

CONSTITUTION

THE APOSTOLATE OF THE SUFFERING

CVS

- I. Official text approved by the Board of Directors of the Silent Workers of the Cross on November 21, 1998.
- II. This Constitution has been given to the CVS of each diocese for discussion and approval under the direction of their Bishops.
- III. This text will have to be integrated by the specific laws of the CVS International Confederation to which the diocesan CVS chapters belong, as soon as final approval is given by the Pontifical Council for the Laity.

(Father Giovan Giuseppe Torre)
Chairman
Silent Workers of the Cross

Valleluogo di Ariano Irpino, Italy
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HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE CVS' FOUNDATION

BY MSG. LUIGI NOVARESE

Msg. Luigi Novarese, the founder of the Apostolate, was born in Casale Monferrato on July 29, 1924. Following a serious illness, he felt it necessary to overcome the sense of uselessness and depersonalization which this caused. From his early years, he had had a strong persevering devotion to the Blessed Virgin; and this was characteristic of his entire Christian growth and maturation. Thus, this became a focal point in all of the organizations which he founded. Each was based on the Blessed Virgin's requests for prayer and penance at Fatima and Lourdes.

Three great saints had a powerful influence on Msg. Novarese in his early years as well: Saint John Bosco for his devotion to the Blessed Virgin and his dynamic way of working with youth. Blessed Joseph Cottolengo for his dedication to the ill. Saint Louis Grignon de Montfort for his total personal donation to the Blessed Virgin.

In 1931, following a miraculous recovery from a fatal illness, Msg. Novarese returned to his studies hoping to become a doctor in order to alleviate that suffering which he himself had undergone. His mother's death in 1935 led him to make another decision. He discovered his priestly vocation as a means of serving the ill more completely; and in 1938, he was ordained a priest. From 1942 until 1970, he worked at the Vatican Secretary of State Office; and he directed the Pastoral Office for the Ill of the Italian Bishops Conference from 1962 until 1977. He died on July 20, 1984.

In May, 1943, through the moral support of his superiors at the Vatican Secretary of State, Msg. Novarese founded the Marian Priest League devoted to the Blessed Virgin which fulfilled the needs of suffering Priests. This became a concrete means of putting into practice the requests of the Blessed Virgin at Lourdes and Fatima. He extended his activities to the laity in May, 1947, founding the "Volunteers of Suffering" composed of ill persons. He was assisted in this endeavour by Sister Elvira Myriam Psorulla. Together they affirmed the positive role of the suffering not as objects of assistance, but as persons who had an active role which benefit both the Church and society.

Later, within the movement, Msg. Novarese saw the need for a group of persons who would work on the organizational level to guarantee the continuity of the group. These Silent Followers of the Cross would completely dedicate themselves to the Apostolate through profession of vows and total consecration to the Blessed Virgin. This group began in May, 1950; and it became a legal association on February 11, 1960. On August 15, 1952, a new sector was added with the "Brothers and Sisters of the Ill." These were lay Christians who through their giving to the suffering and the sanctification of their work followed the goals of the "Volunteers of Suffering."

On February 16, 1960, the Silent Workers of the Cross received diocesan approval from the Bishop of Ariano Irpino. On November 6, 1960, by a decree from the President of the Italian Republic, the organization received official recognition from the government. The Holy Union of the Silent Followers of the Cross became the leader presiding over the other associations: Marian Priest League, Volunteers of the Suffering, Brothers and Sisters of the Ill, through an apostolic bull "Valde Probandae" on November 24, 1960. Then in 1973, another group was added: the Permanent

Brothers and Sisters of the Silent Followers of the Cross. They were to live the same spirituality as the Silent Followers of the Cross, and it became possible for local Bishops to join the organization.

On numerous occasions, various Popes have cited the importance of the goals achieved through these organizations founded by Msg. Novarese. On October 7, 1957, His Holiness, Pope Pious XII spoke to the Association on its tenth anniversary. The ideals of the Apostolate of the Suffering have been fundamental to the thinking in the Church regarding the ill. These ideals characterized the apostolic letters *Salvifici Doloris* on the meaning of Christian pain (February 11, 1984) as well as *Christifideles Laici* (December 30, 1988). These confirm that the goals and objectives set out in the Constitution of the Silent Followers of the Cross, the diocesan Volunteers of Suffering, and the International Confederation are relevant to the universal Church.

CONSTITUTION
The Apostolate of the Suffering
CVS

FIRST PART: THE ASSOCIATION

Chapter 1: Its Identity

ARTICLE 1: The Members

The CVS (The Apostolate of the Suffering) is a private diocesan Association, confederated on an international level with the “Silent Workers of the Cross” Association.¹ It is composed of Christians in the lay part: Volunteers of Suffering, Brothers and Sisters of the Ill, Permanent Brothers of the Silent Followers of the Cross; and of clergy in the Marian Priest League who are dedicated to the Apostolate.

ARTICLE 2: Its Goals

The CVS’ purpose is to fulfill Msg. Novarese’s charismatic vision which saw in the ill person’s offering of his suffering as a way to participate in Christ’s Easter mystery, rendering him an apostle.² Therefore, every suffering situation present in man’s existence is a source of redemption.³

In order to realize this goal, the CVS follows the requests of prayer and penance in the Marian spirituality of Lourdes and Fatima, seeing these as charismatic places and moments for the Association.

All members (Volunteers of Suffering, Brothers and Sisters of the Ill, Marian Priest League) express their active roles as responsible individuals who offer their own spirituality and actions as gifts for the Church and society.

The Association realizes its goals principally through the organized and articulated activities of small groups—the Vanguard Groups.

The Association organizes Spiritual Retreats, Religious Conventions, Meetings, Pilgrimages, publications, formative, recreational and socio-cultural activities, among others to sustain the suffering. The CVS is a non-profit organization.

ARTICLE 3: The Head Office

The location of the Head Office and its eventual transfer can be done only through a motion by the International Assembly approved by an absolute majority.

ARTICLE 4: Its Dissolution

The Association is not limited to a particular period of time. It may be dissolved in the case of grave problems by the International Assembly with a two-thirds majority. Should this occur, all assets of the CVS would pass to the Silent Workers of the Cross Association to sustain the Apostolate of the Suffering.

Chapter 2: The Apostolate

ARTICLE 5: The Spiritual Aspect

The CVS recognizes its roots in the requests for prayers and penance by the Blessed Virgin at Lourdes and Fatima. At that time, Mary asked people to pray: for the reparation of the many sins which offend the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Her Immaculate Heart; for the conversion of sinners; and for the intentions of the Pope and Priests in their ministry to obtain peace.

CVS members live their own baptismal vows and apostolic mission in communion with Christ on the cross, resurrected,⁴ and they note the particular presence of Mary in the life of the Church (Gv 19, 25-27) and abandon themselves to Her, the Holy Mother, who moulds the true apostles of Christ.⁵

When one realizes the real meaning of his baptism, one must completely follow the Lord's will accepting courageously his own life without emphasizing the negative parts or human weakness. One must not run away from or hide in his own suffering. Instead, he must increase the good within himself, eliminating all evil. In union with Christ, the suffering person finds not only salvation, a role, hope, the consolation of his own life; but also, he is called to an apostolic commitment by announcing the Gospel to his brothers and sisters. The Easter Mystery gives the suffering person the opportunity to become deeply involved with Christ, crucified and resurrected, as the only total means of living life to the fullest. In the CVS, the suffering put into practice with the aid of Mary their Mother the keys to salvation.⁶ The ways in which both suffering and non-suffering members live their baptismal vows converge in the Association, and there is a reciprocal exchange of gifts.⁷

In fact, each member understands and shares the fruit of his existence in both trials and tribulations, or in serenity and in achievement. His only joy is in professing the Beatitudes.

ARTICLE 6: The Pastoral Aspect

The pastoral method of the CVS emphasizes that "Presence which accompanies" conducting one to salvation. This is characteristic of Luke's text on the disciples of Emmaus (Luke 24, 13-35), which the CVS's founder, Msg. Luigi Novarese, defined as the mission of the suffering: "The ill aiding the ill with the help of the non-suffering brothers."⁸ The Marian messages of Lourdes and Fatima offer an original revision of such a presence as a pastoral style and forms the criteria for apostolic actions. In fact, in the history of man, the Immaculate Virgin has been present in the lives of those who have coherently sought virtue; and she has aided them to overcome difficulties and their sense of failure as well as frustration.

The fundamental support for this evangelical presence and the place where this formation and promotion of these ideals may occur is the small group to which each member belongs.

These groups' roles are "to promote each member's active involvement in the Church, the family, and the society."⁹

The CVS, following the guidelines of the Second Vatican Council, organizes the Apostolate: individually: through each member's personal testimony living his prophetic and priestly responsibilities; Group-wise: giving life to the Volunteers of the Suffering and the Brothers and Sisters of the Ill, each of which sustains the other spreading the Apostolate's message to all the suffering through the group's activities; Church-wise: encouraging the insertion of the individual and of the group in pastoral activities.¹⁰

ARTICLE 7: The Training Program

The best way to implement the training program is through the small group. This enables members to promote a sense of active responsibility and commitment which characterize the CVS. This program centers on the single person who is called to responsibly take an active role in the Church and in society.

The group achieves its goals by maintaining frequent contacts with its members differentiating arguments according to their needs. It should take particular care of children, adolescents, young adults, and the elderly.¹¹

With the aim "to faithfully carry out a particular spiritual role vital to an Association approved by the Church," the CVS emphasizes the human, spiritual, and apostolic values seen in the Word of the Lord, in the Teachings of the Church, in the pastoral indications of the Bishops, and in the charismatic teachings of its founder, Msg. Luigi Novarese.¹²

The overall general program of the CVS shall be fixed on an international level by the Confederation of the Silent Workers of the Cross and the Volunteers of Suffering Centers.

It is the role of the Diocesan Board to apply the training program to its own personal diocesan needs with respect to sector and age. The training program outlined specifically will be approved and rendered operative by the Assembly.

It is the role of the Diocesan Board to set the dates for its Spiritual Retreats, Study Sessions, Specialized Courses, etc. Also, the Board must promote the national program in its activities and appoint Group Heads according to age groups and to the different social and ecclesiastical needs with respect to catechism, pastoral objectives and social rehabilitative-work-occupational activities, etc.

THE SECOND PART: THE ORGANIZATION

Chapter 1: The Membership

ARTICLE 8: Members

Each person following his baptismal vows is an active, responsible member in all of the CVS' activities. One is directly involved in the missionary role to evangelize his own brothers and sisters. All aspects should promote human and Christian growth toward a full life filled with the joy that each human being seeks.

“Member” refers to all those who follow the apostolic path offered by the CVS: the ill, the disabled, the suffering (The Volunteers of Suffering), those who sustain and aid the suffering within the Apostolate (The Brothers and Sisters of the Ill); the Priests who show a deep sense of caring toward their own fellow suffering members (Marian Priest League).¹³

ARTICLE 9. Admission

In order to be admitted to the Association, it is necessary to present a written letter of application to the local Diocesan Board indicating the respective sector, asking to be assigned to a particular group: Laity (Volunteers of Suffering, Brothers and Sisters of the Ill) or clergy (Marian Priest League).

Membership is to be renewed annually for those over the age of 18, and they must pay a fixed sum set by the Diocesan Board.

ARTICLE 10: Resignation

The members are free to resign from the Association during the year by informing in writing their local Chairman.

The Board recognizes the resignation of those who do not renew their membership or who are responsible for actions which are incompatible with the goals of the Association or gravely contrary to those established by this present Constitution.

Chapter 2: The Association's Activities

ARTICLE 11: The “Vanguard Groups”¹⁴

These groups are for all CVS members. This is the primary means for meeting, training, and doing apostolic actions within the local Church. Each group is composed of a limited number of members (about 10) so that interpersonal relationships can be established, which are characteristic of this format.¹⁵ In order to give continuity to the Association, new groups should be formed; and this task should be given to two members of the original group. The group is co-ordinated by a leader, who preferably is a Volunteer of Suffering, “who must know his members well; he must instill in them the

will to live their own vocations following the ecclesiastical plan; he must aid them in their religious formation which the Association proposes; he must sustain them in their quest for life and its final victory.”¹⁶

The group is the means by which the members participate in the Apostolate from childhood until old age. The close network and stability of the group give the dynamics and flexibility necessary to articulate the internal and external functions of the group. It offers its members all the necessary elements to follow an integral and fruitful apostolic path.

The cohesion and the co-ordination of the group are fundamental for apostolic action in the various moments of the Association’s life: praying, training, organizing activities, evaluating, and re-programming.

ARTICLE 12: The Marian Priest League

The aim of the Marian Priest League, following the example of the Blessed Virgin in the Apostolic College, is to assist Priests on the diocesan level as well as within their own religious congregations. In this way, each member—particularly those who are ill, old, or in difficulty—may feel among their brethren a real sense of Christ as a Priest and victim. This will render a more united and harmonious presbytery and will create a more active priestly brotherhood “with Mary in the center in Christ’s love.”¹⁷

The Marian Priest League puts into action its own pastoral role through diocesan meetings. Their aim is to promote and to expand the Apostolate of the Suffering.

ARTICLE 13: Permanent Brothers and Sisters of the Silent Workers of the Cross

The Permanent Brothers and Sisters of the SFOC focus their Apostolic role on this same branch of the movement. They live their personal spirituality working directly with the Silent Workers of the Cross in a voluntary role within the religious organization.

After a year of initial training, on the occasion of a particular feast day in their CVS diocesan group, these Permanent Brothers and Sisters “consecrate themselves to Jesus through the Blessed Virgin’s loving guidance.” They vow to imitate Her maternal, humble, caring presence next to each suffering individual.

Their training and apostolic action are co-ordinated through a person designated by the Silent Workers of the Cross Association’s Board of Directors.

Chapter 3: The Co-ordination of the Association

ARTICLE 14: The Staff and Governing Bodies

The following are the components of the Association:

Group Level: The Assembly;
 The Board of Directors.

Individual Level: The Chairman;
 The Co-ordinator of Groups;
 The Members of the Board of Directors;
 The Clerical Assistant

ARTICLE 15: The Assembly

Its Components

The Assembly is composed of the Board of Directors and of all the members who are chosen as delegates and representatives. Each Diocesan Board of Directors designates for the Assembly Reunions a sufficient number of delegates (at least three times more than the number of members of the Board).

Meeting Agenda

The regular meeting of the Assembly takes place at least once a year to consider the Apostolate's programs and to approve the current budget as well as the provisional one for the coming year. It also meets when it is necessary to re-elect members of the executive branch.

The Board of Directors may call a special meeting when deemed necessary (with an absolute majority).

Roles

All Assembly meetings are presided by the Chairman. During each meeting, a Secretary is designated by the Chairman.

The Assembly's roles are:

- Election of the Chairman, Group leaders, and Members of the Board of Directors;
- Approve the Chairman's annual program and actual/provisional budgets, outlining the aims and objectives for the year.

ARTICLE 16: Elections and Nominations

The election of the Chairman, the Co-ordinator of Groups, the Members of the Board of Directors are done by the Assembly through an absolute majority. All persons over the age of 18 regularly enrolled in the CVS have an active voice in these proceedings; whereas those over the age of 18 enrolled for at least a year have a passive voice.

The Clerical Assistant is named by each diocese's Bishop after being nominated by the Diocesan Board.¹⁸

The term of the Board of Directors lasts for five years and members may be re-elected for a second term. A third term must be authorized by the Board of Directors of the National Confederation.

In the case of a resignation, the same Board of Directors may elect by an absolute majority a substitute which will remain until the end of the Board of Director's term.

ARTICLE 17. The Board of Directors

The Board of Directors formulate and co-ordinate programs to achieve the Association's goals. They are according to those outlined in the Constitution and which are decided by the Assembly following these ends.

The Board of Directors is formed by a Chairman, a Co-ordinator of Groups, Board Members, and the Clerical Assistant.

The Board of Directors is presided by the Chairman; and in the case of his absence or illness, his Vicar chairs the meeting.

The Board of Directors:

- Exercise their power of ordinary and extraordinary administration, with the option of delegating certain affairs to the Chairman or to other Members of the Board of Directors for certain matters;
- Look after the execution of the resolutions of the Assembly;
- Prepare the perspective budget and final balance sheet as well as the new programs to be given to the Assembly;
- Administer the common funds of the Association;
- Elect from their members the Vicar of the Chairman, in the case that the Chairman is absent or unable to function.

The Board of Directors meets at least four times a year and any other time that the Chairman deems necessary. All resolutions are to be approved by an absolute majority of those present. Each member has the right to one vote. In case of a tie, the Chairman's vote, or in his absence the Vicar's vote, counts double. The Clerical Assistant has the right to vote as well.

It is the role of the Diocesan Board: to organize the collection, filing, and updating of membership forms; to nominate and confirm the Heads of groups; to delegate authority creating any other necessary positions within the realm of the diocesan activities.

ARTICLE 18: The Chairman

The Chairman, preferably a Volunteer of the Suffering, is the President of the Association. He presides over and co-ordinates all of the Board of Director's work. He presents the Assembly the actual programs and co-ordinates their functioning following the rules prescribed by these Articles.

He outlines the CVS' apostolic activities following an effective, dynamic missionary program for the members. Also, he co-ordinates training, designates guidelines for the various programs as well as the evaluation of their success.

ARTICLE 19. The Co-ordinator of the Various Groups

The Co-ordinator of Groups has to aid and stimulate the various activities. He maintains the lines of communication between the Chairmen of the smaller groups following the dynamic apostolic spirit of the Association.

ARTICLE 20: The Members of the Board of Directors

The Members of the Board of Directors are elected on the basis of representation (see Article 8) and pastoral goals. They contribute to Board Meetings, outline programs, define goals achieved, work on the actualization of projects, decide on the real suitability of programs, and evaluate them according to the needs of the Apostolate. The Board of Directors choose a Secretary and a Treasurer from its members.

ARTICLE 21: The Clerical Assistant

The Clerical Assistant is suggested by the Diocesan Board and appointed by the Head of the diocese for a term of five years. His pastoral objectives focus on maintaining relations between the hierarchy and Association members, faithfully adhering to the spirit and doctrine of the Church. He dedicates his time to the spiritual and apostolic functions of the Association. He sustains all of the groups' initiatives, and he promotes unity within the Association among all members as well as among the CVS and other associations.¹⁹

ARTICLE 22: The Administration

The common funds of the Association is made up of membership fees, charity donations, funds from public and private organizations, and profits made from investments taken from the same fund.

ARTICLE 23: Final Conclusions

The Rules of Canon Law and the national laws within each nation are applicable to any other matter not cited in this Constitution.

FOOTNOTES

1. The Confederation is being formed through the approval of the Pontifical Council for the Laity according to Canon Law 313.

2. Col. 1,24.

3. AA. 16 See His Holiness Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris*, no. 27. "Those who participate in Christ's pain, through their own suffering, have a special part in the infinite treasure of the world's redemption; and they can share this treasure with others.

To the extent that man is threatened by sin, so heavy is that sin which today's world has within itself. Even greater is the value of human suffering. Thus, the Church must look to the fruit of human suffering for the salvation of the world."

4. *Salvifici Doloris*, no. 20.

5. See Luigi Maria Grignon de Montfort, taken from "True Devotion to Mary," no, 47.

6. "Everyone must remember that with the public practice of his faith, with penance and the spontaneous acceptance of trials and tribulations with which one sees himself united with Christ who suffers (2Cor, 4,10; Col 1,24), one can reach all men and contribute to the salvation of all the world." AA. No. 16.

7". . .through love you serve one another." See Gal 5,13.

8. According to what was authoritatively taught in the Second Vatican Council, see *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 13.

9. Msg. Luigi Novarese, L'ANCORA, no. 8-9, August-September, 1976, p. 47; *Christifideles Laici*, no. 23.

10. AA., nos. 16-19.

11. "In the 'Vanguard Groups,' the suffering persons of every age from children to the elderly, even if they are involved together in their parishes, find in their group meetings the possibility of having a special spiritual formation through the study of problems of interest to their ages. The group does not exclude a specialized formation, but it pushes its own specialization for the activity and dynamics of the same group." Msg.Luigi Novarese, "The Associate Apostolate and the Mystical Body of Christ," L'ANCORA, April, 1976, no. 4, pages 8-9.

12. AA., no. 4.

13. "One of the fundamental objectives of this renewed and intensified pastoral action which cannot but involve all the ecclesiastical community is to consider the ill, disabled person who suffers, not simply as having a role of love and service in the Church, but as an *active, responsible member in the evangelization and salvation of the world.*" *Christifiles Lasici*, no. 54.

14. Members “should meet in groups up to ten focusing on the needs of their suffering brothers and sisters in order to fulfill the requests of the Blessed Virgin at Lourdes and Fatima. Each member sustains the other through active participation in the Apostolate by prayer and sacrifice.” Msg. Luigi Novarese

15. AA., no. 17,30.

16. Msg. Luigi Novarese, “The Formation of the Heads of Groups,” Ed. CVS, Rome, 1989, page 23.

17. See His Holiness, Pope John Paul II’s speech to the Marian Priest League, June 25, 1993.

18. Canon laws 158-163.

19. AA., no. 25.