



GUIDE FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES

INTRODUCTION

The Preparatory Commission for the General Assembly 2022 provides this optional guide for the Provincial and Domestic Assemblies. There are two parts:

- I. **Preparation of the Provincial Assembly.**
- II. **The Provincial Assembly Itself.**

It is important that this time of Assemblies be a moment of grace for our Little Company, so that, in a spirit of synodality, we are able to listen to each other, to discern in community and to walk together with the poor.

This guide offers you help in organizing your assemblies, but the substance and content are proposed in the *Instrumentum Laboris* that we, the commission, have prepared on the theme of the 2022 General Assembly:

Revitalizing our identity at the beginning of the 5th century of the Congregation of the Mission

I. PREPARATION OF THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY

A. Purpose and nature of the Provincial Assembly is explained in number 143 of the Constitutions:

143. The provincial assembly, as a gathering of members who represent the province as delegates, has the following functions:

- 1° to establish norms for the common good of the province, within the limits of universal law and our own law, which obtain obligatory force after being approved by the superior general with the consent of his council;*



- 2° *as a consultative organ of the provincial, to deal with matters which can promote the good of the province;*
- 3° *to act on proposals which in the name of the province are to be presented to the General Assembly or the superior general;*
- 4° *to elect delegates to the General Assembly, when required;*
- 5° *to make norms for domestic assemblies, within the limits of universal law and our own law, and these do not need the approval of the superior general.*

It is important to note that the upcoming Provincial Assemblies have as their objective the preparation of the General Assembly 2022. The theme and agenda of these Provincial Assemblies are to be consistent with the *Instrumentum Laboris* provided by the Preparatory Committee of the General Assembly.

Never forget that the Provincial Assembly can be, and even should be, a precious time of ongoing formation, of fraternal encounter, of encounter with Jesus Christ, of revision of our life, spirituality and ministries. It is important that this be the atmosphere from the moment of the convocation of the Provincial Assembly until its members are officially dismissed.

B. Time and Place of the Provincial Assembly.

The Provincial Assembly is to be held twice every six years, once before the General Assembly and once at some intermediate time... (C. 144).

It pertains to the provincial, having heard his Council, to set the date, and to designate the house in which the provincial assembly is to be held. (S. 95).

At this point it is appropriate to take into account that the Preparatory Committee of the General Assembly 2022 has requested the Visitors to send the results of the Provincial Assemblies no later than November 2021 to the email address ag2022@cmglobal.org. The visitor has, therefore, the possibility of convening the Provincial Assembly in the remainder of 2020 and until the beginning of November 2021.

C. Who are convened to the Provincial Assembly?

To identify who are called to participate in the Provincial Assembly, each Visitor and his Council and / or the Preparatory Committee, if any, should consult the Provincial Norms.

In general, number 146 of the Constitutions indicates the following:

146.--Unless something else is provided in provincial norms, the following are to

participate in the provincial assembly:

1° by reason of office, the provincial, the provincial consultors, the provincial treasurer, and the superiors of each of the houses of the province;

2° in addition, delegates elected according to the norm of our own law.

The concept of "elected delegates" is explained in numbers 97-100 of the current Statutes:

97. --Taking part in the provincial assembly there should be, unless otherwise established by the provincial norms, as many delegates elected from the one provincial body consisting of all the members with passive voice, as there are delegates who must

be present by reason of office, plus one delegate for every twenty-five members with active voice or part thereof.

98. -- From this one provincial body, those are to be considered as elected who have received the greater number of votes, and in case of a tie, those who are senior by reason of vocation or age; the same number are substitutes according to the order of a majority of votes.
99. -- If the superior of a house is impeded from going to the provincial assembly, the assistant of the house should go in his place. If, however, the assistant has been elected as a delegate, then one of the alternates should replace him.
100. -- The provincial assembly can propose for the approval of the superior general, with the consent of his Council, its own method of representation in the provincial assembly, in such a way, however, that the number of elected delegates is greater than the number of those who are to participate in the assembly by reason of office.

D. Those responsible for the Preparation of the Provincial Assembly.

Although all *Superiors and members should prepare for the assemblies, earnestly participate in them* (S. 82), the responsibility for the preparation of the Provincial Assembly rests primarily with the Visitor and his Council. For this reason, according to the provincial reality, it could be more convenient for them (Visitor and Council) to be in charge of animating and executing each task of the preparation of the Assembly. There is also the possibility, according to the provincial reality and the reflection of the Visitor with his Council, to appoint a Preparatory Commission for the Provincial Assembly. In both cases, the Visitor retains his role as the first person responsible for the preparation of the Provincial Assembly.

E. Preparation Tasks for the Provincial Assembly.

The Visitor and his Council, or the Preparatory Commission, have within their tasks:

- ❖ Send notice to all the missionaries of the Province that the Visitor has convoked the Provincial Assembly. (C.145)
- ❖ If a Preparatory Commission has been appointed then an official notice of the appointment from the Visitor will be necessary.
- ❖ *Before and during the assembly there is to be fostered free communication of information regarding the matters to be decided and the qualities of those to be elected.* (S. 84)
- ❖ In accordance with number 101 of the Statutes, the Directory must be reviewed and provided to the missionaries by a reasonable time before the Provincial Assembly is held. This directory must be voted and approved once the Provincial Assembly is convened.
- ❖ To follow through with the work of the *Instrumentum Laboris* which you have received from the Preparatory Commission for the General Assembly 2022.
- ❖ Receive and synthesize the contributions of the Domestic Assemblies. If the synthesis work is done correctly, it will help the Provincial Assembly more effectively accomplish its task.



- ❖ Provide a good pedagogy for the development of the Provincial Assembly, so that, following the *Instrumentum Laboris*, serious and deep discussions around the topics of most interest to the Congregation can take place.
- ❖ Prepare the schedule and agenda of the Provincial Assembly.
- ❖ Provide the resources that will be required during the Assembly: speakers, work materials, among others.
- ❖ Coordinate the logistical aspects that are necessary for the smooth running of the Assembly.
- ❖ Motivate prayer for the Assembly and the celebration of the Eucharist with that intention.
- ❖ Send early enough (one month in anticipation of the Assembly should be considered the minimum) to the assembly members, a folder with the necessary materials for the Assembly. For example, the folder should contain: Assembly schedule and agenda, list of participants, Directory of Assembly rules and procedures, *Instrumentum Laboris*, study materials, prayer guide to be used during the Assembly and other documents that are deemed appropriate.

F. **The Domestic Assemblies.**

Domestic Assemblies are determined by number 147 of the Constitutions:

147.--§ 1. The domestic assembly is convoked by the superior of the house or by the assistant who is exercising the total office of superior, and is held to prepare for the provincial assembly.

§ 2. All those having active voice are to be called to the domestic assembly.

§ 3. It is the function of the domestic assembly to deal with those things which the house wishes to propose to the provincial assembly as well as those things which the preparatory commission for the provincial assembly has proposed for discussion, and to deliberate about proposals.

It is very necessary that, since the beginning of the Domestic Assemblies, or before, to appoint a local secretary to take minutes of the Domestic Assembly and to make a synthesis of the contribution of all the missionaries, according to the indications given in the *Instrumentum Laboris*.

It is advisable to reserve enough time and arrange everything so that the confreres can fully experience this Domestic Assembly as free from the pressure of the many usual duties of the missionary life.

II. THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY CONVENED

A. **Roles and Services During the Assembly.**

We have already seen who is convoked to the Provincial Assembly at point C. of the Preparation. Now let us note the services that are necessary for the development of the Assembly, from the very beginning:

- **Presidency:** Corresponds to the Visitor in his own right with all the responsibilities emanating from the service of the presidency indicated by the Constitutions in number 145:

It pertains to the provincial to convoke the provincial assembly, to preside over it, to dismiss the members with the consent of the assembly, and to promulgate its norms.

This does not mean, in any way, that the Assembly must be totally controlled by the Visitor; on the contrary, it is a very opportune moment for the Visitor and his Council to listen to the missionaries who represent the entire Province, and it is therefore important that open dialogue is facilitated to construct, using the process of a synod, the life and ministries of the Congregation.

- **Moderator:** It is necessary that a person be able to execute the Directory clearly and keep all the members of the assembly in harmony with the strategy proposed for the Assembly. He can be the timekeeper or another person may be appointed as the timekeeper. He must have the art of ensuring that all the voices of the Assembly are heard at the appointed times, streamline the debate and voting processes and not unnecessarily allow the Assembly to be held up at a single point on the agenda.

Due to the importance of this service for the good development of the Assembly, it could be helpful that it be a confrere proposed by the Provincial Council or the Preparatory Commission, so as to ensure that the moderator effectively shepherds the entire Assembly process.

- **Secretary:** It is helpful to take into account the abilities and interests of the person, to ensure that a suitable secretary will be chosen for this service. About the election of the secretary, Statute 83 § 3 reads as follows:

At the start of the assembly, there is an election of a secretary, whose function is:

- 1) *to fulfill the task of first teller;*
- 2) *to draw up the minutes and documents of the sessions.*

Do not forget his role at the conclusion of the Assembly according to Statute 85:

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.

- **Tellers:** Statutes 83 reads:

§ 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.

As already indicated, the secretary is also one of the three tellers.



B. Presentation of Postulates.

Every missionary or community has the legitimate right to send to the Provincial Assembly and General Assembly their wishes, suggestions and requests (cf. CIC, canon 631, 3°). We call what is sent postulates.

Therefore, those who are preparing the assembly will have organized the materials on postulates that have been received from the domestic assemblies or directly from one of the missionaries. This will facilitate the processing of the postulates at the Provincial Assembly by the moderator.

The Postulates can be treated as:

- ❖ *Norm: a norm is a general rule that becomes binding in the Province after a positive vote by the Assembly and approved by the Superior General.*
- ❖ *Suggestion to the Visitor: This must be voted by the Assembly.*
- ❖ *Comment: The comments are printed in the compilation of postulates for the benefit of the Provincial and the Assembly, but they are neither debated nor voted.*

This distinction is made following the prescriptions of our Constitutions (143) and Statutes (91)¹

For the purposes of the Postulates that will be sent to the Preparatory Commission of the General Assembly, please refer to the document: *Guidelines for the Presentation of Postulates of the General Assembly*, which the Preparatory Commission sent to all the visitors.

C. Election of the Delegates for the General Assembly.

Every six years, the provincial assembly elects delegates and alternates to the General Assembly (C. 143, 4; S. 102). These confreres are being chosen for a very important task on behalf of the worldwide Congregation. Thus, the members of the Provincial Assembly need to carefully discern the qualities of the men whom they will elect. General Assembly delegates need to be imbued with the missionary character of the community, able to see beyond the realities of a particular province to the international nature of the Congregation.

They are servants of the poor who have a clear understanding of the needs of persons living in poverty in today's world. Elected delegates ought to be collaborative, able and willing to work during the General Assembly with their confreres in a multicultural and multilingual environment. They know and live our Vincentian charism. And they need stamina to meet the demands of a General Assembly. Needless to say, this election is neither a popularity contest nor a reward for past service. General Assembly delegates are the prophetic voices of the Congregation's future response to the mission that has been entrusted to us by St. Vincent and the Church.²

To determine the number of delegates for each province, it must be taken into account that the 2016 General Assembly has changed the formulation of Statute 89 §2, which, in turn, ipso facto modifies the directory for the General Assembly at 5 §2, so that now the procedure is as follows:

1 AGOSTINO Joseph. Guía Práctica para la Asamblea Provincial. 2014. Vincenciana 2015 1.

2 Ibid.

§ 2. Besides those who, according to the constitutions, must by office attend the General Assembly, from each Province and Vice-Province one delegate will attend the General Assembly for the first seventy-five members having active voice. If there are more than seventy-five members having active voice, another delegate will go to the General Assembly 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 in the Province on the day of the election in the provincial assembly.

The election process for delegates follows Statute 102:

The provincial assembly is to proceed to the election of delegates and alternates for the General Assembly in separate balloting, in which there is needed an absolute majority of votes. If in the first and second balloting no one is elected, then in the third balloting he is elected who obtains the greater number of votes, and in case of a tie, the senior by vocation or age.

In addition, in exceptional cases, please refer to Statute 89 § 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.

Please also submit the following documents provided by the Preparatory Commission for the General Assembly: *Certificate of the Election of Delegates and the Data Sheet.*

D. **Dissolution of the Assembly.**

Once the delegates have been elected, the Visitor, if there is no further business to treat, can dismiss those convened to the Provincial Assembly (C. 125.7) and begin the task of promulgating its norms (C. 145).

Do not forget, as already noted above, that at the conclusion of the Assembly according to Statute 85:

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.

When the Assembly has decided to change or update the Provincial Norms, it is the task of the Visitor to send these modifications to the Superior General for approval. The Superior General, in turn, will communicate his decision within two months. Once the Superior General approves said norms, they are binding and obligatory for the entire Province until a new Provincial Assembly revokes them.

In the context of the New Evangelization, it is important that the Provincial Assemblies be integrated into a provincial process; this means that the dissolution of the same is not the padlock that closes a drawer, but the invitation for the entire Province, animated by the Visitor and his Council, to walk in a clear direction as a community for mission. In this way we are **revitalizing our identity at the beginning of the 5th century of the Congregation of the Mission.**

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