

SECULAR AUGUSTINIANS
RULE OF LIFE
AND GENERAL STATUTES

1980

INTRODUCTION

1. We Christians, all of us, are called to holiness, to the fullness of the Christian life and the perfection of love (cf. Mt 5,48; 1 Thes 4,3; Eph 1,4)¹. The paths are different, however (cf. 1 Cor 7,7)². Some choose to embrace marriage, others the priesthood. There are some who choose to live in virginity or in celibacy, and even in poverty and obedience, but in the world. Still others profess vows in the religious life.

2. The Family of the Augustinian Order is made up of all of these. This Family was brought into being in the Church by the Holy Spirit, and its purpose is to follow Christ and spread his message under the spiritual leadership and teachings of St. Augustine. All of us, its members, each according to his or her ability, are called upon to lend our generous assistance toward making a practical reality out of that ideal which St. Augustine described in his writings and sealed with the example of his life, that is, unity of minds and hearts intent upon God³.

CHAPTER I

NATURE, TITLE AND LAWS

3. We secular Augustinians have an important place in the Augustinian Family⁴. We are secular Augustinians by the fact that we have committed ourselves, according to our particular state in life, whether that of a lay person or that of a priest, to search for and to announce God and his kingdom in conformity with the charism of the Augustinian Order. Each of us, therefore, has to realize his or her Augustinian life in accord with what the Church proposes as the mission proper to lay persons and to priests in the Church and the world.

4. The nature, spirituality, purpose and structures of the whole Augustinian Order, and therefore of the Augustinian Secular Fraternity, are shaped by two fundamental principles: a love for what is Augustinian and fraternity⁵. Fraternity might be called the body of the Order, while its soul, that which enlivens it, is love for what is Augustinian.

5. The principle of fraternity determines our form of life and its structures; through fraternity the purposes of the Augustinian order are realized:

- a) search for God in a spirit of contemplation;
- b) fraternal relationships - person to person - both among our own membership and with others;
- c) simplicity of life, in the spirit of evangelical poverty and the sharing of goods;

¹ Cf. LG 11, 32, 39-40; PC 1; Aug., Sermons, 96, 9-10; 325, 1-2.

² Cf. LG 11, 32; Aug., On holy virginity, 45-46, 46.

³ Cf. Constitutions O.S.A., no. 51.

⁴ The origin of the Secular Augustinians, under several different titles, goes back to the thirteenth century. They were given definitive canonical form by Boniface IX, 7 Nov. 1399, and by Paul II, 31 August 1470. Julius II declared (2 July 1512) that they formed part of the third level of the Augustinian Order. In the course of the centuries, many of their members have been noted for holiness, apostolic zeal and the cultivation of studies.

⁵ Cf. Paul VI, letter *Ordo Fratrum S. Augustini* (8 Aug. 1968), in *Living in Freedom under Grace*, Rome 1977, p. 31.

d) prophetic stance in the face of secularism, materialism and injustice;

e) apostolic commitment that reaches out to all mankind, for the sake of propagating truth, promoting Christian unity and serving the needs of one's neighbor.

6. The other principle, love for what is Augustinian, gives us the right as well as the obligation of having St. Augustine as our model. He, by the example of his life and by the teachings contained in his writings, is our guide in following Christ, the incarnate Word, who is the focal point of our life and action for God and his kingdom. For us St. Augustine is first of all the faithful disciple of Christ. We, as his sons and daughters, must imitate him chiefly in his fidelity to Jesus Christ, "the one teacher" (cf. Mt 23,8).

7. The holiness of the Church is manifested in a special way in the practice of the evangelical counsels. As secular Augustinians we commit ourselves, each of us, in accord with his or her state in life, to live according to the spirit of chastity, poverty and obedience. Moreover, we are pleased that there are some among us who, without leaving their secular condition, respond to a particular gift of divine grace and consecrate themselves wholly to God in virginity or celibacy⁶, including also the vows of poverty and obedience made privately and in a condition or state accepted by holy mother Church⁷.

8. Our title is Secular Augustinians and our groups are known collectively as the Augustinian Secular Fraternity, Community or Order. This title may be appropriately adapted according to the needs of local or regional circumstance and usage.

9. The Rule of Life and the Statutes are our particular laws. The function of the Statutes is to give structural form to the Rule of Life. In addition to general Statutes, there may be particular ones also, as determined by competent authority.

CHAPTER II

PURPOSE

Integral Love

10. The Augustinian Rule impresses upon us above all the great precept of love. *"Before all else, dear brothers and sisters, love God and then your neighbor, for these -are the chief commandments given to us"*⁸.

11. Let us be always conscious of the fact that *"when we reach out to our brothers in love we are loving them in God, because the precepts of love of God and love of neighbor cannot exist apart"*⁹. *"Whoever loves his brother"*, says the evangelist St. John, *"remains in the light and is not in danger of stumbling"* (1 Jn 2,10). From this Augustine concludes: *"It is clear that the apostle St. John places the perfection of justice in the love of one's brother"*¹⁰. *"By loving your neighbor you make yourself worthy of seeing God. Love of neighbor opens your eyes to the sight of God ... 'God is love and whoever*

⁶ Cf. LG 37-42.

⁷ Cf. LG 39; *Regula consoriorum oblatarum Ord. Fratrum Her. S. Augustini de Pisis composita ... sorores nostrae de Senis*, Ms., s. XV, Rome, Biblioteca Angelica, Cod. 1202, ff. 1-10; cf. also *Regula fratrum et sororum de poenitentia Ord. Her. b. Augustini*, Rome 1479.

⁸ Cf. Rule, no. I.

⁹ On the Trinity, 8,8,12.

¹⁰ Ibid.

*abides in love abides in God and God in him' (1 Jn 4,16). Love your neighbor, then, and recognize within yourself the source of that love. There you will see God*¹¹.

12. Love, divine and human, must be ever the center and the heart of our life and our apostolate. If we always act out of love, we shall always act well. So claimed Augustine: *"Once and for all, learn this brief precept: love and do as you please. If you are silent, be silent for love. If you cry out, cry out for love. If you correct, correct for love. If you pardon, pardon for love. Let the root of love be ever there within you. Out of this root only good can come"*¹².

13. Our love should be universal, without any boundaries. That is to say, it should be apostolic and missionary. Again it is St. Augustine who reminds us: *"If you wish to love Christ, extend your love everywhere, for Christ's members are scattered throughout the world"*¹³. *"If you love God. win all others to his love ... Win as many as you can, exhorting, bearing up with them, praying, discussing, giving reasons, but gently, calmly. Win them for love"*¹⁴. This approach should cause us to make our own the profound sentiments which Augustine expressed when he was bishop: *"My wish is that we together may live with Christ ...for I do not wish to be saved without you"*¹⁵.

Example of the Community of Jerusalem

14. It is none other than *"the love poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit"* (Rom 5,5) that has brought us together to live our Augustinian secular fraternity under the inspiration of the ecclesial ideal of the primitive Christian community of Jerusalem¹⁶.

15. We pledge ourselves to make every effort *"to live in harmony"* in our fraternity, to gain that *"one mind and one heart intent upon God"*, and to be keenly concerned about serving one another's needs in every respect¹⁷.

16. *"Union of mind and heart"* requires that *"we honor one another in God"*, whose living temples we are¹⁸. For this reason, those among us who have met with less fortune in the world *"should not consider themselves superior in their association with persons whom they would not have dared to approach outside the fraternity. Let them raise their hearts to God, and not be interested in vain and earthly things"*¹⁹. And *"those who appear to be something in the world should not look down on the other brothers and sisters. They should rather be proud of the company of their less fortunate companions"*²⁰.

Friendship

17. Our Augustinian life of fraternity and community leads us to the careful cultivation of the values of friendship. Friendship begets and nourishes loyalty, trust, sincerity and mutual understanding. It joins us together in Christ, for God fastens us in

¹¹ Tracts on the Gospel of St. John, 17,8.

¹² Tracts on the first letter of St. John, 7,8.

¹³ Ibid., 10,8; see also no. 9.

¹⁴ Commentaries on the Psalms, 33, Ps 2,6-7.

¹⁵ Sermons 17,2; Comment. on the Psalms, 32,22.

¹⁶ Acts 4,31-35 was particularly inspiring for St. Augustine, Sermons, 356,1.

¹⁷ Cf. Rule, nos. 3-4.

¹⁸ Ibid., no. 9.

¹⁹ Ibid., no. 7.

²⁰ Ibid., no. 8.

friendship by means of the love poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit²¹. Thus united in love we pursue our goal as friends, brothers and sisters, sharing with others what we have or gain, and receiving from them what God has given or will give them²².

Openness to the Spirit

18. In order to be able to follow through in our proposal, we, like the members of the Jerusalem community, have to live in a pentecostal attitude of openness to the Holy Spirit, for it was he who molded the minds of the apostles and the faithful into one, and made one heart out of their many hearts²³.

Unity, Peace, Justice

19. Our more specific apostolate consists in working to make unity and peace, which are the fruit of love, a reality in the Church and in the world. This requires us to rid ourselves of narrowness and selfishness, and become attuned to a broader social love, joining ourselves to others in such wise that we may have “*only one mind, the mind of Christ*”²⁴.

20. If we are to realize the apostolate of unity and peace in love, we must tirelessly defend justice and denounce injustice in accord with Gospel values. Peace, which is the hoped for good of everyone²⁵, is “*the tranquillity of order*”²⁶. This “*tranquillity of order*”, and therefore peace itself, cannot exist, unless we succeed in having every thing in its proper place according to its nature²⁷, and unless we act according to the will of God, seeing to it that the rights of every person are respected²⁸. Every injustice, no matter how small, is contrary to the cause of peace, for justice and peace cannot be separated (cf. Ps 84,11 ; Rom 14, 17; Is 32,17).

Sharing of Goods and Efforts

21. Augustinian community consciousness urges us to do whatever we can to make the ideal of the primitive community of Jerusalem an inspirational force in both the ecclesial and the human communities, so that sharing of goods may be the sign and sacrament of unity of hearts and everyone may have what he requires, thus leaving no one in need (cf. Acts 2,42-46; 4,32-35).

22. Augustinian spirituality requires us to promote a fraternal distribution of goods which will show that we all believe ourselves to be friends and brothers in Jesus Christ under the fatherhood of God²⁹. It would not be Augustinian to condone arbitrary socio-economic inequality and exploitation of one's brother, or to claim that economics is answerable only to itself and has nothing to do with universal brotherhood, unity and peace³⁰.

²¹ Confessions, 4,4,7.

²² Cf. Comment. on the Psalms, 38,4; 83 Varied Questions, 71, 5-7; Letters, 73, 10; City of God, 19,8; Soliloquies, 1,12,20; 13,22.

²³ Cf. Conference with Maximinus Arian Bishop, 12.

²⁴ Letters, 243, 3-7.

²⁵ Cf. City of God, 19,11-12.

²⁶ Ibid., 19,13; cf. Sermon on the Mount, 1,2,9.

²⁷ Cf. City of God, 19,12; Confessions, 13,9.

²⁸ Cf. Against Faustus, 22,27.

²⁹ Cf. Tracts on the Gospel of St. John, 6,25.

³⁰ St. Augustine desired that all Christians should aspire to the ideal of the primitive community of Jerusalem, in that the goods of all might be held in common. As one example, here is a selection from his commentary on Psalm 131: “My brothers, how many thousands were they who believed, at the time when

23. In harmony with Augustine's thinking, we look upon work as important, as something that is an expression of one's human nature and person. We do not view it as a burden or simply a means of sustenance, but as cooperation with the Creator in shaping the world and serving the human community³¹. We strive to be competent in our particular skill or profession, and to deal fairly and kindly with both employers and employees. We are conscious of our civic duty and we try to live according to the social virtues of honesty, sense of justice, sincerity, integrity, courtesy and so on, because these things pertain to an authentic Christian life³². We want every action of our public life to be consistent with our faith.

24. Our commitment to the human and ecclesial communities ought to be visible in our generous service to both, as we carry out our duties and pursue our efforts *"with greater care and cheerfulness than if each one were working for himself. Love, of which it is written that it 'is not self-seeking' (1 Cor 13,5), is to be understood thus that it puts the common good before private advantage, not private advantage before the common good. Know, therefore, continues Augustine, that your progress is the greater, the more you are intent on the common good instead of your own. Let love, which lasts forever, transcend over all the passing needs of this life"*³³.

CHAPTER III

CHRIST, CHURCH, SACRED SCRIPTURE

25. In order to carry out our mission suitably and move ahead on the way to holiness with both determination and joyfulness³⁴, it is necessary to live in union with Christ, keeping him ever in view. He is the one we are to follow. Without him we can do nothing (cf. Jn 3,27; 15,5). With him we can do all things (cf. Phil 4,13). *"Christ the Lord is the fatherland toward which we are traveling, Christ the man is the way by which we are to travel"*³⁵.

26. To follow Christ one must know him. And to know him one must lovingly study the Scriptures, especially the Gospel. *"The Gospel is the mouth of Christ ... which never ceases to speak to us"*³⁶. To this statement Augustine added in another place: *"The Lord left for us on earth a model, he left the Gospel. In the Gospel he is still with you ... Follow him, then. What does it mean to follow the Lord? To imitate him. What does it mean to imitate the Lord? 'Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart' (Mt 11,29). And, 'if I give everything I have to feed the poor and hand over my body to be*

they brought to the feet of the apostles the price of their goods! And what does Scripture say of them? That they certainly became the temple of God. Not only each one alone, but all of them together, became God's temple. They thus became a place for the Lord. In order that you may understand that all of them were made into one single place for the Lord, the Scripture says: 'They had one mind and one heart intent upon God' (Acts 4, 32-35). There are many persons who do not create a place for the Lord, because they look out for their own interests, they love their own advantage, they rejoice in their possessions, they seek their personal good. Whoever wants to make a place for the Lord must be content, not with private goods, but with what is common ... My brothers, let us, too, abstain from private property, at least in a spirit of detachment, if we cannot do it in fact, and we also shall prepare a place for the Lord" (Commentaries on the Psalms, 131,5.)

³¹ Cf. GS 67.

³² Cf. AA 4.

³³ Rule, no. 31.

³⁴ Cf. AA 4.

³⁵ Sermons, 123,3.

³⁶ Sermons, 83,1,1.

burned, but do not have love, I gain nothing' (1 Cor 13,3)³⁷. Without humility, there is no charity, no love, no peace³⁸.

27. Jesus Christ is with us in many other ways as well. We should recognize him in every man and woman³⁹, and especially in the poor: "As often as you have done it for one of my least brothers, you have done it for me" (Mt 25,40). These words are cause for great concern⁴⁰. They are a true call to action which Augustine made specific in the following passage: "Turn your attention to Christ who lies in the street. Look at Christ who is hungry and suffering from the cold, Christ who is a stranger and in need"⁴¹. Bear witness to Christ every way you can, for he speaks in you, he lives in you⁴².

28. Jesus wishes to unite us to himself so that all of us together with him form one Christ, "the whole Christ"⁴³. He is the head. We are his body which is the Church⁴⁴, and which we should love as our mother, if we wish to love Christ. That is the way St. Augustine put it: "Let us love the Lord our God, let us love the Church, God as our Father, the Church as our mother"⁴⁵. He did not hesitate to declare that "to the degree that one loves the Church he will possess the Holy Spirit"⁴⁶.

29. We ought not to forget that our incorporation into Christ through baptism makes us participants in the priestly, prophetic and royal role of Christ⁴⁷, for the purpose of engaging in the apostolate by our work for the evangelization and sanctification of mankind and the restoration of the temporal order through the application of Gospel values. Our activity in the temporal order should give clear witness to Christ and serve for the salvation of all men and women⁴⁸.

30. We are apostles, then, by reason of the very essence of the Christian vocation⁴⁹. Although our Augustinian life draws us toward certain preferred goals, our apostolate extends to whatever the needs of the Church may require⁵⁰. Since we live in the world and in the midst of its temporal affairs, our proper task is to work toward the renewal of the temporal order in justice and brotherhood, and the consecration of the world in the spirit of the beatitudes⁵¹.

31. Our belonging to the Augustinian Order does not limit our activity to areas proper to the Order. Our spirituality can and should inspire us "to enter enthusiastically into the liturgical, spiritual and missionary life of the parish community"⁵², and of other apostolic communities and movements.

³⁷ Sermons, 142,9,10, in *Miscellanea Agostiniana*, I, Rome 1930, p. 705.

³⁸ Cf. Tracts on the first letter of St. John, prol.

³⁹ Cf. AA 4.

⁴⁰ Cf. Sermons, 389,5.

⁴¹ Sermons, 25,8.

⁴² Cf. Sermons, Guelferb., XIX, 2, in *Miscel. Agos., I*, Rome 1930, p. 503; GS 88.

⁴³ Tracts on the first letter of S. John, 10; see also 8.

⁴⁴ Cf. Sermons, 144,4.

⁴⁵ Comment. on the Psalms, 38, Ps 2,14.

⁴⁶ Tracts on the Gospel of St. John, 32,8; cf. OT 9.

⁴⁷ Cf. LG 31; PO 2.

⁴⁸ Cf. AA 2; City of God, 20,10; Questions on the Gospel, 2, c. 48; Comment. on the Psalms, 26, Ps 2, no. 2; Tracts on the Gospel of St. John, 15,12-13.

⁴⁹ Cf. AA 1,2,3.

⁵⁰ Cf. Letters, 48,2; 220,3; 243,8-12.

⁵¹ Cf. AA 4-5,7; LG 31 and 34.

⁵² Pontifical Council for the Laity, *Formation of the Laity, III, Parish; IV, Types of Formation*, in *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, Vol. 6, Rome 1980, pp. 677, 691.

Mary our Mother

32. With filial love we venerate the Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus, who is our model and patroness. Her knowledge and love help us to know better and love more the mystery of Christ and his Church. Mary is the great model for a life of faith. Completely open to God, she permitted his Word to enter into her whole being. Because of her openness to the gift of faith and her response to God in hope and fidelity, Mary continues *“by her love to cooperate in the birth of the faithful in the Church”*⁵³. She, the figure of the Church, teaches us how to be totally the Lord’s and, in him, totally the servants of mankind. When Mary was taken up into heaven she did not abandon her saving missions for she continues to obtain for us by her intercession the gifts of eternal salvation: grace, consolation, good counsel, help, liberation ...⁵⁴

CHAPTER IV

CONVERSION AND INTERIORITY

33. In order to fulfill what is contained in our Rule of Life, our approach to life has to be one of conversion and interiority⁵⁵. We should not forget the significance of the ancient title that the members of our fraternity once used: Brothers and Sisters of Penance. It reminds us of the conversion to which the Gospel calls us (cf. Mk1,15), *“the putting on of the Lord Jesus Christ”* (Rom 13,14), and opening up to him the doors of our heart⁵⁶, as Augustine did with great affection every day of his life after his conversion.

34. Conversion leads us to the gradual discovery of the greatness of the eternal values which we have within ourselves and which cause in us a kind of tension or restlessness. God, in creating us according to his own image, has given us the capacity for enjoying infinite goodness, which is himself, according to what St. Augustine said in that well known phrase: *“You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you”*⁵⁷.

35. The image of God, which each of us is, was disfigured by sin. Its reshaping and renewal is begun by the grace of baptism. In order to bring this to completion, however, God requires our lifelong, deliberate and generous collaboration, for, as Augustine says: *“He who made you without your help, will not justify you without your cooperation”*⁵⁸. This renewal will be more perfect the more we become like God through knowledge and especially through love⁵⁹. It brings us close to God and draws us toward our inner self.

36. The return to interiority facilitates our renewal. It is necessary therefore, that, led in this direction by the testimony of the things God has created, we return within ourselves, in order to discern and to know ourselves. The knowledge of self brings us to the knowledge of God, to be realized in an attitude of prayer, of supplication: *“You, Lord God, are always the same. Let me know myself, and let me know you. This is my*

⁵³ On holy virginity, 6.

⁵⁴ Cf. LG 62.

⁵⁵ Cf. above, note 52, p. 709.

⁵⁶ Cf. Comment. on the Psalms, 141.4.

⁵⁷ Confessions, 1,1,1; cf. GS 21.

⁵⁸ Sermons, 170, 11,13.

⁵⁹ Cf. On merit and the pardon of sinners, 2,7-8,9-10; Letters, 92,3; 187,6,21.

*plea*⁶⁰. This admirable synthesis of his program of interiority Augustine explained as follows: “Do not wander about outside yourself. Return to yourself, for truth dwells in the interior man. When you find that your own nature is changeable, go beyond yourself ... Go where the light of reason is itself enkindled”⁶¹. Which is to say, do not remain simply enclosed within yourself, but recognize that you have need of God, who sustains you. Remember that lack of knowledge of self is the source of many evils⁶². The way of interiority will bring us to the knowledge of truth, “which is much more sublime than our own spirit and our own reason”⁶³. Indeed, “nothing is to be preferred to the search for truth”⁶⁴. By means of interiority we approach the Father, guided by the truth of Christ, to whom we are drawn by the love of the Holy Spirit, who makes us all one on our way to God in the service of mankind.

CHAPTER V COMMUNITY LIFE

Prayer

37. The Augustinian community is basically a group of persons who live their faith, hope and love. Hence, our prayer, both personal and common, is not only an act of piety, but a way of life. Dialogue with God is the summit of dialogue with our brothers and sisters. By them and with them we arrive at encounter with the Lord⁶⁵. We need, therefore, certain times of prayer in common, including participated prayer, with the members of our fraternity⁶⁶. Moreover, conscious of the fact that we are the Church, we will want to join our prayer to the prayer of the Liturgy.

38. We who by baptism are identified with Christ “*the new man*” (Col 3,10) have to make our life a continual witness of our awareness that we are children of the Father and brothers and sisters to all men and women. For this reason, everything that we do is directed toward the establishment of the kingdom of God in and through the vital temporal affairs that are our concern⁶⁷.

39. Those of us who have chosen married life should remember that living the sacrament of matrimony includes the call to be witnesses to the paschal presence of the Lord by developing an ever greater spirit of love and service as a tangible expression of our ministerial function.

40. In the celebration of the Eucharist, which is the foundation and summit of all community and “*the soul of the apostolate*”⁶⁸, we find the inspiration and the energy we need to make our life a constant evangelization activity in communion with God and all mankind.

Meeting

41. It is not enough to form a fraternity or community by intention only. We have to meet together for the sake of promoting our fraternal relationships and encouraging one

⁶⁰ Soliloquies, 2,1,1.

⁶¹ On true religion, 39,72.

⁶² Cf. On order, 1,1,3.

⁶³ On free will, 2,13,35.

⁶⁴ Against the Academicians, 3.11.

⁶⁵ Cf. Comment. on the Psalms, 85,1.

⁶⁶ Cf. Document of the Intermediate General Chapter of Dublin, no. 67.

⁶⁷ Cf. LG 31.

⁶⁸ 68 AA 3.

another in the fulfillment of our ideals. As far as possible each local fraternity should meet at least once a month to celebrate the Eucharist and participate in whatever other activities are found to be suitable for giving a greater vitality to the fraternity and its members. The Statutes, general and particular, shall determine the kinds of meetings to be held on a general or regional level. Local Statutes shall specify the procedures for local meetings.

42. The secular condition of the fraternity does not prohibit that some members may live in full community life⁶⁹. Indeed, our Augustinian charism requires us to be recognized experts in community life and spirit and offer to the world an example and model of our kind of life. This might be realized in a more radical way, if a group of secular Augustinians were to commit themselves to live in full community life.

CHAPTER VI

FORMATION

43. Our formation should be continually renewed, filled with Augustinian spirit, and adapted to the age, condition and ability of the members. It should be the product of personal reflection, community dialogue and sound theological, moral and social training, imparted chiefly by carefully chosen brothers and sisters⁷⁰.

44. We propose to study St. Augustine and the great masters of the Order, and to know the Order's history and spirituality, so that our title, Secular Augustinians, may correspond to a reality in our lives. We shall thus be able to instill an Augustinian spirit into our temporal occupations and collaborate better in the activities of the whole Augustinian Order, such as, in parishes, schools and other apostolic endeavors⁷¹.

45. Ongoing formation will be more effective, if it has its beginning in the kind of careful and serious initial formation which should be given to the candidates to our fraternity during their trial period.

CHAPTER VII

GOVERNMENT

46. The Augustinian Secular Fraternity is divided into various levels: local, regional, national and international. Each has its own moral personality in the Church. These fraternities are interrelated and coordinated according to the Rule of Life and the Statutes.

47. The life, growth and welfare of the whole fraternity is the shared responsibility of all the members. Each fraternity is guided and directed, on its respective level, by a President and a Council, in accord with the general Statutes. Their service, which is limited to a specified term, includes the duty of availability and responsibility toward each and every one of the members.

48. The local fraternity is to be established canonically. Thus constituted as a basic cell of the whole fraternity, it should be a visible sign of the Church, a community of love.

⁶⁹ Cf. above, note 52, p. 709.

⁷⁰ Cf. AA 29; and the document, *Formation of the Laity*, cited above, note 52.

⁷¹ Cf. Constitutions O.S.A., nos. 180, 182 and 219; AA 4.

49. Petitions for admission to the Augustinian Secular Fraternity are to be made to the local fraternity.

50. Incorporation shall take place after a trial period and through the pronouncing of the promises or vows in accord with the Rule of Life. The Statutes shall determine the age for making the promises or vows, as well as the use of an insignia or distinctive sign of our Augustinian life.

51. Members who find themselves in special difficulties should discuss their problems with the President or the Council in fraternal dialogue. Separation from the fraternity, either requested or imposed, if this should be necessary, shall be the competence of the respective Council according to the Statutes.

52. For the expenses required by the fraternity, all the members shall make a contribution according to their means. The local fraternities shall make an adequate contribution to the expenses of the Councils on higher levels of the fraternity.

53. The Councils on the various levels are to ask the superiors of the Augustinian Order for spiritual assistance, to be supplied by suitable Augustinian religious who are duly prepared⁷². Visitation by the Prior General, or by another major superior within the territory of his jurisdiction, is to be regarded as an especially important occasion in the life of the fraternity.

CHAPTER VIII CORRESPONSIBILITY

54. We are all responsible for the progress of the fraternity and its membership. The love that should reign in our hearts, and our love for the honor of the fraternity and the Augustinian Order, ought to move all of us to mutual concern and assistance in every way possible, including also the use of fraternal correction in a spirit of love and understanding⁷³.

55. Let us keep in mind St. Augustine's admonition: *"The thought of how much the Lord suffered for us ought to be enough to make us accept willingly the dutiful task of bearing one another's burdens. So it is that the Apostle said to us: 'Your attitude must be that of Christ: though he was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather, he emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men. He was known to be of human estate, and it was thus that he humbled himself, obediently accepting even death, death on a cross' (Phil 2,5-8). ... From this you should be able to understand that by being concerned and merciful you are not neglecting Christ for the sake of a needy person, rather you are loving the needy person for the sake of Christ"*⁷⁴.

CONCLUSION

56. The Lord grant that we, motivated by love, may observe all these things as admirers of spiritual beauty who are fragrant with the good odor of Christ - not as slaves under the law, but as freemen living under grace⁷⁵.

⁷² Cf. Constitutions O.S.A., no. 170.

⁷³ Cf. Rule, nos. 25-29, 41-43; Sermon on the Mount, 2,19,64.

⁷⁴ 83 Varied Questions, 71, 3 and 7.

⁷⁵ Cf. Rule, no. 48.

GENERAL STATUTES
JURIDICAL STRUCTURE

I. Establishment of a Fraternity of Secular Augustinians

1. For the canonical establishment of a Fraternity, there is required:
 - a) the written request of a Major Superior of the Order, with the consent of his Council;
 - b) the consent of the local Ordinary, given in writing;
 - c) approval of the Prior General.

II. Structure

2. The Major Superior, either directly or through a delegate, shall provide for the proper functioning of a Fraternity established in his area of jurisdiction. It pertains to him to appoint the Spiritual Director, after having consulted the Council of the respective Fraternity.
3. The principal duties of a Spiritual Director are:
 - a) to receive, in the name of the Prior General, the promises or vows of new members;
 - b) to meet periodically with new members to instruct them in the following of Christ and in the knowledge and observance of the Rule of Life and the Statutes;
 - c) to guide the members in the fulfillment of their duties, constantly encouraging them in the observance of the Rule of Life and the Statutes;
 - d) to promote Augustinian spirit in all the activities of the Fraternity;
 - e) to participate in the meetings of the members;
 - f) to be present in the Council of the Fraternity, but without right of vote.
4. The local Fraternity is under the leadership of a President and a Council, who are elected by those members who have made their promises or vows. The term of office and other norms are determined by particular Statutes.
5. The principal duties of the President are:
 - a) to preside at all meetings of the Council and of the Fraternity;
 - b) to lead and sustain a spirit of friendship and fraternal sharing;
 - c) to encourage and promote the apostolic activities of the Fraternity;
 - d) to safeguard the observance of the Rule of Life and Statutes.
6. The competence of the Council, other than what is indicated in the present Statutes, is to be determined by particular Statutes.
7. Other organs, believed to be useful on the local level and not provided for in these Statutes, may be introduced with the approval of the Council of the Fraternity.

III. Admission

8. All of the faithful of both sexes may join the Augustinian Secular Fraternity, provided that:

a) they have reached the age specified in particular Statutes;

b) they commit themselves to receiving a Christian formation according to the Augustinian spirit, which will help them to respond to the universal call to holiness and to bear witness to Christ within their own temporal environment;

c) they accept the responsibility to participate in the life of the Fraternity and contribute toward the realization of its purposes;

d) they are not members of other secular fraternities.

9. Admission to membership, requested by the interested party, is granted by the President with the consent of the Council.

The ceremony of admission is carried out according to the Ritual of the Order.

10. Before making one's promises or vows in the Fraternity, the candidate shall have a period of formation of not less than one year. During that time, under the tutelage of the Spiritual Director, he or she shall:

a) learn thoroughly the Gospel, the Rule of Life and the Statutes;

b) think carefully about the possibility of fulfilling what the Fraternity requires;

c) seek to live the Christian life with greater fidelity, particularly with respect to prayer and the fulfillment of his or her particular duties in life;

d) keep in contact with the President and the other members, especially by participation in the meetings and the other activities of the Fraternity.

11. When the period of formation is finished, and with the consent of the Council, the new member shall make the promises or vows, according to the Ritual of the Order.