

Constitution 4

Brotherhood

- 33.** Our calling is to serve the Lord Jesus in mission not as independent individuals but in a brotherhood. Our community life refreshes the faith that makes our work a ministry and not just an employment; it fortifies us by the example and encouragement of our confreres; and it protects us from being overwhelmed or discouraged by our work.
- 34.** We grow close to one another as brothers by living together in community. If we do not love the brothers whom we see, then we cannot love the God whom we have not seen. In our common life we give an immediate and tangible expression to what we profess through our vows: in the local community we share the companionship, the goods and the united efforts of our celibacy, poverty and obedience.
- 35.** Our ordinary and desirable manner of living is in a local community, normally an established religious house. Where the formalities of such a house are inapplicable the local community is designated as a residence.
- 36.** If the needs of mission, studies or health dispose the congregation to assign a member to live outside a religious house, efforts should be put forth by both the individual and the community to ensure his access to fraternal companionship by his becoming a nonresidential member of a nearby local community or a member actively drawn into the fellowship of a region. If for any other reason the provincial, with the consent of his council and upon notification of the superior general, permits a member to reside outside a local house or residence, it must be for no more than one year.
- 37.** A community must reach out in purposeful and sensitive ways to members who are sick or sorrowful or often absent. When members retire or encounter a breakdown of health, we must have communities to receive and provide for them. We gather as a community to anoint any brother threatened by serious sickness or injury or disabled by age, and appeal in prayer for the recovery of his body and the generous perseverance of his spirit. And when we come to die, we need to know that especially then our confreres stand by us, for we are sustained and remembered all the more in their prayers.

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continued ...

38. A local community has a superior to preside and govern and a council to assist him by giving advice and consent. But the shared welfare of a household benefits by the shared deliberations of all its members. For that reason the superior shall periodically convene the community to consider their common life and mission in the light of Christ's gospel. This local chapter will become for the community an instrument of reflection and renewal. Its deliberations will include the pragmatic concerns of daily life, but they must also be a way for men of faith to explore the life of the spirit with one another, lest we should speak least about what means most to us.
39. We are men who work. We are, as well, men who need to be revitalized after that work. Each local community needs to provide some measure of domestic privacy where we can be at home among ourselves and find an enclosure of silence for prayer, recreation, study and rest.
40. Those who care for us and for the kingdom will expect our way of life to be modest and simple. However, our local communities should be generous in continuing our tradition of hospitality to confreres, to those who labor with us, to our relatives and neighbors, and to the poor, especially those who have no one to have them in. The measure of our generosity will be the sincerity, the simplicity and the sensitivity of our welcome. But we shall have most to share with others by dwelling together as brothers in unity.
41. As men who share their lives in community, we come to know one another closely. Faults and shortcomings will make us each a trial to others from time to time. Differences of opinion, misunderstanding and resentment can and occasionally will unravel the peace in our community. Thus it is part of our lives to extend brotherly correction and apology to one another and in frank yet discreet ways to reconcile. Our very failures can then be transformed by God's grace into closer comradeship.
42. It is essential to our mission that we strive to abide so attentively together that people will observe: "See how they love one another." We will then be a sign in an alienated world: men who have, for love of their Lord, become closest neighbors, trustworthy friends, brothers.