

September 2020

THE KNIGHTS OF JUSTICES' 10 PRINCIPLES FOR THE RENEWAL OF THE ORDER

The call of His Holiness, Pope Francis, for the renewal of the Order of Malta was warmly welcomed by the professed Knights of Justice who have been called by others "the heart of the Order". Indeed, the Order cannot be sustained as a religious institute without the professed. As such, we are mindful of our responsibility before God and our confreres to contribute to the successful renewal of the Order. This is a responsibility that we gladly take up for the love of our vocation, the Order, and the Church. It is this desire to live out our vocation -- as it has been lived for hundreds of years and as we understood it when we made our professions -- that encourages us, the undersigned, to share our reflections on the renewal of the Order.

Recognizing the spiritual and practical benefits of a renewal at this time in our history, the professed Knights of Justice humbly submit these 10 principles upon which a renewal of the Order should be based. We do not identify specific ways to enact these principles. Rather, we believe that general adherence to them will ensure that we undertake a successful renewal, while remaining a religious institute, and so be able to build, even more effectively, the kingdom of God.

THE 10 PRINCIPLES

- 1. RENEWAL OF FORMATION FOR THE PROFESSED.** We strongly support the development of a new standardized formation program. A document on formation was apparently sent to the Holy See by the Grand Magistry without any input from the vast majority of the professed. We are encouraged by the recent letter of the Papal Delegate to the Lieutenant which assures us that the views of the professed, as a whole, will be solicited before any proposals are submitted for final approval. In addition, it is important that the renewal of the professed goes forward without undue influence from those who are not Knights of Justice.
- 2. EMPHASIS ON FRATERNAL LIFE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE PROFESSED'S CURRENT RELIGIOUS LIFESTYLE.** We support changes to enhance our fraternal life and warmly embraced the initiatives of the late Grand Master to increase our fraternal interaction. The Knights of Justice, as lay religious, profess the evangelical vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Our current way of living the three vows has been present in the Order for almost 400 years. Thus, it is predicated upon tradition, repeated confirmations by the popes, and practical necessity. Our form of religious life (living singly and chastely, witnessing God in the world through our prayer life and acts of corporal mercy, living modestly in the spirit of poverty, and taking care of our own financial needs) has proven to attract vocations within the context of our Order and its charisms to defend the faith and care for the poor and sick. We would very much like to discuss an improved international novitiate, an increase in fraternal activities, especially on the national levels, and the implementation of a life-long training program that needs to be unified and consistent throughout the Order. Accessible and multi-lingual distance learning

technologies can assist with this. We are again encouraged by the recent letter of the Papal Delegate to the Lieutenant that ensures that all the professed will be consulted on this matter before consideration by the Chapter General.

3. **THE LIFTING OF THE *DE FACTO* BAN ON ACCEPTING NEW VOCATIONS INTO THE CURRENT RELIGIOUS LIFESTYLE.** This should be done as soon as the professed are given the opportunity to review and come to an agreement on the issues of formation and our religious lifestyle. (Principles 1 and 2, above) In fact, there are upwards of 12 men who have expressed an interest in the professed over the last three years.
4. **PERMITTING THOSE IN TEMPORARY VOWS TO PROFESS SOLEMN VOWS.** Those professed currently in simple vows should have the right to pursue solemn vows under the religious lifestyle of their simple profession. It is difficult to see how a change in the Constitution could alter the particular conditions under which members made their first profession. Denying this right (Can. 657, §1) appears contrary to Canon Law (Can. 28) and to Christian charity. Their numbers are few and they should, if they discern a calling, be permitted to advance.
5. **ISSUES THAT AFFECT THE PROFESSED SHOULD BE DECIDED BY THE PROFESSED.** As a matter of canon law, decisions affecting the professed within a religious congregation cannot be taken by non-religious.
6. **THE LACK OF NOBLE GRADES SHOULD NOT BE A BARRIER TO APPOINTMENT OR ELECTION.** The professed believe in continuing the traditional identification of the Order with its chivalrous and noble lineage, but nobiliary requirements should not be a prerequisite for holding office in a religious order. It is possible for a sovereign (the Grand Master) to raise up non-nobles. This would allow the maintenance of the nobiliary tradition, while putting those most qualified into office.
7. **THE RETENTION OF GRAND PRIORIES, PRIORIES, AND SUB-PRIORIES.** These structures provide for the spiritual superiors required for the professed and those in Obedience. More importantly, they provide institutional opportunities for the members of the two Classes to pray and grow spiritually side-by-side, and they are efficient structures to foster vocations to the professed.
8. **THE CONTINUANCE OF THE PROFESSED AS ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS.** It is an important aspect of formation and vocation for the professed to work closely in our ministries with all members of the Order. It may also be useful to members to become more familiar with the Knights of Justice and their role in the Order. The close interaction between the professed and the membership should be encouraged. There is no canonical justification to ban the professed from holding positions of leadership in a religious institute at any level, including in national associations. The professed have the experience, professionalism, and competencies to take their proper canonical roles and contribute to the success of the Order.
9. **TERM LIMITS FOR ALL MAJOR OFFICES.** We believe that a transparent set of rules should be put into place limiting terms of service for all major offices. By doing so, the Order can avoid the problems inherent in the *de facto* perpetual governance by any one person. We do not suggest any particular approach to establishing term limits for service on, for example, the Sovereign Council, Government Council, or National Presidents Association, and other entities. We only recommend that rules, of as yet unspecified detail, be put into place to limit the continual dominance of a relatively few number of individuals. Term limits would exclude the Grand Master who, we suggest, would continue to serve for life.

10. ADHERENCE TO GOOD GOVERNANCE PRACTICES. We should apply the practices of good governance to all aspects of the Order's organization. This includes ensuring that entities, such as the National Presidents Association, individual associations, and so on, have a current set of by-laws or codified terms of operation that provide for a transparent, fair and equitable approach to their work. As religious in a lay religious order, we cannot close our eyes to the lack of ethical and transparent management when we see it.

May it please God to grant that our collective efforts to renew the Order will result in a more just, equitable, and loving religious community.