

# Spirituality

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### Franciscan Sisters of Siessen

#### III A Our Identity

- <sup>01</sup> The Triune God is the origin, centre and goal of the vocation and mission of our Congregation and of each individual Sister.<sup>1</sup>
- <sup>02</sup> Through the power of baptism, we live our Christian life in the Catholic Church as a community of women of different generations, backgrounds and cultures. Like St Francis, we strive throughout our lives to know God more deeply<sup>2</sup> and thereby recognise more clearly who we are. Our identity is nourished by the experiences of St Francis with God, by the experiences of our Sisters in the history of our Congregation and by our experiences in the present. As Franciscan Sisters of the Third Order Regular, we live simply and fraternally in poverty, obedience and chastity for the sake of the kingdom of God.
- <sup>03</sup> The basis and orientation for our path of following Christ in community is the Gospel. In this way, we bear witness to God's living presence in the world.
- <sup>04</sup> Our relationship with the incarnate, crucified and risen Christ is nourished by living from the Word of God and personal prayer, through the liturgy celebrated in common, the sacraments of the Church and Eucharistic adoration. Everyday events, fraternal encounters, the beauty of creation, music, art and much more can be signs of God's activity for us.
- <sup>05</sup> Like Mary, we say yes to God's call and his plans as they are revealed to us. In the religious profession, we place ourselves at God's disposal in the Congregation so that he can become incarnate in us and through us.
- <sup>06</sup> We practice spiritual discernment both individually and collectively, in order to hear God's voice with increasing sensitivity in the multitude of voices of our time.
- <sup>07</sup> We are all formed by our origins and the cultural and social environment in which we live. Both the richness and the limited nature of these influences urge us to examine when it is necessary to go beyond ourselves and to be open to that which is foreign. The Gospel unites us across all differences and foreignness.
- <sup>08</sup> St Francis encourages us to grow in the spirit of constant conversion and turning towards God and our fellow human beings. Positive perception and communication, simplicity and cheerfulness as well as the willingness for reconciliation and new beginning are part of a Franciscan culture of common life. In the attitude of minority, we stand at the side of the poor and always dare to set out anew as pilgrims and strangers.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Con85 1,1

<sup>2</sup> Jn 17:3

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Test 24

- 09 In the spirit of Jesus, we use our gifts and abilities to make an impact on the world. Because we trust that God will provide us with everything we need for our mission, we use our strength and creativity generously. We are aware that God can build his kingdom even in times of our weakness and limitations.
- 10 We live our mission as part of the mission of the Church. Through our actions and prayers, we let the feminine face of the Church shine.
- 11 As members of the body of Christ, we rejoice in all fruitful life in the Church and suffer because of its shortcomings. With St Francis and St Clare we are learning what creative fidelity to our Church is. We speak out where the actions of individuals or structures obscure the message of the Gospel. In awareness of our own weakness and sinfulness, we do this respectfully and at eye level.
- 12 We live in unity with other members of the Franciscan family and other Communities of Consecrated Life. In addition, we seek contact and cultivate relationships with people of other denominations, religions and movements and with all people of good will.
- 13 St Francis' experience of God led him to be a brother to all creatures. By respecting all created things with reverence and fraternal love, we change and can work towards a more just and peaceful world. This is reflected in a sustainable and life-enhancing engagement with the goods of creation and in social and political commitment.
- 14 In the spirit of St Francis, we bless everyone and everything we encounter:
- May the Lord bless you and keep you.  
May He show His face to you  
and have mercy on you.  
May He turn His countenance towards you and give you peace.

### III B Acceptance into this Life

- 01 At the beginning of our vocation, Jesus invites us: „Come, follow me!”<sup>1</sup>
- 02 Our vocation is a gift and a mission. Our journey begins with the experience that the Triune God speaks to us personally in different ways and awakens in us the longing to follow Him as a Franciscan Sister of Siessen.
- 03 We welcome the young women who come to us in response to this call with the will to share our lives in the spirit of St Francis and St Clare and accept them as a gift from God. In our common search for the paths into the future, we look attentively to see what gifts and ideas the Lord wants to give us through these new vocations.
- 04 In listening together to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in dialogue with one another and in mutual responsibility of the individual and the Congregation, the vocation can unfold, deepen and consolidate.
- 05 The love of Christ motivates us to orient ourselves towards His life, death and resurrection in all dimensions and always to follow Him.  
We want to discover Jesus Christ in everything, follow His footsteps like St Francis, love and adore Him.
- 06 In journeying together and living with one another, it becomes clear as to whether human maturity and the ability to relate, joy and contentment, growth in faith and

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<sup>1</sup> Mt 19:21

- spirituality can be felt. If this is recognisable for the Sister herself and for the community, the path of growing into the Congregation may be continued.
- 07 In our baptismal vocation God begins an eternal covenant with each Sister. The Religious Profession is the concrete expression of our Baptism. In our Profession, we consecrate ourselves to God and continue the covenant that God has made with the Congregation and continually renews. Like Mary we say yes to God's call in our life.
- 08 Our yes has many facets.  
 I say yes to God as my Creator and Saviour.  
 I say yes to myself and to my own life.  
 I say yes to the world into which I was born.  
 I say yes to my vocation of Baptism and to my being in the Catholic Church.  
 I say yes to consecrated and communal-life in our Franciscan Congregation.
- 09 The yes of the beginning must find new forms of expression in the maturing of our personality and our faith throughout our lives. This process is motivated by the will to grow and the constant willingness to repent, as well as by crises, challenges and new beginnings and upheavals. We allow each other the necessary space for development and rejoice in what grows and matures. Through mutual encouragement and feedback, we support each other in this process as Sisters. Spiritual guidance can also be helpful.
- 10 In each phase of our lives, God's call resounds anew, and our response is also new. As people who are called and who also listen, we repeatedly set out inwardly and outwardly, renewing our decision in faithfulness and perseverance. This deepens our rootedness in God, and we follow His invitation to "Remain in my love."<sup>2</sup>
- 11 At the end of our lives, we can pray like Saint Clare: "I thank you for having created me."<sup>3</sup>  
 And full of hope, we join in the call of the Spirit and the Bride: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"<sup>4</sup>

### III C The Spirit of Prayer

- 01 The love of the Triune God, who first loved us, is the origin of our vocation and the source of our mission. His love calls and draws us and arouses in us the longing for Him in us. The personal bond with Him thus sustains our lives and gives us the space that leads us deeper into a prayerful attitude that constantly inspires and shapes our everyday lives. That way, we prepare a home and dwelling place<sup>1</sup> for the Lord in our hearts and amongst us.
- 02 Inspired by St Francis and St Clare, we join in the praise of God. Their prayers and writings serve as motivation and orientation.
- 03 We live in a Eucharistic attitude that is nourished by a regular and conscious life with the Eucharist, especially participation in the Eucharistic celebration and adoration. This is characterized by our readiness to be transformed and dedicated, and by the desire to be fully present. In service to our fellow human beings, in gratitude, reconciliation and commitment to peace, this inner attitude is also externally visible.

<sup>2</sup> Jn 15:9

<sup>3</sup> PC III 20,74

<sup>4</sup> Rv 22:20

<sup>1</sup> ER 22,27

- 04 Our entire life is guided by the Word of God. We use a variety of methods to interact with and give space to it so that it can permeate our everyday lives. We interpret our lives based on the Word. Important to us are daily meditation on the Word, Bible studies, regular Scripture sharing, and sharing experiences on how we have lived the Word.
- 05 We understand our prayers to be part of the prayer of the whole Church. We pray the Liturgy of the Hours in this worldwide community. We bring joy and hope, sorrow and fear<sup>2</sup> and the concerns of the world before God in intercessory prayer. We use our gifts to ensure that the liturgy in our Convents and parishes is celebrated in a lively way with dignity and radiates the beauty of God.
- 06 Our prayer is always a balancing act between both communal and individual prayer as well as between preformulated, spontaneous and silent prayer. We also experience the dynamic between action and contemplation. It remains a lifelong task to find the right balance at every age according to one's own vocation and life situation.
- 07 Contemplation is an essential component of our Franciscan vocation. Through it, we recognise in everything we encounter the Triune God, who became incarnate in Jesus Christ.
- 08 For Francis, Mary, the mother of Jesus, is the prototype of the contemplative human being. She is the “Daughter and handmaid of the most high, supreme King and Father in heaven, Mother of our most holy Lord Jesus Christ, Spouse of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>3</sup> Through her entire being she indicates God. From his relationship with Mary, Francis developed an attitude of mind and heart that molded his feelings, thoughts and actions and enabled him to constantly contemplate the mystery of Jesus Christ.
- Communion with Mary can also lead us deeper to Christ.  
The prayer of the Rosary, the “Angelus” and the Marian prayers of St. Francis can help us in this.
- 09 The mystery of Christ and our transformation into his image is condensed in St Clare's motif of the mirror. For her, Christ is the mirror of God, into which she looks constantly. She invites us: “Place your mind before the mirror of eternity! Place your soul in the brilliance of glory! Place your heart in the figure of the divine substance and, through contemplation, transform your entire being into the image of the Godhead Itself.”<sup>4</sup>
- Through constant contemplation of God's love, we become capable to recognize and love Christ in ourselves, in our Co-Sisters and in all people. This is how Clare encourages us in her blessing: “Always be lovers of your souls and the souls of all your Sisters.”<sup>5</sup>
- 10 St Francis encounters the whole of creation with a sense of the sacred, miraculous and mysterious in it. Everything created – people, animals, plants, rocks and stars – become a ‘sacramentum’, a sign of God and his presence.<sup>6</sup>
- 11 For Francis, retreating to hermitages was the source of his apostolic mission. We also have the opportunity to visit places like this from time to time. We also reserve times of communal and positive personal silence in our everyday lives and respect spaces of silence.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. GS 1

<sup>3</sup> OfP Ant 2

<sup>4</sup> 3 LAg 12-13

<sup>5</sup> BICl 14

<sup>6</sup> Cf. CtC

- <sup>12</sup> St Francis wanted to follow God, who is love, with all his strength and become a co-lover with him. It was a great pain for him that love is not loved. With St Francis, we look at the child in the manger, and at the Crucified, so that we can learn the loving and merciful acceptance of the broken reality that we are and in which we live. We can deepen our love for the suffering Lord, for example, by praying the Stations of the Cross and the Office of the Passion.
- <sup>13</sup> We are aware that in our communal life we become guilty toward one another and hurt each other. We continually practise an attitude of constant repentance and are willing to forgive and reconcile. In our personal lives, for example, the daily review and the examination of consciousness serve this purpose. Communal forms include the renewal chapters or the liturgy of repentance. Sacramental acts are the sacrament of reconciliation, the Eucharist and anointing of the sick.
- <sup>14</sup> We value fasting in the sense of renunciation out of love as an important spiritual exercise through which the Holy Spirit wants to make us open and sensitive. This strengthens our spirit and enables us to reorient ourselves and become sensitive to the situation of the poor. We fast especially during the Lenten season and on Fridays. We also prepare for feast days that have a special significance for our Congregation by fasting and, for example, through praying novenas.
- <sup>15</sup> We encourage spiritual sharing, strengthen and accompany each other through good and bad times. Annual retreats, recollection days and spiritual guidance help us to grow and mature both in our personal relationship with God and in the challenges of life.
- <sup>16</sup> At the end of his life, Francis had “become not so much a prayerful man as a prayer himself.”<sup>7</sup> We too experience that faithful prayer transforms us and turns our lives into prayer.

### III D The Life of Consecrated Chastity for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven

- <sup>01</sup> God created us in his image out of love and conferred on us dignity, beauty and wholeness. “God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.”<sup>1</sup>
- <sup>02</sup> We enter into and are filled with the Triune love that gives and receives. We are called to be “co-lovers”<sup>2</sup> with God. Love transforms us and allows us to become who God intended us to be. This enables us to become “spouses, brothers and sisters and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup>
- <sup>03</sup> In Jesus Christ God became true human. Everything human is familiar to him, and he addresses us as whole human beings. He calls us to love with everything that belongs to us, with our entire existence, including our womanhood and our sexuality. With our decision for a life in consecrated chastity to God for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven, we respond to his love.
- <sup>04</sup> Jesus chose the life of celibacy for Himself.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, His life was a life among people and in relationships. We are fascinated by the way in which Jesus approached people, how He allowed Himself to be touched, how He engaged in relationships and closeness, while maintaining a clear focus on the Father and his

<sup>7</sup> 2 C 95

<sup>1</sup> Gn 1:27

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Duns Scotus

<sup>3</sup> Cf. 2LrF 50-53

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Mt 19:12

mission and urges us to imitate Him. Our commitment to a life of consecrated chastity can only be fruitful if it is nourished by a living relationship with God and lives from the interpersonal dynamic of giving and receiving.

05 Since God shows us his human face in Christ, we love Christ with all the strength of our being. The loving relationship with Christ, her Bridegroom<sup>5</sup>, is a mystery in the soul of every Sister.

06 Mary, bride of the Holy Spirit, mother and disciple of Jesus Christ and the prototype of the Church, is our role model and companion in the life of chastity. In Mary Immaculate, we see dignity, beauty and wholeness realized in a special way. Her being chosen shows us that God, out of pure grace, leads people to the fullness of their human vocation.

We trust that God wants to make our lives fruitful, as he has made her life fruitful.  
07 In the Cantic of the Creatures, Francis describes water as chaste.<sup>6</sup> Like 'Sister Water', we want to be transparent to God and to have clear and pure intentions. We practise an undisguised, impartial view of ourselves and the world. This requires clear discernment of our inner movements. It is how we gain a pure heart.<sup>7</sup>

08 We cultivate relationships and friendships both within and outside the Congregation and do so with gratitude. Relationships with friends enrich us, broaden our horizons and deepen our vocation. St Francis and St Clare, Brother Leo and Lady Jacoba of Settesoli are examples of healthy friendships. They can be our role models for an attitude of fraternity in our relationships.

09 We form relationships transparently and truthfully. We respect and value the other person and avoid dependencies or even forms of exploitation. We are aware of the tension between closeness and distance and remain vigilant when we are in danger of satisfying our own needs at the expense of others. We respect and protect each other's boundaries and are particularly attentive in asymmetrical relationships. We protect ourselves if our own boundaries are threatened and seek help if necessary. We pay attention to discretion and avoid rumours and judgements or counteract them.

10 We also live in fraternity with people of other religions, cultures and world views, meet them without prejudice and grow in contact with the unfamiliar. We live together with all creatures and all created things, showing great respect and mindfulness. In all our encounters, we seek to allow ourselves to be touched by the mystery of God.

11 Our decision to live a life of consecrated chastity includes renouncing marriage or partnership, biological motherhood and intimate interpersonal sexuality. It is important that we are aware of our body and the emotions, desires and needs associated with it and that we find a good way of dealing with our emotional and sexual desires. On one hand, this includes each Sister being aware of her sexual identity and orientation and, if necessary, dealing with stressful sexual experiences in an appropriate manner. On the other hand, this includes being able to speak on a community level and talk to one another about sexuality in safe spaces without fear or prejudice. Integrated sexuality leads us to vitality and freedom and enables us to be creative and mature in our relationships.

12 Every phase of life has its own specific challenges and dangers. We recognise them honestly and bring them confidently before our Creator. We need to be vigilant and

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<sup>5</sup> 1LtF 12

<sup>6</sup> CtC 7

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Mt 5:8; Adm 16

disciplined and, if necessary, seek help if we try to fill our inner emptiness, for example through excessive work, media consumption, relationships, shopping, food, fasting or various addictive substances.

13 Consecrated chastity unfolds its vital power during our lives in its various phases and also in times of crisis up to old age.

It is important that each of us knows what serves to develop the powers of mind, soul and body, for example through creative, musical or sporting activities and bring them into balance.

14 Even if we forego important aspects of the physical experience of life and fulfilment, we gratefully recognise the many signs of God's care for us. God is beautiful. We rejoice in the beauty that is given to us in nature and culture. At the same breath, we remain sensitive to vulnerability and finiteness that are inscribed within it. Out of the power of God's loving care we turn toward the poor and the suffering creation.

15 In the conviction that God wants to give us life in abundance, we use and enjoy what we have been given with a grateful attitude. We will only find our final emotional home and fulfilment in God. In this sense, the way of life of consecrated chastity is a sign of the longing that can only find its fulfilment in God. The Bible offers many images of this fulfilment, that can be experienced in small ways here and now and that will one day come to fruition. The images of the heavenly bridegroom, the wedding feast and the heavenly city of Jerusalem for all nations can help us to keep our longing and hope alive and open.

### III E The Way to Serve and Work

1 God entrusted us with his world as a common home.<sup>1</sup> We are part of his creation, and we collaborate with his creative activity. The work is an opportunity for us to be creative and to contribute from our respective cultures.<sup>2</sup> We can develop our own abilities, find meaning and become fruitful.

2 St Francis says that being able to work is a grace and a gift. Like him, we want to work with joy and commitment, taking care not to extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion.<sup>3</sup>

3 In the Franciscan attitude of minority and fraternity and sorority, we work for a living and thus experience our dependence on people, structures and things. In this, we live solidarity among ourselves as Sisters and with the poor. We refrain from using and dominating nature and our environment as a mere object of use.<sup>4</sup>

4 By working, we place our gifts and abilities at the service of God, the Congregation, the Church and the society. In this way, we practise an attitude of service that finds expression in faithfulness, dedication, gentleness and respectful behaviour.<sup>5</sup> A fundamental willingness to take on responsibility, as well as various kinds of service and work, derives from our Franciscan identity.

5 We recognize the gifts and abilities given by God to each individual Sister and encourage her through training and higher education to become fruitful for the Congregation, the Church and the world.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gn 1:26-28, 2:15; LS 1

<sup>2</sup> LS 14

<sup>3</sup> Cf. LR 5,1-2; Cf. LtAnt 2; FLCI 7,1-2

<sup>4</sup> LS 11

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Rule II E 20

- <sup>6</sup> Each individual Sister is valued, independent of her performance or on the nature of her work and its success. We strive to find the balance between work, community life, prayer and times of rest and recuperation. In illness and in old age, when our physical and mental strength deteriorate, the focus of life shifts more to being present before God. Accompaniment can be helpful on this path. All our being and doing is in praise and honour of God.

### III F Life of Poverty

- <sup>01</sup> The evangelical counsel of poverty reflects the constant giving and receiving of the Trinitarian life. Our choice to embrace the vow of poverty arises from God's promise and our experience of Him showering love and acting generously in our lives.
- <sup>02</sup> In the incarnation of Jesus, God chose the path of profound poverty and humility. Jesus lived a simple life among the people, emptied Himself, gave up His life on the cross and was exalted.<sup>1</sup> St Francis and St Clare were filled with the longing to follow this poor and humble Jesus. They recognized in Him what enriched their lives.<sup>2</sup> Like them, we have decided to live the vow of poverty. On this journey we are strengthened by meditating the incarnate, poor, crucified and risen Christ.
- <sup>03</sup> As we acknowledge God as the creator and provider of all and entrust ourselves to His care, we exercise – both personally and collectively – the letting go of individuals, things and locations, of duties, powers and responsibilities, of demands and expectations, of resentments and injuries. Consequently, we grow more liberated from our limiting self-interest and receptive to the richness of God and life in His abundance. We are increasingly capable of offering ourselves until, ultimately, we surrender our lives entirely into His hands.
- <sup>04</sup> The evangelical counsel of poverty frees us to make decisions, to engage in commitments and ultimately dedicate ourselves to God. From the multitude of options, it is essential to have the courage to select one option and to renounce others. Therefore, it also needs a willingness to flexibly embrace changes, to accept new developments and to allow for the unexpected.
- <sup>05</sup> The encounter with the lepers<sup>3</sup> and the feeling of being seen and personally addressed by the Crucified in San Damiano<sup>4</sup> were crucial for St Francis' path with 'Lady Poverty'. Facing God's magnificence and experiencing God's complete self-emptying, he acknowledged his own poverty. St Clare's deepest impulse was to embrace as a poor virgin the poor Christ.<sup>5</sup> In this embrace, Francis and Clare permitted Christ to draw close and shape them. Just like them, we do not seek poverty in the sense of mere ascetic renouncement, but a new, radical way towards a life in abundance.
- <sup>06</sup> The poor Christ encounters us in the poor of our time and obliges us to continually ask anew who exactly the "poor and lepers" are, and to be alert to the needs of the people around us and in the world. We must never cease to ask this question, both communally and individually: Whom shall we serve?<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Phil 2:5-9

<sup>2</sup> PrsG 4

<sup>3</sup> Test 1; 2C 9; LMj I 5

<sup>4</sup> LMj 2

<sup>5</sup> Cf. 2LAg 18

<sup>6</sup> cf. L3C 6

- 07 A true encounter with the poor requires us to acknowledge and embrace our own poverty before God. This continues to be an ongoing challenge for the Congregation at every level.
- 08 Choosing Franciscan poverty and humility means for each of us: I place my gifts and abilities at the disposal of my Co-Sisters and our Congregation. I do not have to conceal my shortcomings and my poverty but can handle them openly. I can entrust myself to my Co-Sisters and seek assistance. At the same time, it is my obligation to strive for my further development and growth. I lovingly and respectfully acknowledge the shortcomings and poverty of others as well as those of our Congregation and patiently endure and bear them. I rejoice in the talents of others without envy, and I value them.
- 09 Poverty lived and shared in this manner awakens and strengthens love. It creates relationships and a vibrant community and lets us experience that we depend on one another. Trust in God and communal relationships provide a security that goes far beyond the necessary worldly security. Times of crisis, illness, weakness and frailty represent a particular challenge. They can lead us from a chosen poverty to an accepted poverty.
- 10 We practise the attitude of poverty and express it in concrete actions. We live in community of goods; to which each contributes her share. This also includes the willingness to make our personal spiritual and material possessions available to our Co-Sisters. We rejoice in the things given to us and practice attitudes of contentment and gratitude for everything we have and receive. We continually re-examine what we truly need, how we can live more simply, maintain moderation, and limit ourselves.
- 11 We are placed in global economic contexts in which there is much injustice. Conscious of our responsibility for creation, we pay attention to aspects such as sustainability, fair production conditions, recyclability, and reparability. Whenever possible, we aim to cover the actual costs of items to prevent taking advantage of others and the environment for our benefit.
- 12 Our decision to take the vow of poverty means also that we provide as much support in solidarity as possible for the poor and needy. It obliges us to think globally, to bear in mind the repercussions of our actions and to combat the systemic causes of poverty and all forms of injustice. Interacting with the poor and marginalized, we aim to interpret the Gospel from their viewpoint, grasp their daily hardships, worries, and needs and to learn from them. We back them and amplify their voice.

### III G Our Life in Community

- <sup>01</sup> Jesus invites us: “Love one another, as I have loved you.”<sup>7</sup> We are called to a sisterly life in the spirit of St Francis and St Clare. God's presence in our midst, our common focus on Him and our profession unites us.
- <sup>02</sup> In order for this bond to grow and take shape, it is important to get to know, understand and appreciate one another more and more deeply. This happens when we spend time and share our lives together. This is how we give ourselves joy and experience the richness of community. We support one another on the path of discipleship through sisterly encouragement and timely exhortation, through patient listening, through bearing with one another and praying with and for one another.
- <sup>03</sup> The dignity and uniqueness of every person, and therefore of every Co-Sister, lies in the fact that the Triune God dwells in each of us. It remains a lifelong task to keep this truth in mind and to align our relationships with it. We are aware that differences in age, personality, family and culture influence our relationships. These differences can both enrich and challenge us. We demonstrate goodwill and warm-hearted interest and make sure that we are respectful towards one another and speak well of one another.
- <sup>04</sup> We are not an ideal community; it frequently happens that we irritate and annoy one another.<sup>8</sup> This also leads to differences of opinion, conflicts and injuries. In order not to remain stuck in these inner movements, we seek the Crucified and bring our limitations, hard-heartedness, hurts and guilt before God. From this we draw strength to move on and towards one another in peace and reconciliation. When we ask for forgiveness, when we offer or give it, reconciliation becomes possible. Throughout this process, we give one another time to take the necessary steps.
- <sup>05</sup> For our communal life to succeed, we need to be willing to engage in dialogue and compromise and to practice the discernment of spirits together. At the Chapter meetings on various levels, we discuss and agree on how to live our common charism in the respective places and in the current time. In so doing, we listen attentively and appreciatively to the voices of all generations. By sharing our gifts, experiences and visions, we grow together in giving and receiving.
- <sup>06</sup> The Senior Sisters gift us with the testimony of their love for Christ and their life experience and wisdom. They strengthen us through their benevolence, their love and their prayers. Particularly in times of crisis and illness, as well as in the frailty of old age, we experience that we are dependent on one another and on the care of the Congregation. Even in these times, we help one another to keep our eyes on our calling and mission and to discover the traces of God in them. We care for one another until the end of life and remain connected to our Co-Sisters after death, also in prayer.

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<sup>7</sup> Jn 15:12

<sup>8</sup> Con85 24,1

### III H Obedience based on Love

- 01 Our vocation enables us to live in loving obedience to God, in a lively interaction of  
call and response. Attentive listening and walking courageously on the ways He  
guides us, belongs to the inner core of our religious life.
- 02 Created in the image of God, each of us has an inherent dignity and a role in the  
biblical creation mandate to serve life.
- 03 Baptism makes us children of God and grants us the joint responsibility of  
participating in the kingdom of God. The grace of baptism unfolds in the life of  
Religious Profession, which unites us Sisters in a special way as members of the  
body of Christ and bestows upon us a common responsibility for the Congregation  
and its mission. We live this as we listen attentively, following in the footsteps of  
Jesus, who was obedient unto death.<sup>9</sup>
- 04 Out of love for God and following the example of St Francis, we live obedience in a  
spirit of fraternity and in reverence for the divine presence in every person. When  
listening to one another in dialogue and communal listening to God come together,  
a sacred space is created in which we can experience the Triune God vividly and  
deepen our relationships.
- 05 As a Congregation, we believe that God speaks through each Sister.<sup>10</sup> When we  
listen together, it is vital to recognize and consider gifts and abilities as well as  
limitations – both those of the individual Sister and those of the Congregation.
- 06 We perceive our world and its needs, in view of our common mission and the reality  
in which we live. We listen to the lamentations and groans of creation and try to  
interpret and respond to the signs of the times<sup>11</sup> in the light of the Gospel.
- 07 Our Chapters and community meetings give us space to seek God's will together  
and encourage one another to follow Jesus Christ. In doing so, we can experience  
how the Holy Spirit opens doors to that which is new and shows us ways into the  
future.
- 08 Also in everyday life, we are called to be attentive to how God wants to guide us  
through encounters and experiences.
- 09 The practice of spiritual discernment, both personally and collectively, enables us  
to live our vow of obedience as a Congregation.
- 10 St Francis and St Clare describe admission to the Religious Congregation as “being  
accepted for obedience.”<sup>12</sup> Our Yes to God and to the Congregation simultaneously  
means a yes to specific people and to community structures. Living obedience  
responsibly and in inner freedom within the hierarchical structure of our  
Congregation is a lifelong task.
- 11 Some Sisters are given special responsibilities for a certain period of time in the  
Congregation. St Francis refers to the brothers in leadership roles “ministers” and  
“guardians”, which highlighting the servant character of their ministry. Even if we  
call the Sisters in charge Superiors, they are the primarily obedient and servants of  
their Co-Sisters and the Congregation.
- 12 They strengthen sisterly and spiritual life at various levels. They serve to ensure  
unity and to preserve and realize the charism and further development of the  
Congregation. They are concerned with fidelity to the mission and securing the  
material foundations of the Congregation. In the Franciscan spirit, they should

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<sup>9</sup> Phil 2:8

<sup>10</sup> FICl 4,18; LMj VI 4

<sup>11</sup> GS 4

<sup>12</sup> LR 2,11; FICl 2,13

seek out and support their Co-Sisters, encourage them in their strengths and take them seriously in their limitations, be concerned about their growth and work together with them for their personal development and the deepening of their vocation.<sup>13</sup>

13 In her work, the Superior relies on the prayer, trust, discretion and cooperation of the Sisters as well as on the acceptance of her responsibility. The relationship between personal and shared responsibility and the responsibility of the Superior is sometimes tense and must be shaped.

14 In the struggle to make good decisions, we align our own interests with the good of the Congregation and learn to set aside our own interests when necessary for the sake of all.<sup>14</sup>

15 By living a life of obedience, we deepen our attitude of availability, humility and trust. This manifests itself, among other things, in accepting constructive criticism and in being open to suggestions and decisions that do not align with our own wishes and ideas.

16 At the same time, we express our own perceptions and well-founded concerns and examine them through collective listening. We take the initiative and are prepared to assume responsibility and to contribute in a concrete way.

17 In his third admonition, St Francis points out that in the life of obedience we can reach a point where what is demanded is not compatible with conscience, the Rule or religious profession. In such a case, the Sister must not follow the instruction, but she should not cut her relationship with the Superior.<sup>15</sup>

18 Every ministry and every assigned service is limited in time. If we do not cling to places, tasks and offices, but instead listen, obey and move forward repeatedly, we grow in the freedom of the children of God.<sup>16</sup>

19 So obedience of Love is a spiritual encounter which unites heaven and earth, and through which God's healing presence is reaching our world more and more.

### III I The Apostolic-Missionary Life

01 Everyone who is a follower of Christ lives a missionary-apostolic life: "This missionary mandate touches us personally: I am a mission, always; you are a mission, always; every baptized man and woman is a mission. People in love never stand still: they are drawn out of themselves (...). As far as God's love is concerned, no one is useless or insignificant. Each of us is a mission to the world, for each of us is the fruit of God's love."<sup>43</sup>

02 The disciples of Jesus were sent to bear witness.<sup>44</sup> We too are sent into the world to love, to dedicate our lives to others and to bear witness. We want to be attentive to the signs of the times and ready to engage with reality in the place where we find ourselves. In our hearts and in our relationships, we keep the paschal hope that the cross is followed by resurrection.

03 We are called every day to be transformed by the Word that became man in Jesus Christ. This leads us to an attitude of minority, of dialogue and service, in which we treat others with attention and appreciation. In this way, the kingdom of God and the values of the Gospel can become present.

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<sup>13</sup> LR 10,4-6

<sup>14</sup> Adm 3,5

<sup>15</sup> Adm 3,7

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Con85 28,1

<sup>43</sup> WMiss 2019

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Lk 10:1

- 04 We belong to the Catholic Church and share in its mission. By getting involved in the local Church and in the dialogue within and outside the Church, we contribute to the renewal of the Church. We invite people to share life and faith with us and want to experience faith together with them. As Franciscans, we also want to go to places where the Church is not yet established<sup>45</sup>, or no longer present.
- 05 On our journey, we learn from the testimony of life of St Francis and of St Clare, of our Co-Sisters and of many other people. We participate in the lives of others and are blessed by this. We also welcome people into our lives and offer different kinds of hospitality. We are open and grateful for all people for whom our charism is meaningful for their own lives. In sharing with them and others, we receive renewing inspirations.
- 06 We create and open up spaces and places where God's beauty can be experienced with all senses, e.g. in liturgy, art and music as well as in our living and garden areas.
- 07 As a praying Congregation, Eucharistic adoration is our source and mission. We bring the concerns of the world to God in intercessory prayer. Certain Sisters or Convents may be entrusted by the Province with a special mission of prayer.
- 08 As creatures of God, we live in the common home<sup>46</sup> of creation. Each of us is part of the whole and we only become human beings through our encounters with other human beings.<sup>47</sup> We live fraternal relationships in our Congregation, in the Church, with people and with creation. Mutual respect and appreciation are central values for our intercultural life together and for our commitment to peace and justice in this world. We take on our responsibility for God's creation and are committed to ensuring that future generations can also live in it. We acquire and share the necessary knowledge in dialogue with other committed people.
- 09 We support social developments and projects that serve life and we raise our voices against undesirable developments. Through our being and our actions and, if necessary, our words, we bear witness to the hope that moves us and we enable people to discover and develop perspectives for their lives.<sup>48</sup>
- 10 We use our gifts and abilities for various tasks and jobs in all places where the Congregation sends us. We want to be witnesses and instruments of God's love for His world through our actions.
- 11 The poor and marginalized are the "favored ones" in the Kingdom of God. When St Francis encountered the lepers, he experienced that "what had seemed bitter [to him] was turned into sweetness of soul and body."<sup>49</sup> For us, the option for the poor means taking care of those in need, welcoming them into our hearts, listening to their voices, amplifying them and raising our own voices for them. As Sisters of all we are called to "heal the wounded, to bind up those who are bruised, and to reclaim the erring."<sup>50</sup>
- 12 The need is always greater than what our limited resources and strength can provide. When we give generously, we can trust that the little we give will be multiplied in God's hands.<sup>51</sup> The Triune God will show us the next steps both in the risky stage of setting out and when courageously completing a mission.
- 13 Our vocation is grace, our mission, a gift. We look with gratitude at the good that our Sisters have done in the course of history. We painfully recognize the failings

<sup>45</sup> Aparecida 2007,  
No. 376  
<sup>46</sup> LS 1

<sup>47</sup> Cf. African  
Philosophy UBUNTU  
<sup>48</sup> Cf. ER 16,5-7

<sup>49</sup> Test 3  
<sup>50</sup> Rule II I 30  
<sup>51</sup> Cf. Mk 6:30-44

throughout our history, knowing that people have been hurt and suffered wounds.  
We entrust the past, present and future to God's mercy.

Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,  
Yours are the praises, the glory and the honor and all blessing.  
To You alone, Most High, do they belong,  
and no human is worthy to mention Your Name.  
Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures ...  
Praise and bless my Lord and give  
Him thanks and serve Him with great humility.<sup>52</sup>

Text approved by the Extraordinary General Chapter in August 2025

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<sup>52</sup> CtC 1-3a,14