/or requesting obedience.

The Lord has led our Community to look for the

will of God together, Community and authority, and this way of proceeding is the norm. Every cell group has a coordinator who presides over cell group meetings and gives account of his/her service to the other cell group members. This coordinator, a member of the Community, is chosen by the members of the cell group and his/her appointment is confirmed by the relevant person in authority.

The President of the Community gives account of his/her service to the whole Community, while Community Area Leaders give account of their service to the relevant Community Area. Other members of the Community who carry out services for its benefit also give account of what they do. The President of the Community exercises the service of confirmation and guidance along the vocational path. Community Area Leaders exercise a service of participatory authority which derives from their being in communion with and in obedience to him/her. Obedience is the objective criterion of admission into the Community. Those who wish to walk this path of sanctification become members of the Community at the moment they accept the authority of the Community as the guarantor of their vocational path. Members of the Community must always do everything they can to participate in its essential communal acts.

5. Living a life of fraternity

Fraternity is our love for God addressed to our brothers and sisters. Our love of God is shown by our love for them (1 Jn 4:20). The sign that the least of those in society are loved is the love which exists among the members of the Community. Fraternity is a movement of the soul which springs from the love of God poured into our hearts (Rom 5:5) and from the love of God who loved first (1 Jn 4:19). It is realised by praying for one another, by mutual help and by fraternal correction, which is in turn realised by telling one's brothers or sisters what we think is wrong with their behaviour. Fraternity is also realised by choosing to be together, not because we are good but because the Lord, in His plan of love, has called us to walk the same path of sanctification.

Fraternity and poverty are inextricably linked. Members of the Community have their cell group as the preferential place to share ideas and to sustain and correct one another.

3. THE COMMUNITY AND THE WORLD

In addition to directly sharing their lives, the members of the Community also aim to remove the causes of marginalisation by committing themselves, in a non-violent way and in conformity with the Social Doctrine of the Church, to realising a fairer world and to being the voice of the voiceless.

It is considered a gift of the Lord that some members of the Community are willing to leave their home and live out their vocation in mission territories.

The whole Community lives trustful in the Lord, knowing well that we are immersed in His love, that He is carrying out His plan of salvation and that He acts beyond human understanding.