



DIRECTORY FOR THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

I. PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1. The General Assembly, immediately representing the entire Congregation as the supreme authority of the Congregation, has the right:
 - 1°. to protect the heritage of the Institute and to foster appropriate renewal in accord with that heritage;
 - 2°. to elect the superior general, vicar general, and assistants general;
 - 3°. to enact laws or Statutes, and Decrees, for the good of the Congregation, with due regard for the principle of subsidiarity. Statutes which are not explicitly abrogated remain in force. Decrees must be explicitly confirmed in order to remain in force;
 - 4°. by a two-thirds vote to request from the Holy See changes in the Constitutions approved by it;
 - 5°. to interpret authentically the Statutes; the authentic interpretation of the Constitutions, however, belongs to the Holy See (C. 137).
2. The General Assembly has the right of making declarations, which have doctrinal force and the character of an exhortation (S. 86).
3. A General Assembly, once it is convoked by the superior general, can be:
 - 1°. an ordinary General Assembly, for electing the superior general, vicar general, and assistants general, and for the transaction of the business of the Congregation;
 - 2°. an extraordinary General Assembly, when it is convoked by the superior general according to the norm of our own law (C. 138).



II. MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

4. The following are to be present at the General Assembly:
 - 1°. the superior general, the vicar general and assistants general, the secretary general, the treasurer general, and the procurator to the Holy See;
 - 2°. provincials, and delegates of the provinces elected according to the norm of our own law (C. 139).
5. Other considerations
 - §1. The superior general, the vicar general, and the assistants general who are going out of office remain members of the assembly in the subsequent sessions of the same assembly.
 - §2. Besides those who must be present by reason of office at the General Assembly according to the norm of our Constitutions, there should be present one delegate from each province and vice province for the first seventy-five members having active voice; if, however, there are more than seventy-five members having active voice, there will be another delegate for each fifty members or part thereof. The number of delegates to the General Assembly is to be computed according to the number of members having active voice on the day of the election of delegates in the provincial assembly.
 - §3. If the office of provincial is vacant, the one who holds the interim government of the province goes to the General Assembly. If the provincial is legitimately impeded from going to the General Assembly, the one who substitutes for him in office goes in his place. If, however, the latter was elected a delegate, the first elected alternate goes to the General Assembly (S. 89).
 - §4. In case no brother is elected to participate in the General Assembly, the superior general with his Council will assure the presence of one of them (S. 90 § 1).
 - §5. If, for a serious reason, a delegate is prevented from participating in the General Assembly, the first alternate will participate in his place.
 - §6. If a member of the General Assembly is obliged to leave it after the Assembly has begun, he will not be replaced.
6. Votes and elections¹
 - §1. No one can have a double vote.
 - §2. Conditions attached to a vote before the election are to be considered as not having been attached.
 - §3. Election imposes on the one elected the obligation of participating in an assembly or of accepting an office, unless excused for a serious reason. If it is a matter of participation, the serious reason is approved by the competent superior, who afterwards seeks from the assembly its confirmation; if it is a matter of accepting an office, the serious reason is to be approved by the assembly itself.
 - §4. No one of his own authority is able to substitute another for himself in assemblies.

1 This title does not appear in Vincenciana 2016 3.

§5. The majority of votes is to be computed from the valid votes only. Blank votes are invalid (C. 136).

7. Superiors and members should prepare for the assemblies, earnestly participate in them, and faithfully observe the laws and norms established by them (S. 82).
8. Before and during the assembly free communication of information regarding the matters to be decided and the qualities of those to be elected is to be fostered (S. 84).
 - 1°. Prior to the Assembly, the Preparatory Commission will gather and publish appropriate factual information about each member of the Assembly, his specialized formation, his experience, his assignments, his responsibilities, etc.
 - 2°. If, during the Assembly, members should request similar information concerning other Confreres, the Central Commission shall gather it and publish it.

III. BEGINNING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

9. Convocation

- §1. An ordinary General Assembly must be held in the sixth year after the last ordinary General Assembly.
- §2. An extraordinary General Assembly is held as often as the superior general, with the consent of his council, and having heard the provincials, thinks that it should be held.
- §3. Provincial assemblies must precede the holding of a General Assembly (S. 87).

10. General Assembly²

- §1. The superior general with the consent of his council should determine the time and place for holding the General Assembly.
- §2. However, in the sixth year, for a just reason, the holding of a General Assembly, by a decree of the superior general with the consent of his council, may be anticipated or delayed for six months from the day on which the preceding ordinary General Assembly began³ (S. 88).

11. The Preparatory Commission

- §1. Before the convocation of the General Assembly, the superior general, with his council, having heard the provincials and paying attention to different regions and works, should appoint a preparatory commission at an opportune time.
- §2. With ample faculty being left to the superior general with his council to determine the work of the preparatory commission according to the circumstances of the time, the tasks of this commission can be the following:
 - 1°. to inquire from the provinces and from individual members what, in their judgement, are the more urgent problems and what method should be used to deal with them in the General Assembly;

2 This title did not appear in Vincentiana 2016 3.

3 This was erroneously numbered §3. in the version printed in Vincentiana 2016 N° 3.



- 2°. after receiving the answers, to select, when necessary, the matters that are more universal and more urgent, to prepare studies and collect sources, and to send everything to the provincials in plenty of time before the holding of domestic assemblies;
 - 3°. to receive the proposals or postulates of the provincial assemblies, the studies made by provinces, and the postulates proposed by the superior general after hearing his council;
 - 4°. to organize all this material, and from it to draw up a working document; to send all this material out in plenty of time so that members of the assembly and the alternates can have it all in hand two whole months before the beginning of the General Assembly.
- §3. Once the assembly has begun, the task of this commission ceases; the chairman of the commission, however, personally or through another should, if it seems opportune, present an account of the work of the commission (S. 91).

Approval of the Directory

- 12. The Directory approved by one assembly remains in force until it is changed or abrogated by another assembly (S. 93).
- 13. If a new Directory is proposed, copies will be sent to all members of the Assembly beforehand. At the beginning of the Assembly, a representative of the Preparatory Commission will present the proposed Directory to the members of the Assembly in order to familiarize them with its contents. Any change from the Directory shall be submitted for the approval of the present Assembly and, in order to be approved, requires an absolute majority of the votes.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE ASSEMBLY

- 14. **The President of the General Assembly** It is the function of the Superior General to preside over the General Assembly (cf. C. 107, 4°).
- 15. **The Secretary of the General Assembly and the Tellers**
 - §1. In elections, at least three tellers are required.
 - §2. By law, the tellers are the two youngest members of the assembly by reason of age along with the president and secretary after his election.
 - §3. At the beginning of the assembly, there is an election of a secretary, whose function is:
 - 1°. to fill the task of first teller;
 - 2°. to draw up the minutes and documents of the sessions (S. 83).
- 16. **The SECRETARY of the General Assembly**
 - §1. is a member of the General Assembly elected in secret ballot by an absolute majority of the valid votes. If in the first and second ballot no candidate secures an absolute majority, then in the third ballot a relative majority suffices.
 - §2. Then, the Assembly will elect, using the same procedure, a deputy secretary, who will help the secretary in his task, working under his responsibility. For practical reasons, the two should know the same language.

§3. The Secretary works under the guidance and direction of the Central Commission.

17. If a teller is elected to fulfill another function in the Assembly, his place as teller will be taken by the member of the Assembly who follows him in order of age.

18. The Moderators

§1. Three MODERATORS will be nominated before the Assembly by the Superior General, with the consent of his Council, from among the members of the Assembly. At the beginning of the Assembly, these nominees will be presented for the vote of the Assembly, which may accept them or elect others.

§2. With special competence in the area of organizational behavior and group dynamics, the principal function of the Moderators is to assist the Assembly in the successful completion of its work. Attentive to the diversity of cultures and to areas of concern, the Moderators promote the work of the Assembly by carrying out these duties:

1°. to direct, by turns, the plenary sessions in an orderly manner;⁴

2°. to indicate who is to speak in the plenary sessions and to see that the time-limit of the interventions is observed (cf. no. 24); the Moderator may be assisted in this task by a Timekeeper;

3°. to decide, with the approval of the Assembly, when a motion is to be put to vote after due and mature deliberation;

4°. to present the work agenda of the Assembly;

5°. to communicate to the Assembly useful and relevant messages and information.

19. The Central Commission

§1. The CENTRAL COMMISSION will consist of a President, three Moderators, the Secretary and five elected members.

§2. The election of the five members proceeds as follows: each linguistic or regional group (the groups to be suggested by the President) proposes to the President three names (even of those belonging to other groups). The President in turn presents all the names thus proposed back to the members on a single ballot in alphabetical order. The members then vote for five candidates according to their preference. Among those receiving an absolute majority, the five persons with the highest number of votes are elected. If more than two ballots are required, a relative majority suffices on the third ballot.

§3. The function of the Central Commission is to coordinate and direct the entire work of the Assembly, taking into account the pace, the tone, and the mood of its members.

§4. In order to assist the Moderators in their work, the Central Commission may recommend to the Assembly the naming of a Timekeeper.

§5. The Central Commission is responsible to supervise the drafting of the final synthesis document of the Assembly, including the fundamental commitments that will be undertaken by the Congregation over the next six years. This draft will be presented to the General Assembly for its discussion, modification, and final approval, as stipulated in VII of this Directory.

4 In Vincentiana 2016 3 this level was numbered as a). etc.



20. Groups

§1. The Central Commission – taking account of the current reality of the Congregation – may propose the formation of groups for dialogue and reflection, such as:

- 1°. LINGUISTIC Groups;⁵
- 2°. THEMATIC Groups for exchanging ideas around themes of common interest proposed by the Assembly;
- 3°. CONTINENTAL Groups in order to take into account the views of the Continental Conferences (COVIAM, CEVIM, CLAPVI, APVC, NCV).

Members of the Assembly always remain free to join, or form, other groups

§2. These groups represent a privileged space for dialogue and sharing. They will report their conclusions to the Assembly and provide a written account of their discussions to the Secretary.

21. Particular Commissions

The Central Commission will ask the linguistic groups to suggest members for the PARTICULAR COMMISSIONS needed for facilitating the work of the Assembly; e.g., for drafting propositions or documents. From the names suggested, the Central Commission will propose, for the approval of the Assembly, the members of these commissions.

V. ORGANIZATION OF INTERVENTIONS

22. The sessions of the General Assembly may be:

- §1. Plenary sessions⁶
- §2. Group sessions (cf. no. 20) or Commissions (cf. no. 21).

23. The President of the Assembly has the right to address the Assembly whenever he thinks it opportune.

24. Each delegate also has the right to speak when he is called upon by the Moderator, in accordance with the Directory. The time limit for interventions from the floor is: three minutes for spontaneous interventions, five minutes for written interventions previously submitted to the secretary for distribution to the translators.

25. The delegates at the Assembly may also present the following motions:

- 1°. When a delegate believes that the discussion is not proceeding in accordance with the Directory, he may propose a **point of order**, which is approved or rejected by the Body immediately. This point of order is approved by a simple majority of votes.
- 2°. When a delegate thinks that a recess is needed or that the session should be adjourned because the circumstances of the moment make it advisable, he may present a **motion to recess or to adjourn**, which is approved or rejected by the Body immediately. This motion to recess or to adjourn is approved by a simple majority of votes.
- 3°. When a delegate thinks that it is more convenient to postpone the discussion of an issue to some other time in order to obtain more information or to look for consensus

5 Same as the footnote above.

6 In Vincentiana 2016 3 this level was numbered as a). etc

on conflicting views, he proposes a **motion to postpone** to a set time. In this case, the Moderator allows two persons who are in favor and two who are against the motion to speak. Then the Moderator presents the motion to the Body for its approval or rejection. This motion to postpone to a set time is approved by a simple majority of votes.

- 4°. When a delegate believes that an issue must be reconsidered, after the Body has already decided on it, because of additional information or data obtained, he may propose a **motion to reconsider**. The Moderator allows two persons who are against the motion to speak before he presents it to the Body for approval or rejection. This motion to reconsider, to be approved, needs two thirds of the votes.
- 5°. When a delegate believes that an issue has been sufficiently dealt with, he can propose a **motion to end the discussion**. The Moderator will allow two persons who are against this motion to speak before he presents it to the Body for approval or rejection. This motion to end the discussion, to be approved, needs two thirds of the votes.

VI. STUDY OF THE THEME

26. Study of the Theme

- §1. For the study of the theme, the Preparatory Commission of the General Assembly, using the replies received from the Provincial Assemblies, may draft a *documentum laboris* or another type of document, which, at the opportune moment, a member of the Preparatory Commission will present to the Assembly.
 - §2. If another document is proposed, for example, a "consultation document," the approval of the Assembly will not be necessary.
27. The theme of the Assembly and the questions raised will be studied in various formats, including expert witnesses, roundtable discussions, and groups (cf. no. 20) formed with flexibility in order to promote the greatest possible exchange and dialogue.
 28. When the Assembly employs small groups, each one will designate a moderator to promote discussion and the participation of each and every member. A reporter, also selected by the group, will gather together the ideas discussed in the group and will transmit these in writing to the Secretary.

VII. THE COMMISSION OF SYNTHESIS AND REDACTION OF THE FINAL DOCUMENT

29. A. The Commission

- §1. The Commission of Synthesis and Redaction of the Final Document will be composed of three members of the Assembly who will be nominated before the Assembly by the Superior General, with the consent of his Council. At the beginning of the Assembly, these nominees will be presented for the vote of the Assembly, which may accept them or elect others.
- §2. These three members of the Commission of Synthesis and Redaction of the Final Document may also be part of the Central Commission, if they are elected to it by the Assembly. When it is opportune, they may be invited by the President of the Central Commission to review their work.



30. The members of this Commission are to listen attentively to the voices of the Assembly and to put into writing their collective aspirations. They are to take into account the reports submitted by the various groups to the Secretary of the Assembly. Commission members are attentive observers and privileged witnesses of the Plenary Sessions of the Assembly.
31. The result of their work should be given in writing to the Delegates and presented to the Assembly at least at the end of each week or whenever the Central Commission requests it. The Moderators will invite the Assembly to share briefly their impressions of this text.
32. The content of the Final Document ought to be composed of at least two parts: the concrete commitments on the level of the Congregation for the next six years, and the Lines of Action, which the continental groups have decided upon and which are not submitted for vote.
33. **B. Approval of the Final Document.** In the last days of the Assembly, the Commission of Synthesis and Redaction of the Final Document will propose a Final Document for discussion and approval.
- §1. Groups as well as individuals may formulate amendments and present them directly to the Commission.⁷
- §2. This Commission revises the text in light of what has been suggested and prepares a written report on the amendments accepted and rejected.
- §3. This report, printed and distributed to the Delegates, is also presented to the Assembly by a member of the Commission.
- §4. The Moderator will submit the amendments to the Assembly for its approval in the following matter:
- 1°. those accepted, which contain some significant change, are voted on one by one;⁸
- 2°. those accepted, which are of lesser importance, are voted on globally;
- 3°. those rejected are voted on globally.
- §5. Each member of the Assembly has the right to propose a motion contrary to the report of the Commission, asking for a separate vote on any amendment.
- §6. The Final Document, with the approved amendments, is presented to the Assembly by the Moderator for its definitive approval, as a whole or in parts. Once the text is approved, it becomes the official document of the Assembly.
- §7. This Document will be prepared in English, Spanish, and French. The Commission of Synthesis and Redaction of the Final Document will indicate which is the basic text.

VIII. STUDY OF THE POSTULATES

34. Postulates⁹

- §1. Every missionary, community, province, vice-province, or region of the Congregation of the Mission has the legitimate right to send proposals in the form of postulates to the General Assembly (cf. Code of Canon Law, Canon 631, 4°).

7 In Vincentiana 2016 3 this level was numbered as 1. etc.

8 In Vincentiana 2016 3 these items were numbered as a) etc.

9 This title does not appear in Vincenciana 2016 3.

§2. The following constitute material for a postulate:

- 1°. Requesting some modification in the Constitutions (cf. C. 137, 4°), or in the Statutes (cf. C. 137, 3°);¹⁰
- 2°. Asking to have a Decree promulgated (cf. C. 137, 3°);
- 3°. Requesting the authentic interpretation of some point of the Statutes (cf. C. 137, 5°);
- 4°. Asking that the authentic interpretation of some point of the Constitutions be requested of the Holy See (cf. C. 137, 5°);
- 5°. Requesting a declaration of doctrinal or exhortative character;
- 6°. Requesting that the General Assembly include some particular theme in the project of the Congregation for the next six years.

35. Processing Postulates¹¹

- §1. Prior to the General Assembly, the Superior General, with the consent of his Council, will name a special Commission to study the postulates received from the provinces and to make a recommendation to the Assembly, at an appropriate time, as to how these postulates should be treated, always safeguarding the right of the Assembly to discuss and treat the postulates as it wishes.
- §2. The postulates are approved by an absolute majority of valid votes. This does not hold for those that concern an amendment to the Constitutions (cf. C. 137, 4°; Directory, no. 1, 4°), for which a two-thirds majority is required.
- §3. The same commission presents the decrees which were promulgated by the previous General Assembly, in order that the General Assembly confirm them, if it judges it opportune (cf. C.137, 3°; Directory, no. 1, 3°).

IX. ELECTIONS

A. The Election of the Superior General

Preparation for the Election

36. Before the Assembly

- §1. At least six months before the Assembly, the Preparatory Commission of the General Assembly will send a letter to all the Visitors of the Congregation asking them, together with their Councils, after having consulted the confreres they wish, to present three possible candidates for the office of Superior General in order of preference. The Visitors should respond to this request within two months. The Preparatory Commission is obliged to keep secret the content of this consultation.
- §2. The Preparatory Commission according to the responses received will draw up a list with all the names presented by the Visitors in the order of votes received. The votes will be weighed using this system: first preference = 3 points, second preference = 2 points, third preference = 1 point.

10 In Vincentiana 2016 3, these items were listed as bullet point with “-“.

11 This title does not appear in Vincenciana 2016 3.



§3. The Preparatory Commission will present this list to the Superior General, who will consult each of the most frequently mentioned candidates to find out if he has grave motives for not accepting (C. 96).

37. During the Assembly

§1. The alphabetized list of the most frequently mentioned candidates, without publishing the support received, will be distributed to the participants in the Assembly, at the very beginning of the Assembly with a brief biography of each candidate.

§2. The Central Commission will organize a straw vote in which each delegate will be able to choose three names in order of preference. These names are able to be taken from the list presented, or one is also able to nominate other members of the Congregation.

§3. The tellers at the Assembly will line up the names of the candidates according to the amount of support received (using the point system in the straw vote).

§4. After having spoken with the possible candidates, the Superior General will present to the Assembly the list of those who have received the most support (without publishing the numbers). This list is able to contain up to ten names.

38. Election of the Superior General

§1. At the moment of election, each member of the Assembly can choose someone from the list or any other member of the Congregation.

§2. For the good of the Congregation, it is desirable that members freely and willingly share among themselves regarding the qualities and dispositions of candidates. But any electioneering or soliciting of votes for one or other candidate must be completely rejected.

§3. Before the election of the Superior General, a day of retreat is planned; the Central Commission will also provide for a time of prayer in order to prepare more immediately for the elections.

§4. In the election of the Superior General, there shall be no more than two ballots in the same session.

39. Election Day

§1. On the day of the election of the superior general, the electors should offer Mass for a successful election and, after a brief exhortation, begin the session at the appointed hour under the direction of the president.

§2. On prepared ballots, the electors should write the name of him whom they choose for superior general.

§3. When all the ballots are counted, if their number is greater than the number of electors, the procedure is null and must be repeated. (S. 92).

40. Procedure

§1. The procedure for the election of the superior general is as follows: if on the first balloting no one receives two thirds of the votes, a second balloting is to be held in the same manner as the first. If no one receives the required majority in the second balloting, a third and a fourth are to be held in the same way.

After the fourth inefficacious balloting, a fifth should be held, in which an absolute majority of votes, discounting the invalid ones, is required and suffices.

After a fifth inefficacious balloting, a sixth should be held, in which only the two candidates who had the greater number of votes, even though equal, in the fifth balloting shall have passive voice, unless several had an equal number of votes in first or second place; in this case, these also have passive voice in the sixth balloting, in which a relative majority of votes, discounting the invalid votes, is required and suffices. In the event of a tied vote, the candidate who is senior by vocation or age shall be considered elected.

- §2. After the election is legitimately completed, and the one elected has accepted office, the decree of election is drawn up, and the one presiding shall proclaim in a clear voice the one elected. But if the president himself has been elected superior general, the secretary of the Assembly shall draw up the decree and the moderator shall proclaim the one elected.
- §3. The one elected should not refuse the burden committed to him except for a serious reason.
- §4. When the election is completed and thanks given to God, the ballots should be destroyed.
- §5. If the newly elected is not present, he should be summoned, and the Assembly can deal with other business of the Congregation until he arrives (C. 140).

41. The Election of the Vicar General and of the Assistants General

- §1. The election of the **Vicar General and at least three Assistants General** (C. 109, C. 116 § 2) will be preceded, a day in advance, by meetings of the Continental groups.
- §2. Each group will be asked to prepare a single page, listing the five criteria it judges most important in an Assistant and proposing the names of four to six persons who could best serve as Vicar General and Assistants General.
- §3. Each group will also propose the number of Assistants General, which it feels necessary for the good of the Congregation.
- §4. The results of each group meeting (i.e., the list of criteria and the list of names prepared by the group) will then be published for the reflection of the members of the Assembly.
- §5. The Superior General may propose to the Assembly the number of Assistants General which he deems necessary for the good government of the Congregation (cf. C. 116 §2).
- §6. For the good of the Congregation, it is desirable that members freely and willingly share among themselves regarding the qualities and dispositions of candidates. But any electioneering or soliciting of votes for one or other candidate must be completely rejected.

42. *The vicar general is elected under the same conditions as the superior general and in the manner prescribed in article 140, § 1 of the Constitutions (C. 141). (Cf. no. 41, § 1 of the Directory).*

43. The other Assistants will be elected on the day after the election of the Vicar General.

44. Election of Assistants General

- §1. When the elections of the superior general and vicar general are finished, the General Assembly proceeds to the election of the other assistants in distinct ballotings.



- §2. Those will be considered elected who, discounting the invalid votes, receive an absolute majority of votes; these should be proclaimed by the president of the Assembly as elected.
- §3. If in the first and second balloting no one is elected, then in the third balloting he is elected who receives a relative majority of votes, and in case of a tie, the senior by vocation or age (C. 142).
45. After the election of each one of the Assistants, there will be a break and then a new session. During the election of each one, however, there will not be a break; rather, the necessary ballots will take place one after another.

X. CLOSING OF THE ASSEMBLY

46. *When the business is finished, the acts of the assembly approved by the participants are to be signed by the president of the assembly, by its secretary, and by all participants, and, having had the seal affixed, are to be preserved diligently in the archives (S. 85).*
47. When the Superior General, with the consent of the members of the Assembly, judges that the work of the Assembly is concluded, he declares it closed (cf. C. 107, 4°).

XI. APPENDIX

48. A "simple majority" means more than half the votes saying "YES" or "NO." Invalid votes and abstentions are not counted. If there are an equal number of "YES" and "NO" votes, the motion fails.
49. A "two-thirds majority" means two-thirds or more of the valid votes saying "YES" or "NO." Invalid votes and abstentions are not counted. If there is exactly two-thirds, the motion carries.
50. An "absolute majority" is more than half the number of valid votes.