

**GOOD GOVERNANCE
IN MONTFORTIAN GABRIELITE
CONSECRATED LIFE AND MISSION**



Table of Contents

1. WHAT IS GOOD GOVERNANCE?	3
2. GOOD GOVERNANCE, ITS OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES:	4
2.1. Spirituality of Good Governance:	6
2.2 Principles of Good Governance:	7
3. FOCUS AREAS FOR OUR REFLECTION	8
3.1. Participative and Consensus Process of Decision Making	8
3.2. Transparency	8
3.3. Accountability	9
3.4. Rule of Law	9
4. GOOD GOVERNANCE AS UNDERSTOOD IN OUR RULE OF LIFE AND IN OTHER DOCUMENTS.	9
4.1. Elements of Good Governance in the Rule of Life	10
4.1.1. Our Mission is a Combined and Collective Effort	10
4.1.2. Good Governance is for the Service of All	10
4.1.3. Solidarity and Network: Shared Dimension of Life	11
4.1.4. Sincere Dialogue and Balanced Participation are Pillars of Good Governance	11
4.2. Good Governance in the 30 th and 31 st General Chapters:	11
4.3. Good Governance in the Montfortian Education Charter (MEC):	12
5. GOOD GOVERNANCE IN OUR LIFE IN THE PROVINCES AND IN THE COMMUNITIES:	13
5.1. Good Governance in the Life of the Brothers in our PROVINCES	14

5.1.1. The Existence of Credible Structures and Bodies	14
5.1.2. Planning for the Formation of Human Resources	15
5.1.3. Planning, Development and Financial Aspects	15
5.1.4. Good Governance: A Shared Responsibility	15
5.1.5. Compliance with the Rules and Procedures	16
5.2. Good Governance in the Life of our COMMUNITIES	17
5.2.1. Avoiding all Forms of Privileges and Special Status	17
5.2.2. Information and Communication	17
5.2.3. Order and Discipline through Community Projects and Budgets	17
6. PRACTICE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE IN OUR MISSION	18
6.1. Focus at the Central Administration Level	19
6.2. Focus at the Province Level:	20
6.3. Focus at the Community Level:	21
6.4. Focus at the Education Mission Level:	22
7. PROPOSED ACTION PLAN:	24
8. CONCLUSION	25
9. QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING:	27
10. BIBLIOGRAPHY	29
Documents of the Church	29
Documents of the Institute	29
Others	30

GOOD GOVERNANCE (GG) IN MONTFORTIAN GABRIELITE CONSECRATED LIFE (CL) AND MISSION

Dear Brothers,

In our letter to all the Brothers of the Institute following the 16th Council of the Institute (No.08/2015)¹, under the title “Priorities for the Future and Action Plans”, we had mentioned in detail under the sub-heading “Education”, some proposals for re-investing in our education mission. That letter had made a mention about introducing the system of Governing Body in our educational Institutions, devising structures to ensure greater transparency and accountability in the management of educational Institutions and implementing the principles of Good Governance in our life and mission. This Circular Letter is written with a view to presenting some reflections on *Good Governance* and its relevance for us today. It is our hope that this will help each entity of our Institute towards the preparation of an “Instrument of Governance and Evaluation”. We see it as an ongoing process of study and research since we do not have set models to follow.

We are all aware that *Good Governance* is increasingly becoming a sign of our times across sectors. Principles, contents, parameters and indicators of Good Governance are being developed by Governments and Institutions all over the world. The Church and Church Institutions are also becoming a part of this paradigm shift. In fact, a review of the existing modes of governance of the Institutions/Works of the Religious Congregations and Communities has become necessary as never before. As Pope Francis reminded

¹ See Circular No.08/2015, dt.22nd June 2015, from the Superior General and the Members of the Central Administration (B.p.13)

the heads of Religious Congregations on November 27, 2014, *“Religious Orders and Vatican Congregation that assists them must be bold in assessing whether the current structures and practices help or hinder the proclamation of the Gospel, the pursuit of holiness and the service of the poor”*. It is this realization that led our 30th General Chapter to mandate a Commission to study the structures of governance in the Congregation. The 31st General Chapter with its theme, *“Authentic Leaders for a Greater Brotherhood”*, was another opportunity to develop strategies for change using the principles of Good Governance.

Governance is a concept that applies to the total organization and is not limited to administration. Therefore, the 31st General Chapter has called for *“Good Governance in Our Life and in Our Mission”*. It points out 5 or 6 areas of concern² where we need to pay attention in order to evolve as a Congregation of effective governance:

- a) To give special attention to greater transparency and accountability (C 62).
- b) To help our Local Communities to put into practice the principles of Good Governance in order to make our Communities witnesses of authenticity.
- c) To ensure that all the investments made in our Institutions, are always at the service of the mission, and make our Institutions models of sustainable development.
- d) To maintain and promote solidarity between our Provinces, including our mission *“ad gentes”*.

² Message and Orientations of the 31st General Chapter, Brothers of St. Gabriel, 2012, Nos.(19 a-e)

- e) To enable effective animation, administration and Good Governance in our Provinces, we will formulate an Instrument of Governance and Evaluation.

1. WHAT IS GOOD GOVERNANCE?

The phrase ‘Good Governance’ refers to the overall functioning of an organization, respecting all that is good in today’s consciousness of humankind.

The fundamental beliefs and principles are that we are all children of God with equal dignity and rights, that fraternity is our collective existential identity, that all things belong to all and are for the good of all, that everyone has equal opportunities for the realization of their full potential. There are universally codified human rights, values and principles which cannot be violated in organizing our lifestyle as religious, and in fulfilling our mission of education or other areas of commitment.

In Consecrated Life today, governance has come to be understood as the mode or the manner of living the day to day vowed life based on the values and principles of the Gospel, and the process by and through which persons and groups are respected and treated with dignity, through genuine dialogue, participation, consultation and consensus.

Good Governance is not very new to Consecrated Life. Consecrated Life, in history, has made significant contributions by offering different elements or aspects to improve human life. The Circular Letter on the Guidelines of the Administration of the Assets in the Church, has recalled the innovative and prophetic choices made by consecrated men and women through the centuries, which

were put to the service of civil society. It is relevant to cite here the Church's caution to the Major Superiors: "*Major Superiors should be aware that not all management practices correspond to evangelical principles, nor might be in accord with the social teachings of the Church*".³ So, in this Circular Letter, we want to share with you in the spirit of the Church's teachings and of the orientations of the 31st General Chapter, some aspects of Good Governance and its practical relevance in our life and in our mission (31st GC. 19).

Therefore, we wish to address this letter to all the Brothers of our Institute, and we particularly think of all the Brothers who are no more in a situation of governance and who have no longer any administrative responsibility in schools, social centres, or in the Province, because of their age or health. We want to affirm that this letter does not exclude anyone. We can only invite our Brothers - and this applies to all - to develop an "interior" governance in their relationship to God, to their Brothers and to themselves. This "inner" or "interior" governance is also the prerequisite for Good Governance on the "exterior".

2. GOOD GOVERNANCE, ITS OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES:

Good governance in our life and mission becomes necessary, as the individual Local Communities are canonically erected entities within the Institute, because the Congregation is a public juridical person⁴, established by the competent authority. Hence, according to the norms, they have to fulfil properly the functions entrusted to

³Guidelines for the Administration of the Assets in Institutes of Consecrated Life. Circular Letter, CICLSAL, Rome 2015, P.22

⁴Code of Canon Law (CCL), 1257 § 1.

them in view of the public good⁵, and this includes governance too. When we talk about Good Governance in religious life, we don't rule out the fundamental principles of management of the assets, evaluation of life and the daily activities.

The value content of Good Governance is entirely part of our evangelical imperative and expresses well the characteristics of the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus Christ. And the Church founded on Jesus Christ is called to be a model for Good Governance. *“Consecrated life, which ‘is at the very heart of the Church as a decisive element for her mission’ must look into that heart to discover and understand itself. The Religious Brother finds therein the profound meaning of his own vocation. In this contemplation he is inspired by the figure of the Servant of Yahweh, described by Isaiah, to whom God says: ‘I have made you a covenant of the people’ (Is 42:6). That figure is perfectly reflected in Jesus of Nazareth, who sealed with his blood the new covenant and calls those who believe in him to continue the task entrusted to the servant, to be a covenant of the people.”*⁶

That is why the 31st General Chapter reminds us, *“In our call to authenticity, Jesus Christ is the reference point”* (§ 6). As brothers of Jesus, sent on his mission, the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel have to be organized as a Congregation, respecting the principles of Good Governance.

⁵CCL, 116 § 1.

⁶ Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. *“Identity And Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church”*, Vatican, October 4th, 2015, no.5

2.1. Spirituality of Good Governance:

The Bible teaches us much about Good Governance. In the Old Testament this is expressed in terms of right relationships: between the ruler and the people, and between the ruler and God. It also contains stories of when this relationship of trust is broken. The New Testament charts the relationship of Jesus and his followers with the religious and civil authorities of the time, describing harassment and persecution. These reflections throughout the Bible, from generations of people of faith, offer many insights into our own times. Psalm 72 is a prayer to God to guide the rulers of Israel. It offers an ideal governance model, focused on a relationship of care for the poor and the vulnerable. Good Governance is shown as based on the principles of justice, righteousness and compassion, defending the rights of the poor and the marginalized and protecting the people from conflict. Quoting from Isaiah (Is 61, 1-9) Jesus declares his manifesto for leadership in Chapter 4 of Luke's Gospel (Lk 4, 16-22), which lays out the unthinkable equality. *"Your Kingdom come here on earth as it is in heaven"* is his central prayer.

The life and ministry of Jesus Christ project him as one who proclaimed God's righteousness against the injustices of the day and as one who sought to bring about social renewal on the basis of God's reign. Jesus challenged the authoritarian and patriarchal pattern of leadership within the then contemporary Judaism and surrounding cultures. He turned social relations upside down and sought to re-establish them along egalitarian lines. Jesus persistently challenged social and economic injustices, and taught the right attitudes towards wealth and poverty.

A Church of brotherhood is not only desirable but possible, and it is a Gospel imperative as well. All human beings are brothers and sisters in the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus Christ. This fundamental reality is not only a foundational principle of relationship in society, but also a core value in decision-making. Our system of governance must respect the rights of everyone as the child of God, with his/her dignity and competence to make all core decisions of his/her life. We need to govern all aspects of a society or a group, with this fundamental equality.

2.2. Principles of Good Governance:

The core issue of Good Governance is dealing with the *“process of decision making and its implementation, taking into consideration the principles and their derivatives”*.

Some of the important characteristics that indicate Good Governance are⁷:

- 1) Participative and consensus process of decision making,
- 2) Transparency of the process,
- 3) Accountability for the decisions made and their implementation,
- 4) Ensuring equity and inclusiveness (Rule of Law).

⁷For more details on this, Cf. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, What is Good Governance? URL:www.unescap.org Poverty Reduction Section UNESCAP, Bangkok, Thailand

3. FOCUS AREAS FOR OUR REFLECTION

We have not at this stage made a study of the models of Good Governance among the Religious Congregations. So we try to follow an approach of learning and understanding some major characteristics of Good Governance. No doubt we need a professional accompaniment in guiding us in the Good Governance process. This being a maiden effort, we want to focus on a few areas for reflection, study and action. This selective approach and regulated action programme are seen as a process of reiteration, with a view to strengthening a greater and more effective system.

3.1. Participative and Consensus Process of Decision Making

Participative and consensus process of decision making implies the involvement of all in a wide range of policymaking activities, in order to orient the Community/Province/Congregation programs towards common needs, build common support, and encourage a sense of cohesiveness. Involvement of all in the decision-making process enables us to ensuring a more positive impact on our religious and social lives. Giving due weight to all stakeholders and the views of all interested parties, are taken into account when deciding upon the goals and the objectives.

3.2. Transparency

The process, the decision and results need to be visible for all the members of the respective units and for all concerned persons; in our case the whole Congregation or Province as the case be. Transparency means that decisions taken and their enforcement are done in a manner that follows rules and regulations. Transparency is built on the free flow of information. The processes and the relevant

information about them are directly accessible to those who will be affected by such decisions and their enforcement.

3.3. Accountability

Since the individual concerned is involved in the decision-making, the accountability begins there. Then it moves upward to leadership levels as envisaged in a particular context. The Institute and its subsidiary units must be accountable to the public, and to the Church. In general, an Institute or an Institution is accountable to those who will be affected by its decisions or actions. Accountability cannot be enforced without transparency and the rule of law.

3.4. Rule of Law

Good Governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced impartially. It also requires full protection of human rights, particularly those of the minorities. Impartial enforcement of laws requires independent administrative machinery within the framework of the Church and the Congregational paradigms.

4. GOOD GOVERNANCE AS UNDERSTOOD IN OUR RULE OF LIFE AND IN OTHER DOCUMENTS.

In this section we shall try to understand the presence and the explanations of some principles and elements of Good Governance in our Rule of Life, in the two General Chapters and in the Education Charter. Though these documents do not speak explicitly of Good Governance and of its principles, they however stand for evangelical value system and authentic brotherhood.

4.1. Elements of Good Governance in the Rule of Life

Some elements of the principles of Good Governance are found in our Rule of Life itself. These important elements are crying out for relevance and meaning in today's world, and more so in Religious Life. The following are some of the scattered references to Good Governance in our Rule of Life:

4.1.1. Our Mission is a Combined and Collective Effort

We are called by the Lord and placed in the mission; this has been done in order to cooperate with others in the building up of the Church (RL 3). Thus the mission entrusted to each one is a cooperative effort and not isolated initiatives. The Spirit has gathered together all the Brothers to walk the same road and carry on God's mission (RL 4). So, in Religious Life we travel together with the other Brothers, collaborators and all people of good will working and partaking in the wondrous heritage. All share the same light on the Gospel (RL 5).

4.1.2. Good Governance is for the Service of All

The entire Chapter 3 of our Rule of Life highlights different dimensions of Good Governance. Art.12 reiterates the fact that by our life we establish a special communion with the Church and we participate actively in its life. Art.11 reminds us that together with all people we consecrate the world to God. In Religious Life, what each of us has received is to be at the service of all (Art.13), and not just for one's own use. Thus our consecration (Art.14) demands a dedicated and dynamic love for all.

4.1.3. Solidarity and Network: Shared Dimension of Life

The Rule of Life, while stressing on the shared dimension of our life, invites us to be open to accepting all those who want to associate themselves with us (Art.17). It asks them to go beyond the established boundaries (Art.33, 34) because the community is not an end itself. It is only the primary unit of solidarity. Thus the solidarity network is to extend to all the Brothers, to the Church, and to all people in need.

4.1.4. Sincere Dialogue and Balanced Participation are Pillars of Good Governance

Being attentive to the signs of Good Governance is important (Art.41): sincere dialogue, love, unity, working towards a shared or common goal, responsibility and collective effort. Our Rule of Life also (Art.47) speaks about mutual esteem, trust, balanced participation in common tasks, shared responsibility and the art of giving and receiving.

4.2. Good Governance in the 30th and 31st General Chapters:

The 30th General Chapter studied the topic of Good Governance for the first time in the Institute. But it had limited its use to the Central Administration only. It did not look beyond. It reminded the Central Administration of its primary task of being a Community of Governance (C. 175) in the service of unity. This General Chapter also recommended “setting up a Commission to evaluate the functioning of Central Administration and to study the possibility of setting up new structures of animation” (30th GC.43 & 44).

The 31st GC went a step further. It called our attention to greater Brotherhood. It said, *“The call to greater Brotherhood inspires us religious Brothers to be particularly attentive to the urgencies of our time...”*(31st GC.15). One of the urgencies is to heed to the call to Good Governance in our life and mission. What were the principles motivating and guiding the 31st General Chapter to move the Institute towards the concept of Good Governance? The 31st GC, in No.32, says,

“The strengthening of the government of the Institute is modelled after the leadership of Jesus as Shepherd, Steward and Servant...The call is for a team approach to leadership where all the Brothers participate in the decision-making process in which co-responsibility is the hallmark...”

This General Chapter also spoke about Good Governance in our life and mission. It has called for greater transparency and accountability in the management of our Institutions (19 a); to make our Communities witnesses of authenticity (19 b); to ensure that investments are at the service of the mission (19 c); and, finally, it reminded us of the need for an Instrument of Governance and Evaluation (19e).

4.3. Good Governance in the Montfortian Education Charter (MEC)⁸:

The Montfortian Education Charter brings out clearly the vision, goals, various dimensions and the most suitable environment of Montfortian Education. Though this document has not dealt with

⁸ Montfortian Education Charter, Fratelli di San Gabriele, Rome, 2010

the topic of Good Governance separately, it has dealt with the principles of Good Governance under various themes and titles. We would like to cite here some aspects of Good Governance that have been well enunciated in the document:

- a) Inclusive Education and Educational environment;
- b) Involvement of all the Stakeholders in the Educational process;
- c) Partnership and Networking;
- d) Evangelical values as a strategic tool;
- e) Respect for Community of life;
- f) Need for a code of conduct for the Institutions;
- g) Teaching, Learning and Evaluation;
- h) MEC as a Shared Orientation;
- i) Monitoring and Evaluation to ensure Accountability;
- j) Parents as Collaborators in MEC;
- k) Strategies for Implementation and Annual Report.

5. GOOD GOVERNANCE IN OUR LIFE IN THE PROVINCES AND IN THE COMMUNITIES:

It should be noted that the Consecrated Life, as a response to the call of the Spirit to faithfully preserve the memory of the love of Christ who loved his own *to the end* (VC 75), cannot have another model of Good Governance than that of Christ. In Christ, in fact, all Good Governance criteria are fulfilled. As Pope Francis succinctly

put it, *“Who governs must love his people ... love and humility are the two cardinal virtues of any person called to govern”*.⁹

Well, that is exactly what Christ did. On the Provincial and Community levels this is not without consequences. The following reflections will help us as Provinces and as Communities to understand the importance and the relevance of Good Governance in our life as Consecrated Religious Brothers:

5.1. Good Governance in the Life of the Brothers in our PROVINCES

5.1.1. The Existence of Credible Structures and Bodies

The ideal framework of Good Governance in Consecrated Life that wants to be a sign is, first of all, the existence of credible structures and bodies that guarantee fundamental rights to all - Brothers and lay people - and are respected by all. At the Province level, it will be good to study Chapters 9&10 of our Constitutions. There, all services (the Local Superior, the Provincial Superior, the Provincial Council, the Provincial Bursar, and the Provincial Chapter) are described. To these, are often added Commissions (Vocation and Formation, Education, Partnership, Justice and Peace, Finance, Liturgy, etc.). All contribute to Good Governance, since the ‘authority’ is not vested in one or two persons but in several. It is important that all these bodies work in collaboration, each one fulfilling its mission. The credibility of the Province and the vitality of Consecrated Life depend on this atmosphere of healthy, supportive collaboration.

⁹ Pope Francis, Homily at the Chapel Santa Martha, September 16, 2013

5.1.2. Planning for the Formation of Human Resources

Good Governance consists also, as a matter of priority, in planning the formation of human resources. Evidently, having skilled and talented Brothers, who are virtuous and ethical, who are in the right places, is an important factor that impacts positively on Good Governance. It is important that the Brothers are given adequate training in the professional and religious fields. A deep faith in God, coupled with adequate knowledge of the demands of consecration, will help the Brothers in our entities give priority to the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

5.1.3. Planning, Development and Financial Aspects

Good Governance implies of course, beyond the ideal structural framework outlined above, also economic aspects, in the sense of progress and modernization of the productive forces to meet the needs of the mission. So, Good Governance also calls for a good planning of what is to be done, and how well it is to be done so that it achieves satisfactory results for all. Therefore, Good Governance must develop a comprehensive plan for development, taking into account all the needs of the Province in general and of the Communities in particular, and in all areas of activity, with a time frame. In other words: *to govern is to foresee!*

5.1.4. Good Governance: A Shared Responsibility

Good Governance in Consecrated Life is anything except dictatorship or carelessness. It requires a good understanding of Authority which is service (RL 15). It applies the principle of subsidiarity (not wanting to do everything, control everything, etc., but learning to delegate responsibilities). Good Governance of the

Province and of the Communities is a joint responsibility of the Superiors and of the Brothers, each one playing his part, with effective communication and a system of regular reporting. Implementation of the principles of Good Governance in the Communities or in the Provinces also calls for the proper defining of roles; for the Superiors, their obligations to animate, direct and administer according to the Rule (C. 135) and for the Brothers, their duties of solidarity and collaboration (RL. 53).

5.1.5. Compliance with the Rules and Procedures

A Good Governance is also a strict, virtuous, rational and efficient management of people and goods, according to defined, fair, equitable and transparent criteria. Management of the material goods should be done in a manner that helps the Brothers to live according to their vows, ensuring elements like specific directions, estimated budget, accountability, controls, audits, modalities for assistance to the families of Brothers in need, etc. It is important that clear policies are formulated by appropriate bodies, instead of individuals making decisions on the spur of the moment, or according to their personal likes and dislikes. Transfers and appointments of the Brothers are other areas where the principles of Good Governance have to find their appropriate place. As articles of our Constitutions state (*cf.* C 42, 80, 135), appointments and transfers are done in mutual dialogue, making proper discernment, taking into account the competencies, aptitudes and aspirations of the individuals, and the needs of the mission, “*within the framework of common good and the mission of the Institute*” (C 80), and not viewed from the angle of personal aggrandizement or as an instrument of punishment.

5.2. Good Governance in the Life of our COMMUNITIES

5.2.1. Avoiding all Forms of Privileges and Special Status

Good Governance must avoid granting any form of privileges, based on the positions one occupies. Though we perform different functions in the Communities/Institutions, we are all called to the same Consecrated Life, living by the same vows, and following the commandment of Christ that sees all his disciples on the same footing: *“But you, you shall not be called Rabbi; for you have only one Master, and you are all brothers”*(Mt. 23: 8).

5.2.2. Information and Communication

Many unfortunate situations in Local Communities are the result of the absence of adequate communication and sharing of information. Unfortunately, such a situation often leads to spread malicious rumors. The modern technological means of communication like Skype, Viber, Facebook, WhatsApp, Imo, etc., if misused, can do much harm to the reputation of individuals, to the Community and to the Church. Communication should be regular and through authorized channels. If there is no communication by individuals and through proper channels, it is difficult to talk about Good Governance.

5.2.3. Order and Discipline through Community Projects and Budgets

Good Governance requires a certain degree of order and discipline, as an ideal environment favorable for the true following of Christ. These two elements are at the center of any missionary work that can be realized in practice with some chance of success.

To this end, Good Governance, through existing structures mentioned earlier, should set the priorities right, arrange the developmental projects in the order of priority, exercising proper discipline. This is where our Community Projects and Budgets are very useful, provided they are prepared and implemented properly, and evaluated periodically. This will bring together all the efforts towards Good Governance in our Communities, without any scope for arbitrary style of planning and organizing programs or projects. Therefore, order and discipline become integral to Good Governance.

6. PRACTICE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE IN OUR MISSION

Good Governance and the practice of all its principles in our mission bear powerful witness to fraternity. More than the managerial efficiency it has great charismatic and evangelical implications in our mission. It is very pertinent here to cite what Pope Francis said in his message at the Symposium in 2014. He invited the participants *“to combine the priority of the charismatic/spiritual primary dimension with the economical dimension and efficiency, which has its own appropriate humus in the administrative tradition of the Institutes...”*¹⁰ So our effort here is to understand Good Governance combining the charismatic/spiritual dimensions of our mission with all the other dimensions of life for the vibrancy of Consecrated Life.

In the following section we shall try to spell out some possible areas for implementing Good Governance principles in the various levels of our Institute beginning with the Central Administration.

¹⁰ Pope Francis, Message at the International Symposium on the topic of “The Administration of Ecclesiastical Assets of the Institutes of Consecrated Life for the Service of Humanity and of the Mission of the Church”, 8 March 2014.

6.1. Focus at the Central Administration Level

A. Towards a Structural Evolution: A structural shift across the Congregation beginning with the Central Administration and percolating down to the Provinces and Communities is part of an administrative reform, though Good Governance goes beyond administrative measures.

It is suggested that Secretariats/Curia at the Generalate level, are necessary for efficiency and effectiveness. We envisage the following Offices to form the Central Secretariat:

- a) Finance
- b) Mission
- c) Formation, Training, new types of members
- d) Expansion, global initiatives, international organizations
- e) Communication

The Secretaries are selected individuals with competence and specialized training, if needed. They will encourage and facilitate Good Governance principles at all levels of the Congregation. Some of these Secretariats could be combined if efficient persons can be found.

B. Other Administrative Reforms:

- 1) In order to achieve the objective of a better implementation of the principles of Good Governance at the Congregational level, it may be necessary that the General Chapter deliberates on certain structural evolution in the composition and functioning of the Central Administration.

- 2) The Central Administration could prepare an Instrument of Visit for the members of the Central Administration, to enable them to make their visits to the Provinces, professional, effective and fruitful.
- 3) An Instrument of Visit may also be prepared for the Provincials' visit to the Communities of the Provinces.
- 4) Similar Instruments of Visits can be prepared for the visits of the General Bursar to the Provinces and of the Provincial Bursar to the Communities.

C. Communication is the lifeline of Good Governance. A suitable structure for periodic evaluation and reporting by the Provincial Administration to the Central Administration needs to be put in place.

6.2. Focus at the Province Level:

Basically, the most important responsibility of the Provincial Administration is to create a conducive ambience in the Province, which will help the Brothers to live their religious commitment in the most authentic manner.

A. Towards a Structural Evolution: Like the Central Administration, the Provinces will also move in this direction and create appropriate Secretarial structures with accountability.

B. Planning and Evaluation: At the beginning of each mandate of the Provincial, scientific and time-bound goal setting, will help in the convergence of efforts and reduce dissipation of energies. Suitable modalities need to be devised to achieve this.

Preparation of a yearly Province Calendar (Planner), with a systematic process of Evaluation is definitely a good indicator of the existence of Good Governance in the Province.

C. Transparency and accountability in the management of the temporal goods of the Province, especially of money, are credible indicators of Good Governance. Appropriate systems, with sufficient checks and balances, are normative.

D. Instrument for Evaluation: An instrument of periodic evaluation and reporting by Communities to the Provincial Administration will ensure co-responsibility and rule of law.

6.3. Focus at the Community Level:

Community is the cradle in which religious life is lived and experienced. Prophetic and Witnessing aspects of Religious Life are most visibly expressed in the Community living.

A. Preparation of a Community Project, detailing goals, objectives, life style and all other aspects of community living, is an important help for authentic religious living. Structured periodic evaluation and reporting help to optimize the effectiveness of the Community Project.

B. The importance of Community Dialogue cannot be overemphasized. The whole community, under the leadership of the Local Superior, is responsible for the life and mission that it is entrusted with. Community Dialogue is the forum wherein co-responsibility and consensus mode of decision-making are most visible. Periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of Community Dialogue will make it an effective instrument for the unity and effectiveness of the Community. While speaking on the importance of dialogue in family life Pope Francis says, *“the combination of two different ways of thinking can lead to a synthesis that enriches*

*both. The unity that we seek is not uniformity, but... a 'reconciled diversity'. Fraternal communion is enriched by respect and appreciation for differences within an overall perspective that advances common good."*¹¹

6.4. Focus at the Education Mission Level:

The most important Missionary Apostolate the Brothers of the Provinces are involved in is Education and its related works. *"Your active share in the evangelizing mission of the Church as a Brother of St. Gabriel, lies in the privileged field of education, particularly that of school going youth"* (RL.63).

A. It is important that at the Province level, in the mission apostolates of Education and Social Action, the principles of Good Governance need to be adhered to. Suitable guidelines need to be prepared for ensuring Good Governance in the Social Action Centres. The Provincial Administration needs to ensure that proper procedures are put in place for the whole Province wherever applicable, especially in the following areas:

1. Procedures for Admission of students
2. Procedures for the recruitment of staff and their confirmation
3. Procedures for disciplinary actions against staff and students
4. Procedures for fixing staff salaries
5. Procedures for fixing fees structures and their collection

¹¹ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Love in the Family, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 139, p.118

If the Provincial Administrations feel that there are other areas where procedures need to be put in place, they need to take care of it.

B. At the Province and Institution levels, ‘Peace and Reconciliation Committees’ (Grievance Committees), need to be set up. Constitution of the Committees, the responsibilities, rules and regulations that govern them, etc., are to be defined by the Provincial Administration.

C. Procedures for addressing all forms of child abuse and all forms of harassment of women in work places, are to be prepared.

D. Initiation of new missionary endeavors in the Province need to be preceded by a suitable process of consultation among the Brothers of the Province, under the supervision of the Provincial Administration.

E. Procedures for transparency and accountability in the management of finances in the Province are to be established and put in place. Suitable methods need to be devised to communicate to the stakeholders (staff, students, parents, Government agencies and the Brothers), judiciously and with prudence, the efforts taken by the Province to follow the principles of Good Governance in the education mission.

F. Evaluation: The success in the administration and animation of any educational Institution greatly depends on an inbuilt system of regular evaluation. The tools of evaluation, its frequency and the persons responsible, are to be defined and made available.

7. PROPOSED ACTION PLAN:

1. The Province can set up a committee consisting of Brothers and other experts to prepare the '*Manual of Good Governance*' for the Province. It can be prepared at the earliest. The Provincial Administration can study it and present it to the Provincial Chapter for final adoption. The same needs to be ratified by the Central Administration.
2. **A Network for Communication** on a Regular Basis. The use of modern technology is a very essential effective tool of Good Governance today. We need to put in place suitable applications for this purpose.
3. **For the Institutions:** Based on the Province Policy on Good Governance, Institutions can prepare a '*Manual of Good Governance*', specific to each Institution. This Manual gradually becomes an important instrument in the Administration and Animation of the Institution.
4. **Formation for Good Governance:** Formation for Good Governance in the Institute is something new. We have not attempted it so far and we have not put in place any module for formation in this regard. Hence it requires serious study on the part of the Institute to come up with necessary literature and syllabus for the study of this subject at various levels of formation in the Institute. Formation with respect to Good Governance issues in the context of our Congregation's charism is fundamental, if our apostolate and mission are to be both effective and prophetic.

8. CONCLUSION

The principle of centrality of the human person and the principle of the rights and dignity of all is at the centre of the concept of Good Governance. It is interesting to note that St. Louis Marie de Montfort, when he wrote the Rules for the Daughters of Wisdom, had already included certain elements of Good Governance in them: *“They may and often present their reasons for doing or not doing certain actions, but they should do so with calm and indifference (§50). They should show great affability, candour, respect and affection towards one another. They avoid that haughty, reserved or distant air (§123). They avoid all duplicity, and their mutual relations are characterised by greater candour and openness of heart (§125)”*.

It is said with a sense of humour that *“Organizations that avoid discussing governance end up spending a lot of time on it. They define it afresh for each decision. They argue endlessly about decision rights. They end up with little time to actually make the decisions. So they make poor decisions”*. One of the objectives of this Circular Letter is also to impress upon all the members of the Congregation that we are in need of formation in such a way that will sensitize the Brothers to the evangelical principles on which Good Governance is based and also provide them with the skills to apply the principles of Good Governance according to the guidelines of the Institute.

A charism or an ideal to achieve fecundity, needs to be incarnated in the midst of human living. Otherwise, it remains only at the ideological level. Charism incarnation presupposes the need for systems and structures. The responsibility of administrators and animators is to always ensure that the systems and structures are

at the service of the charism and not vice-versa. When the systems and structures are no longer conducive to achieve the high ideals enshrined in the charism of a particular mode of religious living, it is time to evaluate their effectiveness and bring about necessary changes, if required. Focusing on the principles of Good Governance in the animation and administration of the Congregation, is to ensure that the rooting of its charism and ideals in the everyday experiences of human existence, in the most efficacious, effective and efficient manner.

Our Institute which is marked by a distinctive charism, has to learn to live out the Good Governance dimensions of our lives in a manner consistent with the Gospel values. That is the challenge for each one of us.

**Bro. John Kallarackal,
Superior General And the Members of the Central Administration**

9. QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING:

- 1) In our Local Communities of today how do you see the possibility of implementing/putting into real practice the principles of Good Governance?
- 2) In what areas of our Consecrated Life in Community do you see greater possibility of implementing the idea of Good Governance? Why?
- 3) Do you think that if we implement seriously the principles of Good Governance like (Regular Community dialogue, transparency, accountability, participation in planning, decision making and financial aspects, etc.) in our Religious life and mission, our life will become more witnessing and credible? How and Why?
- 4) Good Governance is basically following the evangelical value system and putting into practice the Gospel values in our life and in our mission. What are your reflections?
- 5) It is generally noticed today that dialogue, participation in common tasks, consensus building and decision-making are becoming hard and demanding in Consecrated Life and in Community Living. Why? What are your suggestions to improve them?
- 6) According to you what are the principles of Good Governance that our Rule of Life and Constitutions attempt to explain and promote?
- 7) The 31st General Chapter was largely responsible for discussing and promoting the idea of Good Governance in

our Institute. Where do we go from here (31st GC)? Your suggestions.

- 8) How to bring about Good Governance and implement its various elements in our Montfortian Educational system today? Your concrete proposals and action plan.
- 9) What are your suggestions to introduce the reflection and study of Good Governance in the various stages of formation in our Congregation?
- 10) What is your assessment of Good Governance (on different criteria developed in this Circular Letter: Regular community dialogue, transparency, accountability, participation in planning, decision making, finance, information and communication, etc.) to:
 - Yourself?
 - Your Community?
 - Your Province?
 - The Congregation?
- 11) What instruments (policies, strategies, etc.) do you have, to practice Good Governance by transmitting faithfully the richness of our identity, of our charism and spirituality?
- 12) Suggest ways and means to improve governance in relation to:
 - Your Community,
 - Your Province,
 - The Congregation.

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