

CONSTITUTION

COMMUNION OF SYNODAL CATHOLIC CHURCHES



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Constitution
of the
Communion of Synodal Catholic Churches

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Constitution *of the* Communion of Synodal Catholic Churches

Preamble

The Communion of Synodal Catholic Churches, also referred to as “Communion” or “We”, is a Catholic religious association duly incorporated and is comprised of Members and Member Faith Communities from all nations as part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church subject to this Constitution.

As Members of the Communion of Synodal Catholic Churches, we are People of God and hold that because all women and men are created in God's image and likeness and because the same divine teaching on how they should live is written in every human heart, all persons are to be treated with dignity and justice, each person having the same fundamental rights and responsibilities. In Christ, “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female” (Gal 3:28), and therefore, all persons, regardless of race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, culture, or other demographic or class label, are to be treated with dignity and justice. Therefore, we are committed to welcoming all to the table of the Lord, particularly the poor, the disenfranchised, the marginalized, the displaced, and those that find themselves spiritually homeless because they have been rejected from their former spiritual home.

We hold that by our faith in God through Jesus and our baptism with water and in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, all Christians become “members of the Body of Christ,” that is, the Church universal, and are committed to living out the Gospel proclaimed and lived by Jesus, we further hold that all Christians who ascribe to the catholic ministry of unity as historically exercised in union with the Bishop are members of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

We profess our faith in the Christ through the ancient, yet living Catholic Tradition handed to us from the Apostles through many generations and hold that the Church's mission, grounded in the Gospel, is to proclaim and show forth Jesus' Good News of how to live a fully human life as images of God in individual and communal justice and love. We hold that the Church is to proclaim and make known through word and action the Good News of Jesus Christ to all people.

We hereby avow the holy Gospel, the Catholic Apostolic Tradition, and this Constitution as the instruments of our governance and guidance for our ecclesial body and its Members and Member Faith Communities in our expression of Church.

We stand open, with love and respect, to dialogue with those of other religious identities and faith traditions to promote individual and communal justice and love and to bring the Peace of Christ to the world.

ARTICLE I: Belief Statements and Affirmations of the Catholic Faith

1.1. We establish these Belief Statements and Affirmations of the Catholic Faith which express the Revealed Truth entrusted to the Church by Christ and which are binding on all Members of the Communion.

1.2. Christ – We believe in and affirm the faith of the ancient Christian Church: that the person of Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Christ, the Hope of Israel who has been revealed to us as the Son of God and who through his life, death, and resurrection brings salvation to the whole world.

1.3. Apostolic Succession - We have preserved our Catholic identity and apostolic succession through the Old Catholic, Roman Catholic, Anglican/Episcopal and Orthodox Churches, and hold that such apostolic succession is one essential aspect for the authentic transmittal of Catholic faith and its sacramental integrity.

1.4. Church – We believe and affirm that the Church of Jesus Christ embodies all who follow Jesus and are joined in an indissoluble union with Christ and one another through baptism as the People of God and the Body of Christ. This Body of Christ is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic and is entrusted with continuing the saving work of Christ in the world through the proclamation of the Gospel and the celebration of the Sacred Mysteries which are the Sacraments.

1.5. Holy Spirit - We believe that the Holy Spirit speaks through all the voices of the Church: Laity, Clergy, and Bishops, in their separate yet interdependent roles as delineated herein. These voices all come together to speak as one voice at the Holy Synod as the *sensus fidelium*, which is essential to the synodal process. As in the early Church, we believe that all three voices of Laity, Clergy, and Bishops must be involved in the election of our bishops and continue to maintain this ancient practice in the Communion and its Member Faith Communities.

1.6. Scripture – We believe and affirm the Sacred Scriptures that have been handed on to us through the Apostolic Tradition and are held in common with the historic Catholic Church, including the deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament. We affirm that these Sacred Scriptures are truly inspired by the human encounter with the Divine in history and are both reliable and authoritative in matters of faith and practice.

1.7. Sacraments – We believe and affirm that the Church in her very nature is Sacramental. Therefore, the work of the Church is essentially understood as a Sacramental Ministry. We believe, affirm and acknowledge that the Sacraments of the Church are Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Reconciliation, Anointing of

the Sick, Marriage, and Holy Orders. The Sacraments are grace-filled encounters with the Divine. Through our participation in the celebration of these Sacraments we are renewed by the saving presence of the Resurrected Christ. Therefore, we believe and affirm that the Sacraments of the Church are requisite for an authentic and essential Catholic faith and practice.

1.8. Creed – We believe and affirm the Nicene, Athanasian and Apostles’ Creeds as true and faithful foundational statements of the Catholic faith. These contain the basic Trinitarian and Christological dogmas to which these creeds testify and we accept. That is, we believe that Jesus of Nazareth is true God and true man, and that God is authentically identified in the Trinitarian designation of “Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” Nevertheless, these foundational creedal statements are to be understood and taught in the expression of each age, in order that each generation may understand and fully believe their truth.

1.9. Synodal Catholic Governance and Tradition –The supreme law of the Church is the Law of God, revealed in the person and teaching of Jesus the Christ, the Incarnate Son of God; through the Holy Scriptures; and in the Apostolic Tradition of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

A. We affirm the Catholic Tradition of Synodal governance as expressed in the Trinitarian ecclesiology and polity of the Communion. Synodal governance includes the participation of all three voices of laity, clergy, and bishops in the governance of the church in accordance with their respective roles as delineated herein. We adhere to the principle “in essentials unity, in non-essentials diversity, and in all things charity.” We affirm that the “essentials” of our Catholic faith are defined under this Constitution as essential to our unity and that no Member Faith Community, Bishop, Ordinary, or Jurisdiction may change, alter, or disregard any of these provisions.

1.10. Ecumenism and other historic catholic churches - Consistent with Tradition, we affirm the Bishop of Rome as "first among equals" without the later innovations of both universal jurisdiction and the infallibility of the office of the See of Peter. We respect our sisters and brothers of other catholic faith denominations, such as the Roman Communion, Orthodoxy, the Anglican Communion, the Episcopal Church, and the Old Catholic Churches, and pledge to work to bring ourselves closer to each other in the Love of Christ through ecumenical work.

1.11. Apostolic Tradition - The Apostolic Tradition is the deposit of Christian faith, celebration, and spiritual practice that comes from the Apostles of Jesus as articulated in the Epistle 3 of St. Jude: “the faith that was once and for all handed

down and delivered to the people of God”. The Apostolic Tradition is understood as the foundation of Christian faith and sacramental life, which is then developed through each generation by the work of the Holy Spirit as the Church builds upon what has come before in the life of the universal church.

A. We believe that the Apostolic Tradition, the unbroken transmission, both oral and in writing, of the teachings of Christ and the Apostles, are the authoritative sources for educating all successive generations of Christians. The Apostolic Tradition is partly to be found in the Creeds, in the consensus of the great ecclesiastical bodies standing in historical continuity with the primitive Church, and from the written documents of all centuries. The Creeds can never be changed in substance, although there may be translational differences. Apostolic Tradition is to be applied, contextually to the historic time, using reason and pastoral application of the Gospel message of Christ’s love, justice and peace.

B. The Holy Spirit continues to work and speak to the Church. As such, and for the advancement of “good order,” the Church, over time has been organized and changed in areas of discipline so as to meet the needs of the People of God to advance their betterment in living a life in Christ. Because context and socio-historic changes take place, various changes, deletions, and additions to traditions have occurred throughout time to meet such needs. These changes, deletions and additions must be consistent with the Creeds and the Gospel mandate; both of which cannot be changed. These changes have been effectuated by way of agreements and decrees set forth at the various Ecumenical Councils and Synods throughout history.

C. The Communion may effect changes to this Constitution as set forth herein. We accept the teachings of the official Councils of the Catholic Church only as far as they are in harmony with the Gospel and the teaching of the primitive Church and this Constitution.

D. We affirm that the Old Catholic Declaration of Utrecht, its amendments and its additions over time, as well as the Roman Catholic Vatican II documents, are historical foundational documents as far as they are in conformity with the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. These documents function only to understand the development of doctrine within the context and the history of the Catholic Church, rather than as individual authoritative requirements of faith.

E. Notwithstanding the foregoing, neither the Church, the Communion, nor any of its Member Communities, Bishops, or governing bodies may alter,

change, or revise the substantive faith content of the creedal statements known as the Nicene Creed, the Apostles' Creed or the Athanasian Creed nor any of the faith statements decreed under the seven Ecumenical Councils of the undivided Church.

F. We believe that because Apostolic Tradition has been, and should continue to be applied within the historic temporal context of the Church throughout the ages with regard to discipline and moral issues, that family planning, for example, should be seen as a personal and private decision, and that all who are prepared in accordance with this Constitution, regardless of gender, race, or sexual orientation, or gender identity, may be administered the Sacraments of the church including the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

1.12. INDIVIDUAL HUMAN AND BAPTISMAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Rights do not exist in isolation, but only in conjunction with corresponding responsibilities. It is vital to remember that no responsibilities can be properly carried out without the safeguarding and exercising of those human and Catholic rights, those rights that are founded on and limited by the Gospel and on the Tradition of the Church.

B. This Constitution, therefore, proclaims the following Individual rights: All persons have basic human rights: freedom of action, freedom of conscience, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to receive and impart information, freedom of association, the right to due process of law, the right of participation in self-governance, the right to the accountability of chosen leaders, the right to the safeguarding of one's reputation and privacy, the right to marry, the right to education and the corresponding duty to exercise them responsibly.

i. As a consequence of the basic human right of freedom of conscience, all persons have the right and responsibility to follow their informed consciences in all matters.

ii. As a consequence of the basic human right to receive and impart information, all persons have the right of access to all information possessed by Church authorities concerning their own spiritual and temporal welfare, provided such access does not infringe on the rights of others.

iii. As a consequence of the basic human right of freedom of opinion and expression, all persons have the right to express

themselves publicly in a Christian manner their agreement or disagreement.

a. Laity have the right and responsibility to make their opinions known in a Christian manner, especially where they have first-hand experience of the issue at hand.

b. Teachers and scholars of theology have a right to, and responsibility for, academic freedom. The acceptability of their teaching is to be judged in dialogue with their peers and, when appropriate, Church authorities. Such scholars and teachers will keep in mind that the search for truth and its expression entails following wherever the evidence leads, and hence, the legitimacy of responsible dissent and pluralism of thought and its expression.

iv. As a consequence of the basic human right of freedom of association, all persons have the right to form voluntary associations to pursue Christian aims; such associations have the right to decide on their own rules of governance.

v. As a consequence of the basic human right to due process, all Christians have the right to commonly accepted norms of fair administrative and judicial procedures without undue delay, and to redress of grievances through regular procedures of Church law.

vi. As a consequence of the basic human right of participation in self-governance, all persons have the right to a voice in decisions that affect them, including the choosing of their leaders, and a duty to exercise those rights responsibly.

vii. As a consequence of the basic human right to the accountability of chosen leaders, all persons have the right to have their leaders render an account to them of Church matters in a manner that is appropriate and transparent.

viii. As a consequence of the basic human right to the safeguarding of one's reputation and privacy, all persons have the right to protection against having their good reputations impugned or their privacy violated by members of the Church.

ix. As a consequence of the basic human right to marry, all persons have the right to choose their state in life; this includes the right for both laity and clergy to marry, remain single or embrace celibacy.

x. As a consequence of the basic human right to marry, with each spouse retaining full and equal rights during marriage, all persons have the right to withdraw from a marriage which has irretrievably broken.

a. All such persons retain the right to remarry.

b. All divorced and remarried persons who are in conscience reconciled to the Church retain the right to the same ministries, including all the sacraments.

xi. As a consequence of the basic human rights to marry and to education, all parents have the right and responsibility;

a. To determine the size of their families.

b. To choose appropriate methods of family planning.

c. To see to the education of their children.

C. Basic Baptismal Rights and Responsibilities

i. As a consequence of their baptism, all Christians have the right to receive in the Church those ministries which are needed for the living of a fully Christian life, including:

a. Worship which reflects the joys and concerns of the gathered community and instructs and inspires it;

b. Instruction in the Christian tradition and the presentation of spirituality and moral teaching in a way that promotes the helpfulness and relevance of Christian values to contemporary life; and

c. Pastoral care that applies with concern and effectiveness the Christian heritage to persons in particular situations.

- ii. As a consequence of their baptism, all Christians have the right,
 - a. To receive all the sacraments for which they are catechetically prepared.
 - b. To exercise all ministries in the Church for which they are catechetically prepared, according to the needs and with the approval or commissioning of the Member Faith Community.
- iii. As a consequence of their baptism, all Christians have the right to expect that the resources of the Church will be fairly distributed on their behalf. Among other concerns, this implies that,
 - a. All Christians have the right to the resources and the exercise of all the powers of the Church,
 - b. All Christian parents have the right to expect fair material and other assistance from Church leaders in the religious education of their children.
- iv. As a consequence of their baptism, as well as the social nature of humanity, all Christians have the corresponding responsibility to support the Church through their time, talents, and financial resources.
- v. As a consequence of their baptism, every Christian has the responsibility not to take advantage of any other person. (Pro 10:9, Pro 28:6, Mt 7:12)
- vi. As a consequence of their baptism, every Christian has the responsibility to never abuse another person physically or emotionally. (Rom 12: 17-21)
- vii. As a consequence of their baptism, every Christian has the responsibility to remember that they are a servant, and to act accordingly. (Rom 6: 19-22)
- viii. As a consequence of their baptism, every Christian has the responsibility to never confuse their servant responsibility with power or to corrupt the caring ministry with which they have been entrusted, and to remember that God alone has the attribute of power. (Ps 62:11-12, Mt 28:18-20, Rev 4:11)
- ix. As a consequence of their baptism, every Christian has the responsibility to acknowledge that the Ten Commandments and Christ's summary command to love God with our whole heart, mind and soul, and to love our neighbor as ourselves are essential for all Christians. (Ex 20:1-17, Mt 5:17)

ARTICLE II: Liturgy and Sacraments

2.1. LITURGY:

A. The Liturgy is the act of corporate prayer of the Church. Liturgical actions are, therefore, public in their nature even when celebrated without the presence of persons other than the minister. Nevertheless, whenever feasible there should be the presence and active participation of the People of God in the celebration of the Liturgical Rites of the Church. At the very minimum, all Member Faith Communities shall celebrate and keep the Lord's Day (Saturday Vigil or Sunday Day) as a regular day of public worship utilizing the approved Liturgies set forth below.

B. The Western Rites, Roman, Old Catholic, and Anglican/Episcopal and Eastern/Orthodox Rites for the Sacraments are herein expressly authorized along with their respective Liturgical Calendars, Ordo. In the future, the Communion may develop its own rites. The rites and Ordo employed should bear in mind the needs of the local faith community. The rites and Ordo are at the discretion and approval of the Local Ordinary, Diocesan Bishop.

C. The Episcopal Council shall consult the House of Clergy and the House of Laity on the use of additional rites, except for those Liturgies and Rites authorized expressly herein, however, it pertains solely to the Episcopal Council to define, approve, and promulgate liturgies and rites for the Celebrations of the Sacraments for the Church. Any additional liturgies and rites are to be presented to the Holy Synod for affirmation and are to be used with the discretion and approval of the Local Ordinary.

D. Liturgies and Rites should be celebrated in the vernacular language of the community in whose presence the liturgy is celebrated so that they become the genuine prayer of the faith community. At the discretion and approval of the Local Ordinary, a Liturgy and Rite in another language may be celebrated if it meets the needs of local faith community.

E. The Lectionary is a book containing the readings from Sacred Scriptures employed in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist that coordinates with the Liturgical Calendar. Use of Lectionaries for approved Rites is permitted.

F. All Books, Vessels, and any other items used for Liturgical celebrations, particularly that of the Holy Eucharist, including the Lectionary and Altar Missals, shall be attractive and seemly in appearance, respectful and mindful for the Holy purpose for which each are used.

G. Except in emergencies or when dispensed by the Local Ordinary, ministers shall wear vestments appropriate to their Holy Order during the celebration of each Sacrament according to the norms of the rite employed. At a minimum, all Clergy shall utilize alb and appropriate stole pertaining to their respective Holy Order unless otherwise approved by the Local Ordinary.

H. On Gender Inclusive Language: The only language we have for speaking about God is a language based on our human experience where persons are designated as either male or female. But the natural tendency to attribute gender - and other human qualities - to God is derived from the limitations of language, human understanding, and cultural circumstances. It is not only acceptable, but also consistent with the ample use of female imagery for God in Scriptures and in the Tradition of the Church, to use both male and female imagery for depicting God's dispositions towards ourselves. Gender Inclusive language shall be used when appropriate in caring for the Body of Christ in order to bring them closer to their relationship with God.

I. Faculties for the Celebration of the Liturgy and Sacraments: The right for Presbyters or Deacons to celebrate the Liturgy and Sacraments in circumstances which are not emergencies is granted only by faculty from the Local Ordinary having jurisdiction over the place of celebration and in conformity with this Constitution. By virtue of their office, Local Ordinaries, and Bishops serving under such Local Ordinary have faculties for the celebration of any Sacrament within their own Diocese.

2.2. THE SACRAMENTS:

A. The Sacraments are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual Grace, given by Christ to the Church. We recognize the following Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Reconciliation, Holy Eucharist, Marriage, Anointing of the Sick and Holy Orders. Sacraments are not restricted to any individual or group, by gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital state, or other socio-economic or demographic labels, so long as the applicant has complied with the preparation and requirements set forth in this Constitution and at the discretion of the Local Ordinary.

B. Member Parishes will maintain registers or records for the following Sacraments: Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation, Marriage, and Holy Orders, as well as Christian Funerals and Memorials.

C. The restored order of the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist may be administered to anyone, regardless of age, including infants, if so approved of by the Local Ordinary. It is suggested that Confirmation and Holy Eucharist be administered no earlier than the age of discretion, which is traditionally understood to be between seven and sixteen years of age. In the case of a minor, the consent of at least one parent or legal guardian is required.

D. Baptism: Baptism is the Sacrament by which we die with Christ and Rise again in Him as a renewed People of God. In this Sacrament we are made children of God, members of the Body of Christ, the Church and heirs of the Kingdom of God.

i. The Sacrament of Baptism is open to all who desire to follow Christ and affirm the Profession of Faith, as is formulated in the creeds.

ii. We believe and affirm that Baptism with water in the name of the Triune God unites the one baptized with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, initiates that person into the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic church, and confers the gracious gift of a new life in Christ. This traditional formula is expressed by the words, "I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." and shall be used for all baptisms in order to recognize them as faithful to Apostolic Tradition.

iii. The Ordinary Minister of the Sacrament of Baptism is a Bishop, Presbyter, or Deacon. However, in an emergency where there is a danger of death, any person may baptize.

iv. Each adult candidate for Baptism shall evidence to the pastor an understanding and acceptance of the Belief Statements and Affirmations of the Catholic Faith of this Communion as is appropriate for their level of education, and maturity.

v. In infant/child Baptisms the Sponsors and/or parents of the child shall profess and accept the Belief Statements and Affirmations of the Catholic Faith of this Communion in the name of the child. If the child has reached an age of reason as determined by the Pastor, the child shall evidence to the Pastor an understanding and acceptance of the Belief Statements and Affirmations of the Catholic Faith of this Communion, appropriate to their age, level of education, and maturity.

vi. In the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism, the sponsor(s) must have been themselves baptized and be communicants. If the restored order of Christian Initiation is used, the sponsor must be a fully initiated regular communicant.

vii. The Trinitarian formula "I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" while immersing the one baptized in water or pouring water on their head, shall be used.

viii. While the Sacrament of Baptism shall normally be administered in a church building, the clergy may baptize elsewhere for pastoral reasons with permission from the Local Ordinary.

E. Confirmation: The Sacrament of Confirmation is the path by which the baptized receives the Seal and Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

i. The Ordinary Minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation is the local Bishop. The Local Ordinary may grant Faculties for Confirmation to Presbyters for pastoral reasons.

ii. Each candidate for Confirmation shall evidence to the pastor an understanding of the Belief Statements and Affirmations of the Catholic Faith of this Communion appropriate for their age, level of education and maturity, according to local custom and pastoral need.

iii. Each candidate for Confirmation shall be accompanied by a sponsor(s) who must be a fully initiated Christian and a regular communicant, who will continue to support the candidate in living the Belief Statements and Affirmations of the Catholic Faith as set forth herein.

F. Holy Eucharist: Holy Eucharist is a sacrament and a sacrifice. In the Holy Eucharist, under the appearances of bread and wine, the Lord Christ is contained, offered, and received.

i. The Holy Eucharist is the efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the People of God by which the Church is kept in being. It is the culmination both of God's action sanctifying the world in Christ and of the worship offered to Christ and through Him to the Father in the Holy Spirit.

ii. We believe and affirm that the Body and Blood of Christ are truly present, distributed, and received under the forms of bread and wine in the Holy Eucharist and that the Holy Eucharist is open to all. No test of faith or moral standard shall be required for any person to approach and receive the Holy Eucharist.

iii. Local custom and pastoral need shall determine the administration of the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist, including First Communion and Viaticum.

iv. In every parish, Holy Eucharist shall be celebrated at minimum on every Lord's Day, on major feasts and on Ash Wednesday and appropriate provisions shall be made for public worship during Holy Week.

v. In all cases, the Sacred Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, present in the Holy Eucharist, shall be treated with the utmost reverence, with due diligence to Tradition and custom.

vi. The ordinary minister of Holy Eucharist is the Presbyter or Bishop. The Ordinary minister for the distribution of Holy Eucharist is a Deacon, Presbyter, and Bishop. Extraordinary Ministers for the distribution of Holy Eucharist are permitted at the discretion of the Local Ordinary, in pastoral recognition of the needs of the individual faith community.

vii. Bread for Holy Eucharist must be made of wheat and not corrupt. Wine must be made from the juice of grapes only and not corrupt. The use of gluten-free hosts and/or non-alcoholic wine is permitted out of pastoral necessity and sensitivity, and at the discretion of the Pastor.

viii. The Pastor or priest shall see to the correct training of the persons selected for the sacred task as Extraordinary Ministers of the Holy Eucharist, imparting to them the highest possible respect and reverence for this ministry and instructing them in their duties and in the limitations of their office.

G. Reconciliation: Christians are reconciled with God, the community and each other through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

i. Only a Bishop or Presbyter may administer the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

- ii. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is open to all who request it.
- iii. The primary Sacrament of Reconciliation is Holy Eucharist. General Absolution is granted as part of the Penitential Rite of the Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist.
- iv. Individual Reconciliation is available to any person who requests it.
- v. A clear delineation is made between external and internal forum. A priest may not divulge anything that has been revealed in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, nor refer subsequently to such matter. The seal of the confessional is absolute and is not abrogated on the death of the penitent.
- vi. Private matters elicited in ordinary counseling which is not sacramental are to be held confidential to the extent that the civil law requires and enjoins. Clergy are cautioned that they may be required to report certain matters to appropriate civil law enforcement authorities if such matters come to their attention outside the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- vii. In circumstances which may be unclear as to whether they fall under the area of counseling or the Sacrament of Reconciliation the determining factor shall be whether Sacramental Absolution, regardless of formula, was granted. If Sacramental Absolution was granted at any point by the minister, the entire conversation shall be deemed to be within the Sacrament of Reconciliation and inviolable.

H. Anointing of the Sick: The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick conveys several graces and imparts gifts of strengthening in the Holy Spirit against anxiety, discouragement, and temptation, and conveys peace and fortitude. These graces flow from the atoning death of Jesus Christ, for "this was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, 'He took our infirmities and bore our diseases'" (Matt. 8:17).

- i. The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is open to all who request it.
- ii. The Ordinary Minister of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is a Bishop or a Presbyter when Reconciliation is celebrated. Otherwise, a Deacon may also be the ordinary minister outside of Reconciliation.

I. Marriage: The Sacrament of Marriage is intended by God to be a creative relationship - God's blessing enables spouses to love and support each other in good times and bad. For Christians, marriage is also an invitation to share life together in the spirit of Jesus Christ. It is based upon a solemn, public, and life-long covenant between two people, made and celebrated in the presence of God and before an ordained minister and the Community.

i. The Sacrament of Marriage is affirmed for all couples who seek recognition and blessing of their union.

ii. Only a Deacon, Presbyter, or Bishop with valid Faculties may officiate at the Sacrament of Marriage in this Communion. Where required by civil law, each person intending to officiate at the Sacrament of Marriage shall obtain whatever licensing or certification the civil authority may require of marriage officiants prior to officiating at any marriage.

iii. Persons seeking to be married must have attained legal age as defined by the civil jurisdiction in which the Sacrament will be celebrated. Where no minimum age is defined in civil law the minimum age for marriage shall be 18 years.

iv. It must be freely affirmed by the two (2) parties.

v. If the marriage is also to be legally recognized by the secular authorities, the marriage must conform to the laws of that secular civil jurisdiction.

vi. Clergy shall witness and bless the Sacrament of Marriage between partners of the same gender in accordance with this Constitution. Where in civil law members of the same gender are not recognized or permitted to enter into a civil marriage, this does not prevent the Sacrament of Marriage to be recognized by this Church and is of equal standing sacramentally as those of opposite genders.

vii. All couples must conform to the catechetical requirements and pastoral direction of the officiant.

viii. The Sacrament of Marriage may not be administered to someone with an existing Marriage in place. Simultaneous Marriage to more than one concurrent partner is prohibited.

J. Holy Orders: The Sacrament of Holy Orders is the sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time; thus it is the sacrament of apostolic ministry. It includes three orders: Bishop, Presbyter and Deacon. The Sacrament of Holy Orders is open to all of those who are qualified and abide by the standards set forth herein for each respective order.

i. The Deacon is the minister of Service and of Charity. The Deacon is ordained and commissioned by Christ and the Bishop to minister to the spiritual and material needs of the People of God and to be a minister of the Word of God and an example of service in the world. Working closely with the pastor, the deacon is an official witness of service to others. Deacons may be given faculties by their Ordinary to all or some of the following: Baptize, act as Deacon at the Eucharistic Liturgy, Preach with permission of the pastor of the church, Distribute Holy Eucharist and bring Holy Eucharist to the sick, and Anoint the Sick without reconciliation and absolution. If no priest is available, the deacon may take Holy Eucharist to the dying, may be the minister at exposition or benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament, Bless and Marry with delegation of the local pastor of the parish, and lead prayers at wakes and officiate at burial services. Further, the traditional role of the Deacon during pastoral visits of the Ordinary is to minister to the Ordinary during their visit to the Parish or the Faith Community. Candidates for Deacon should have received the ministries of Reader and Acolyte prior to ordination to the diaconate. Those who are ordained for full service as Deacons shall be known as Permanent Deacons, a historic and traditional role in the Church. Those who are in preparation for the Order of Presbyter shall be known as Transitional Deacons.

ii. The ministry of Presbyter is to build up the Body of Christ in the world through the ministry of Word and Sacrament, pastoral care and teaching. The Presbyter is ordained and commissioned by Christ and the Bishop to minister to the spiritual and sacramental needs of the People of God. The presbyter is the extension and representative of the presence of the Ordinary within the Faith Community. Presbyters may be given faculties by their Ordinary for the following: Baptize, Confirm with the delegation of the local Ordinary, Celebrate and Preside at the Eucharistic Liturgy, Preach and Teach the Word of God, Hear Confession and Absolve Sins, provide Anointing of the Sick with

Reconciliation and Absolution, Bring Viaticum to the Dying, Bless and Marry, and officiate at wakes and burial services. Candidates for the Presbyterate shall be ordained first to the Transitional Diaconate prior to ordination to the Presbyterate, and if approved by the Local Ordinary, shall then be ordained to the Presbyterate. All Priests contain both the role of Deacon and Presbyter once ordained to the Presbyterate.

iii. The ministry of each Bishop is the pastoral care of Church, in particular the Local Church, Diocese, entrusted to them and at the same time, to maintain collegiality within the Episcopal Council. The Diocese, as a local particular Church, is an embodiment of the whole Catholic Church, and is not just an administrative subdivision of something larger. The Bishop is elected by the members of the Local Church to be its head. The Bishop has primary teaching, governance and sanctifying responsibility for the Diocese, in conformity with the unifying essentials found within this Constitution. Further, the Bishop is entrusted to maintain, protect, and defend the continuity of the Gospel and Catholic Tradition and to foster the unity of the Body of Christ. This ministry is built upon the three charisms of: teaching, leading, and sanctifying. Therefore, the role of the Bishop is exercised in personal, collegial, and communal ways to witness to and safeguard the unity and apostolicity of the Church. Candidates for Bishop are to have been ordained to the Diaconate and then Presbyterate prior to their ordination as a Bishop, as all Bishops contain the threefold ministry of Deacon, Presbyter, and Bishop.

ARTICLE III: Member Faith Communities

3.1. Member Faith Communities are the Founding Communities, as well as all Faith Communities that apply, agree to be governed by this Constitution, and that have been accepted into the Communion as set forth under the Guidelines for the Formation of Faith Communities.

3.2. Guidelines for the Formation of Faith Communities shall be administered by the Episcopal Council and may be amended by Synodal agreement.

3.3. The growth of the household of faith should be understood in terms of both Quality Growth and Quantity Growth.

A. Quality Growth is understood as the maturation of the members of the Church. This is exemplified in Saint Paul's concern that the Corinthian community develop from the infancy of spiritual milk to the solid food of faith.

B. Quantity Growth is understood as the increase of local communities, and the increase of members in each community. The scriptural model for such growth is found in Acts 2, concluding with the sentence: "Day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved."

C. While it is desirable to have both dimensions, the building of a community takes time and nurturing. While Quantity may be lacking, what is most important is Quality Growth which results in Quantity Growth over time. When a group within a Diocese requires time to achieve Quantity Growth, that community may be designated a Mission attached to an already established Member Faith Community. Missions within a Diocese have no voting rights of their own and may only participate as part of the Member Faith Community to which they are attached.

3.4. STANDARDS FOR THE FORMATION OF FAITH COMMUNITIES

A. This Communion defines a Faith Community as a recognized Parish, an Intentional Religious Community, or a Specialized Ministry.

B. For recognition and acceptance into the Communion, a Faith Community geographically located within a Member Diocese must engage in a minimum of a one year period of mutual discernment as an Interim Faith Community, after which, a Faith Community's status shall be reviewed by the Local Ordinary.

i. The interim relationship may be terminated without prejudice by either party.

ii. The interim relationship may be extended, at the mutual discretion of the Local Ordinary and the leadership of the Faith Community.

C. For Faith Communities geographically located outside of an Member Diocese who seek Member status in the Communion, such Faith Community must engage in a minimum of one year period of mutual discernment as an Interim Faith Community, after which, a Faith Community's status shall be reviewed by the Episcopal Council. The Ordinary of the geographically closest Member Diocese shall be assigned as the Ordinary over that Faith Community, until such time as the requisite number of Faith Communities in the geographic area determine they are ready to form a Diocese and elect their own Ordinary.

i. The interim relationship may be terminated without prejudice by either party.

ii. The interim relationship may be extended, at the mutual discretion of the Local Ordinary and the leadership of the Faith Community.

D. An Interim Faith Community will be welcome to take a passive voice at Holy Synod, but will not have voting privileges until the Faith Community receives permanent Member status.

E. At the time of application for acceptance into the Communion, the Faith Community should also have applied for a not-for-profit status to the appropriate authorities of the state and federal governments.

i. Before Member Status is received, the Faith Community should have formed a leadership council that is Synodal as defined by this Communion.

ii. Before Member Status is received, the Faith Community should have, at minimum, general liability coverage for their protection.

F. Member Faith communities shall receive an annual episcopal visit by their Local Ordinary, unless otherwise determined by mutual agreement between the Bishop and the community leadership.

i. Member Faith Communities may also be visited by another Bishop of the Communion or designated representative from the Episcopal Council, by mutual agreement for just reason or pastoral cause.

ii. The Member Faith Community shall cover all reasonable and appropriate travel and lodging costs associated with an episcopal visit as mutually agreed upon between the Community and the visiting Bishop.

G. Existing clergy must make a separate application to the Communion for faculties from the appropriate Local Ordinary. Their acceptance as clergy of the Communion may begin with an interim or probationary period. It is important for the community to understand that their application to the Communion is separate from that of their clergy, though it is related to the clergy applications.

H. Non-Member clergy shall make application to the Ordinary who shall review the background of applicants who desire faculties with the Communion to determine if they meet the minimum standards for ordination or incardination in the Communion. Such clergy may be required to complete those areas which are deficient in order to regularize their ministerial orders. It is always the primary concern of the Ordinary that the call to ministry by the Faith Community is seen as a substantial affirmation of the call to Holy Orders for those who apply for ordination or incardination with the Communion. The reception of clergy shall be administered by the Local Ordinary.

I. Should the community have no permanent clergy; depending on availability, the Communion may be able to provide temporary coverage of sacramental ministries through the established clergy of the Communion. Qualified presbyters and deacons should be sought by the community to permanently serve their needs. Qualified men and women should be encouraged to consider ordination. The Communion seeks a return to the understanding that each community shall cultivate such vocations to ordained ministry and that the ordained ministry of the Church arises from within the Eucharistic community itself.

J. A Faith Community must be financially self-sustaining to be admitted into the Communion. It must demonstrate standards and practices of transparency and accountability to its community, to include regular reporting of financial data to its members.

K. Prior to receiving Member Status, Faith Communities will have the following in place:

- i. Communities will form a Finance Committee. This committee should not be chaired by the pastor of the community and should not include members of the Pastor's immediate family. Committee members should include individuals who are knowledgeable in sound business practices, yet understand the spiritual and social mission of a Faith Community.
- ii. Accounting of all funds should reflect standard business practice in accordance with civil law. All contributions and expenditures should be recorded in a timely fashion, and the finance committee should publish a summary of its activities at a minimum of once a year.
- iii. The leadership council of the Faith Community should establish in writing any contractual relationships it has with Clergy. This should include reimbursement of salaries, benefits, and allowances for living expenses.

L. Neither the Communion and nor any Member Diocese hold financial responsibility for any Faith Community's property or operating expenses. Neither the Communion nor any Member Diocese hold claim to the property and assets of the Faith Community.

M. Each Member Faith Community shall be the employer of record for its leaders, members, staff and volunteers. Member Faith Communities will hire and terminate all clergy and staff, practice pre-employment inquiries of sexual misconduct, appropriate psychological evaluations and conduct criminal background checks as delineated within this Constitution.

N. The Communion carries no legal responsibility or liability for the conduct of clergy, leaders, members, staff and volunteers of each Faith Community or Diocese. Each Faith Community shall establish for itself policies and procedures for Sexual Misconduct, Conflict of Interest, or any other reasonable ethical standards required within the civil jurisdiction of the Faith Community.

3.5. PARISHES: In addition to the standards outlined above for all Member Faith Communities the following pertain specifically to a Parish:

A. A recognized Parish, with Synodal voting representation, shall have a minimum of ten (10) regularly attending adult parishioners, who gather every Sunday and on Holy Days for Eucharist, with full rights of polity as established by this Constitution. Regularly attending adult parishioners who fulfill the following criteria shall be considered Individual Members of this Church:

- i. An adult parishioner must be a baptized Christian who has reached the age of majority (18).
- ii. An adult parishioner must accept the doctrines, canons, and rites of the Communion enumerated in this Constitution.
- iii. Pastors and other clergy of Faith Communities that are clergy or incardinated clergy of the Communion with faculties from the Local Ordinary.

B. Faith Communities who are working toward the Parish minimum status shall be designated as a Mission of a Member Faith Community or a Community in Formation as set forth below.

- i. A Mission is not an independent faith community and therefore does not have voting representation in the Holy Synod. The goal of a Mission is to become an independent Parish, Intentional Religious Order, or Specialized Ministry.
- ii. A Community in Formation is not an independent faith community and therefore does not have voting representation in the Holy Synod. A Community in Formation is located outside of an established Member Diocese. The goal of a Community-in-Formation is to become an independent Parish, Intentional Religious Order, or Specialized Ministry.

C. Each recognized Parish shall elect and send up to two voting Lay delegates to the Holy Synods of this Communion. The Pastor of each Parish is required to attend the quadrennial Holy Synod.

D. A Parish shall be financially self-sustaining. The Communion and the Diocese shall hold no claim to the property and assets of the Parish. The Parish shall assume all liabilities and expenses related, directly or indirectly, to its ministerial works. Further it shall be the employer of record for any clergy or staff it employs as well as liable for any independent contractors or volunteers that perform services on behalf of the Parish. The Communion and

the Diocese hold no legal responsibility or liability for the conduct of the parishioners, employees, staff, or volunteers of the Parish.

E. Parishes will maintain registers or records for the following Sacraments: Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation, Marriage, Holy Orders as well as Christian Funerals.

3.6. INTENTIONAL RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES: In addition to the standards outlined above for all Member Faith Communities the following pertain specifically to an Intentional Religious Community:

A. A recognized Intentional Religious Community is a Faith Community of individuals who have undertaken a common covenant of life with a public profession of evangelical counsels. They are united for a communal mission in pursuit of the spiritual life and/or social service.

i. A recognized Intentional Religious Community shall consist of a minimum of three adult members.

ii. Legal incorporation by the Intentional Religious Community and the selection of leaders of the Intentional Religious Community are necessary for both recognition by and admission to the Communion.

iii. The process of recognition and admission of Intentional Religious Communities into the Diocese is administered by the Local Ordinary.

B. The communal Rule of Life that the Intentional Religious Community abides by shall be submitted to the Local Ordinary for Affirmation and approval and shall accede to the Constitution of the Communion.

C. The Intentional Religious Community must be financially self-sustaining. The Communion and the Diocese hold no claim to the property and assets of the Religious Order. The Intentional Religious Community shall assume all liabilities and expenses related, directly and indirectly, to its ministerial work. Further it shall be the employer of record for any religious members or staff it employs as well as liable for any independent contractors or volunteers that perform services on behalf of the Community. The Communion and the Dioceses hold no legal responsibility or liability for the conduct of the members, employees, staff, or volunteers of the Community.

D. Intentional Religious Communities are free to associate with similar communities within the Communion through network or confederation to

further their mission and support for one another through mutual collaboration, networking and cooperation with the approval of the Local Ordinary.

E. The Intentional Religious Community shall be represented at Holy Synods in the House of Clergy and the House of Laity and shall be entitled up to two clergy and two lay Holy Synod representatives..

F. The Intentional Religious Community shall conduct a review of its administration and ministries with the Local Ordinary or their representative no less than once every two years. The Intentional Religious Community shall be responsible for all costs involved with this review.

3.7. SPECIALIZED MINISTRIES: In addition to the standards outlined above for all Member Faith Communities the following pertain specifically to a Specialized Ministry:

A. A Specialized Ministry is a faith community independent of a Parish or Intentional Religious Community devoted to the service of a particular need or population such as but not limited to: education, spiritual care and retreat, hospitality, or compassionate care for the marginalized. Specialized Ministries, in order to be represented at the Holy Synod, must form an Association of Specialized Ministries within a Diocese. When the Association of Specialized Ministries has ten or more regular members, then the Association shall be designated as a Member Specialized Ministry for voting purposes and shall be entitled to up to two Clergy and two Lay Holy Synod representatives.

B. A Specialized Ministry shall receive the endorsement of the Diocese according to guidelines established by the Diocese as administered by an appropriate representative of the Local Ordinary.

C. A Specialized Ministry must be financially self-sustaining. The Communion and the Diocese hold no claim to the property and assets of the Specialized Ministry. The Specialized Ministry shall assume all liabilities and expenses related, directly or indirectly, to its ministerial works. It shall be the employer of record for any clergy or staff it employs as well as liable for any independent contractors or volunteers that perform services on behalf of the Specialized Ministry. The Communion and the Diocese hold no legal responsibility or liability for the conduct of the members, employees, staff, or volunteers of the Specialized Ministry.

3.8. DIOCESES: In addition to the guidelines outlined above for all Member Faith Communities the following pertain specifically to a Diocese:

A. This Communion, as a Communion of Local Churches, understands each Diocese to be the Local Church, comprised of Bishop, Laity and Clergy within a specific geographical area, in accord with the ancient Catholic Tradition. The Local Church is constituted as whole, full and complete with these three elements – yet remains part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church (First Council of Constantinople, 381).

B. Whenever the number of Member Faith Communities within a specific geographic area which is not already under the jurisdiction of an established Diocese has reached three or more, and these Communities begin to discern the need for the spiritual leadership of their own Bishop, that assembly of communities is encouraged to gather together in order to elect a person under these Guidelines to be their Local Ordinary, thereby becoming a Diocese. The Member Faith Communities shall create a plan delineating the timing and process of forming the new Diocese within their own geographic area in accordance with the process set forth herein.

C. The Member Faith Communities will notify the leadership of the House of Laity, the leadership of the House of Clergy, and the Episcopal Council that they intend to form a Diocese and will be holding elections for Bishop. The leadership of the House of Clergy, House of Laity and the Episcopal Council shall counsel and assist the petitioning assembly with the process.

D. The Member Faith Communities seeking a new Bishop will carefully and prayerfully nominate, screen, interview, and elect the person they choose to serve them as their Bishop. The election must afford every individual of the Member Faith Communities the opportunity to cast a conscientious vote in the election.

E. Candidates for the Episcopal office must be ordained and incardinated presbyters in good standing with the Communion.

F. Affirmation by the Holy Synod is necessary for final approval of the Bishop elected by this newly formed Diocese. Affirmation shall not be withheld, unless just cause can be presented to the Episcopal Council and the leadership of both the House of Clergy and the House of Laity that the candidate is unfit by faith or morals.

i. If the next Holy Synod of the Communion is more than one year distant from the date of the affected communities' election, the

Leadership of the House of Clergy, House of Laity, and the Episcopal Council shall communicate with the House of Laity and the House of Clergy the Bishop-Elect's name and shall seek affirmation by majority vote from all the voting Delegates of the Holy Synod. Affirmation is not to be unreasonably withheld and any challenge to the candidate's election must be received by the leadership of the House of Clergy, House of Laity, and the Episcopal Council prior to the Affirmation. A reasonable, modest and efficient period of time should be allowed for this, but under no circumstance longer than three months.

ii. If the next Holy Synod is within one year, the process for affirmation shall take place at the Holy Synod.

G. Upon Affirmation of the Local Ordinary, the Member Faith Communities that have formed the new Diocese shall establish a form of governance that evidences a Synodal polity that includes the three separate but interdependent voices of the Bishop, Laity, and Clergy. The governance structure established shall be representative of the diversity of the Member Faith Communities in that Diocese.

H. While the ordination and consecration of a Bishop is permanent in sacramental character, the administrative term of office for a Local Ordinary cannot be more than six years per term. A bishop may not serve more than two consecutive terms as Local Ordinary.

I. The Member Faith Communities in the Diocese are responsible for the financial expenses of the Local Ordinary related to Diocesan duties and responsibilities in accordance with their Local Diocesan canons.

J. Each Member Faith Community shall uphold its financial obligations to its Diocese by regular and appropriate contributions as established by their local canons.

K. In the event of an Episcopal vacancy arising from death, resignation, retirement or removal from office of a Local Ordinary, the same selection process and Guidelines set forth herein shall be used to select a successor to the Local Ordinary's office. However, in such a case provisions should be made for continuing the regular affairs of the Diocese. In the absence of any Local Diocesan canons that provide for this event, the affected Diocese, in consultation with the Ecumenical Council, may itself appoint or ask for an appointed interim spiritual leader for the jurisdiction, to serve for the period

of vacancy until the election is completed and a new Bishop-elect is selected by the people of the Diocese and affirmed by the Holy Synod.

L. Any constitution and canons of the Diocese must subordinate and accede to the Constitution of the Communion and under no circumstances may a Diocese, a Bishop, or a Faith Community exempt themselves from any of the provisions of the Constitution of the Communion.

M. Every Local Ordinary in good standing and who holds an elected Episcopal office within the Communion shall be a voting member of the Episcopal Council. All other Member Bishops may be invited by the Episcopal Council in accordance with its internal rule of order to voice but without a vote.

N. A Diocese must be financially self-sustaining and by right self-governing so long as it is in conformity with this Constitution. The Communion holds no claim to the property and assets of the Diocese. The Diocese shall assume all liabilities and expenses related, directly or indirectly, to its ministerial works. It shall be the employer of record for any clergy or staff it employs as well as liable for any independent contractors or volunteers that perform services on behalf of the Diocese. The Communion holds no legal responsibility or liability for the conduct of the members, employees, staff, or volunteers of the Diocese.

3.9. INDEPENDENT CATHOLIC JURISDICTIONS: One of the goals of the Communion is to maintain unity or create unity wherever possible. The Communion realizes schisms and breaks have taken place across the history of the Christian Church. As such, the potential exists of having an entire catholic jurisdiction apply for entry into the Communion. With the exception of the Founding Members, the following minimum guidelines are to be followed:

A. All bishops and clergy of an Independent Jurisdiction must apply separately but concurrently with the Faith Communities under their jurisdiction.

B. All bishops, clergy, and lay leaders of each separate faith community seeking entry into the Communion must assent to an Integration Plan created for it in conjunction with the Episcopal Council. Acceptance of the Integration Plan does not guarantee membership in the Communion, but merely sets a path for the process of entry into the Communion. The Integration Plan must address any issues of overlapping jurisdictions, geographic or otherwise, of Member Bishops already in the Communion. In many cases the Integration Plan will include a Transitional Plan for those Faith Communities that are located in areas currently under the jurisdiction

of a Member Bishop. Those affected Faith Communities will be transferred to the jurisdiction of the existing local Member Bishop. The Transfer Plan must address the time period of adjustment for any communities that will be moved in order for pastoral assent and rapport to develop.

C. Bishops from the Independent Jurisdiction seeking entry into the Communion do not gain automatic entry into the Episcopal Council until they have been reviewed, approved and affirmed by the Episcopal Council. If they are not admitted into the Episcopal Council, for good cause, including but not limited to non-compliance with the Guidelines of Selection of Bishops and/or the Guidelines for Ordination set forth herein, a Compliance Plan may be created. They may continue to serve as a member of the Clergy until such time as they are affirmed by the Episcopal Council. If a bishop is unable to fulfill the requirements of the Compliance Plan, a notice must be given to those communities making the concurrent application so that they may choose whether or not to continue with the application.

D. Upon approval by the Episcopal Council and after completing the terms of the Integration and/or Compliance Plan, the Presiding Bishop shall then present the New Faith Community entering under this paragraph to the Holy Synod for Affirmation.

ARTICLE IV: Polity of the Communion

4.1. The Communion is a confederation of independently incorporated Catholic faith communities, which agree to be governed by this Constitution and the Holy Synod of the Communion. The Holy Synod is comprised of the House of Laity, the House of Clergy, and the Episcopal Council. The Presiding Bishop, as President of the Episcopal Council, is the official convener of the Holy Synod. When the Holy Synod is not in session, the Episcopal Council is empowered to make those executive and administrative decisions not expressly reserved for the House of Laity or the House of Clergy. Any decisions that substantially change this Constitution shall be null and void unless approved by the Holy Synod during its Regular Session, or if the Presiding Bishop convenes an Extra-Ordinary Synod to discuss and vote on the matter. The Episcopal Council may invite the participation of non-voting members on a year-to-year basis.

4.2. The Communion shall convene a Holy Synod no less than once every four years.

A. Understanding that we are called first to be Church, and that the blessing of God is paramount to all we accomplish, every Holy Synod shall begin and end with the Celebration of Holy Eucharist.

B. The Holy Synod should not just be a legislative gathering, but rather a gathering of the Body of Christ. Ample time should be allocated to building up the Body of Christ with collegial, educational, relational, spiritual, and ministerial opportunities.

4.3. Proposed legislation may originate by a vote of the House of Laity, the House of Clergy or the Episcopal Council, unless otherwise designated in this Constitution.

4.4 The Holy Synod Planning Committee is a Committee comprised of the elected leadership of all of the Houses, including the Episcopal Council. The Holy Synod Planning Committee shall:

A. Establish a timely and orderly process for the receiving of proposals for legislation or other actions to be taken up by the Holy Synod.

B. Will determine the format for voting for all items that require a vote, including voting by secret ballot. All voting and election processes shall be transparent and made available to the Communion.

C. The Vicar General shall ensure that the process and procedures proposed by the Committee remain in conformity with this Constitution.

D. The Order of Business shall be published for comment and consideration at least sixty (60) days prior to the Holy Synod.

- i. The Order of Business shall include, at minimum, the following:
 - a. Affirmation (Iudicium) of elected Bishop(s);
 - b. Legislation on the action proposed by the elected bodies;
 - c. Legislation or other action proposed by the EC;
 - d. Legislation or other action proposed by a Diocese;
 - e. Legislation or other action proposed by individual delegates of any of the Houses or an individual Member Faith Community.

E. The optimal experience of Holy Synod is achieved by physical presence and full participation in Holy Synod activities. We realize that there may be hardships which preclude such participation. The Holy Synod Planning Committee shall assist those for whom attendance is a hardship by making appropriate arrangements, including but not limited to: technological or electronic participation, validated electronic voting procedures, and the opportunity to solicit the Communion for economic assistance.

F. The Holy Synod Planning Committee shall select a Recorder for all sessions of the Holy Synod. Further, the Committee shall make arrangements that proper equipment is available to record and store the minutes as a permanent record of the Holy Synod.

G. The Holy Synod Planning Committee shall solicit suggestions from the Communion for educational workshop topics to be presented at the Holy Synod.

H. The Holy Synod Planning Committee shall provide the opportunity for daily prayer and liturgy.

I. The Holy Synod Planning Committee shall use of an appropriate Rule of Order that includes the requirement that discussions at the Holy Synod must be exercised with Christian care, charity and professional tone. The Chaplain of the Holy Synod, selected by the House of Clergy and approved of by the Episcopal Council and the House of Laity, will call for prayer if discussions fall out of Christian care and charity. The Presiding Bishop will call the Holy Synod into order when professional tones and the Rules of Order are not

being followed. A Parliamentarian will be selected by the Committee to assist in keeping track of the process.

4.5. The House of Laity is comprised of elected lay delegates from Member Faith Communities who are elected every four years and shall be elected in accordance with the Constitution or guidelines of each Member Faith Community.

A. All Lay Delegates must be at least eighteen years of age and cannot be clergy.

B. Each Parish, Intentional Religious Community, and Member Specialized Ministry shall have the right to send up to two Lay Delegates to the House of Laity.

C. The House of Laity shall establish its own policies and procedures of governance in accordance with this Constitution. The House shall convene no less than every four years at the Regular Session of the Holy Synod, and delegates should meet at the Diocesan level at least annually.

D. Issues of finance shall primarily originate in the House of Laity. The House of Laity shall form and give oversight to a Finance Committee which shall help insure transparent and accountable management of financial resources of the Communion. The Finance Committee shall also include representative voting members from the House of Clergy.

E. At each Holy Synod, the HOL shall be responsible for developing legislation regarding the tithing and/ or financial obligations that Member Faith Communities shall be contributing to through their Diocese to the Communion. Such legislation will then be presented in the regular Order of Business at the Holy Synod and voted upon by the respective Houses and Episcopal Council.

F. The following shall be Standing Committees comprised of members elected from both the Houses of Laity and Clergy, except that no member of any committee may simultaneously hold another elected position within the House of Laity or House of Clergy. These committees shall be chaired by a delegate of the House of Laity:

- i. Stewardship and Development;
- ii. Communication and Technology;
- iii. Finance Committee;
- iv. Catechism and Religious Education for Communities.

4.6. The House of Clergy, is comprised of one clergy, pastor or primary clergy leader, and one clergy representative from each Member Faith Community for a total of up to two clergy representatives from each Member Faith Community.

A. Parishes: Pastors shall be voting members of the House of Clergy. Bishops are not permitted to serve in the House of Clergy. In parishes whose pastor is a Bishop, a designated clergy vicar shall serve in lieu of the Bishop as the voting Pastoral Representative of that parish. Such a designated vicar shall be selected according to the guidelines of the parish. In addition to the Pastor, each Parish shall select one additional clerical representative, deacon or presbyter, of that parish to serve as a voting member of the House of Clergy. The term of office is four years and the number of terms shall be determined by each parish.

B. Intentional Religious Faith Communities: Each Intentional Religious Faith Communities within a Diocese shall have the right to up to two seats in the House of Clergy: one is to be held by the clergy leader of the faith community and the other seat shall be held by an official clergy member of the faith community, as selected by the guidelines of that faith community. The term of office is four years and the number of terms shall be determined by each faith community. If a member of an Intentional Religious Faith Community is also eligible for a voting seat as a Pastor or Clerical Representative of a Parish, then those persons shall be ineligible for voting seats for the Intentional Religious Faith Community and the Community must then select up to two other voting clergy members.

C. Specialized Ministries: All Specialized Ministries within a Diocese shall form an Association of Specialized Ministries as guided by the Local Ordinary. The Association shall then have the right to up to two seats in the House of Clergy: one is to be held by the clergy leader of the Association and the other seat shall be held by an official clergy member of the Association, as elected by the guidelines of that Association. The term of office is four years and the number of terms shall be determined by each Association.

D. The House of Clergy shall establish its own policies and procedures of its governance in conformity with this Constitution and shall convene no less than every four years at the Holy Synod. House delegates should meet at the Diocesan level at least annually.

E. The House of Clergy may propose to the Episcopal Council for consideration the following:

- i. Liturgical changes of the Communion;

- ii. Standards for new faith communities to be received into the Communion;
- iii. Standards for the ordination of bishops, presbyters, or deacons of the Communion;
- iv. Standards for the reception of ordained clergy from other ecclesial bodies into the Communion;
- v. Standards for the discipline and the termination of faculties of clergy of the Communion.

F. The following shall be standing committees comprised of members elected from both the Houses, except that no member of any committee may simultaneously hold another elected position within the House of Laity or House of Clergy and shall be chaired by a delegate of the House of Clergy:

- i. Mission and Evangelism;
- ii. Vocational Formation and Education;
- iii. Social Justice, Health, and Public Policy.

4.7. The Episcopal Council shall be the central executive office of the Communion and is comprised of all elected Diocesan Bishops, Ordinaries, in good standing who shall have voting privileges. All other bishops who are not Diocesan Bishops shall have the right to voice as provided for by the Episcopal Council but shall not have voting privileges. The Presiding Bishop shall become the President of the Episcopal Council. The Presiding Bishop shall serve for a period of forty-eight months, beginning the first day of the month following their election. A Bishop may serve a total of no more than two terms consecutively in the position of Presiding Bishop.

A. The Episcopal Council shall be responsible to establish an Administrative Committee, shall include officers as deemed necessary in order to fulfill the duties of the Council, including a Vicar General from the Clergy and a Chancellor from the Laity. The Council may also establish other Committees that would further the mission of the Communion.

B. The Vicar General is a Clergy Member appointed by the Episcopal Council as its principal administrative deputy and advisor with regard to canon law, ecclesial and diplomatic matters. The duties of the Vicar General may include: recording and retaining the records, calendars, and correspondence of the Episcopal Council, as well as establishing diplomatic relationships with other non-Communion jurisdictions and denominations as directed by the Episcopal Council.

C. The Chancellor is a Lay Member appointed by the Episcopal Council as its principal advisor regarding secular law for the protection of the Communion.

The Chancellor oversees the legal affairs of the Communion. The Chancellor must be learned in secular law and a member in good standing of a State or national Bar and practicing law in at least one jurisdiction. The Chancellor is responsible for authenticating the official acts of the Communion and advising when to seek outside counsel for legal matters.

D. The Episcopal Council has oversight over liturgical changes and intercommunion agreements, working in collaboration with the House of Clergy.

E. The Episcopal Council shall review all applications for ordination, vocations, faith communities and formation of new faith communities that are geographically outside of an established Member Diocese using the Guidelines of this Constitution. The Council will assist in associating these communities with an already established Diocese that is outside their geographic area until such time they may form their own Diocese within their geographic area in accordance with the process set forth in this Constitution.

F. The Episcopal Council may establish or modify the Guidelines for Ordination and the Guidelines for Formation of New Faith Communities as is necessary to further the mission of the Communion.

G. The Episcopal Council receives and accepts a faith community's notice of withdrawal from the Communion.

H. The Episcopal Council shall create an Integration Plan where the relationship of the Communion with other jurisdictions include:

- i. The integration of a jurisdiction into the Communion;
- ii. Shared ministry or involvement in the governance of the other jurisdiction;
- iii. The Integration Plan shall be in conformity with this Constitution, the Guidelines for receiving New Faith Communities, and the minimum standards for Ordination. The Integration Plan once created and approved by the Council, shall then be sent to the House of Clergy for affirmation.

I. The Episcopal Council may initiate liturgical changes for the Communion and intercommunion agreements.

J. The Episcopal Council shall issue pastoral and policy statements as necessary to further the work of the Communion.

K. The Episcopal Council is a Court of Appeal for the decisions made in the Houses or any of its Delegates and/or Committees.

L. The Episcopal Council shall establish an appeal process which includes the formation of an Appeal Commission that is comprised of theologically educated laity, clergy and bishops, and shall review all appeals and submit their recommendations to the Episcopal Council. The members of the Appeal Commission shall be selected according to guidelines established by the Ecumenical Council.

M. The Episcopal Council is a Court of Review for cases of misconduct and/or incompetence and may appoint an investigating committee if deemed necessary.

O. The Episcopal Council consists of Bishops who, as the successors of the Apostles, receive the fullness of the teaching authority of the Church and therefore it remains in the sole purview of the Council to define matters of faith for the Communion and to regulate the Sacraments. The role of a bishop is to provide pastoral governance for a Diocese. Bishops who fulfill this function are known as Diocesan Bishops or Local Ordinaries, because they have ordinary authority for a Diocese.

P. The following are permanent Standing Committees of the Episcopal Council:

- i. The Mission of the Synodal Catholic Churches in the World;
- ii. Liturgy and Sacraments;
- iii. Ecumenism and World Mission.

4.8. The Presiding Bishop shall be regarded as “first among equals” in the Episcopal Council. During their term, the Presiding Bishop shall be the public persona of the Communion, representing the Communion in liturgical and ecumenical functions, articulating the vision and mission of the Communion, and in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ.

A. The Presiding Bishop shall represent the consensus of the Episcopal Council as chief articulator of the mission and vision of the Communion.

B. The Presiding Bishop shall be charged with fostering and strengthening the unity of the Bishops of the Episcopal Council in their relationship with one another and consequently their relationship in the Communion.

C. The Presiding Bishop shall convene and preside at the Holy Synod, all Holy Synod liturgical functions, episcopal ordinations where the Communion is gathered as ecclesia and at all meetings of the Episcopal Council unless otherwise designated by the Presiding Bishop to another.

D. The Presiding Bishop shall have an active voice and vote in the Episcopal Council.

E. The Presiding Bishop must act in accordance with the consensus of the Episcopal Council regarding the veto of any legislation, liturgical changes or intercommunion agreements. A veto of any legislation may be overridden by a 2/3 majority vote of both the House of Laity and the House of Clergy.

F. The Presiding Bishop shall sign any finalized legislation, liturgical changes, and intercommunion agreements.

G. The Presiding Bishop may issue a pastoral letter to the Communion with the advice, counsel and consent of the Episcopal Council.

H. The Presiding Bishop shall present a pastoral plan for the Communion every four years. This plan shall be developed together with the House of Clergy, the House of Laity, and the Episcopal Council.

I. The Presiding Bishop shall sign all contracts and documents as representative of the Communion of Synodal Catholic Churches, with the prior and explicit approval of the Episcopal Council.

J. Qualified clergy may be selected by the Presiding Bishop as their non-episcopal Vicar as confirmed by the EC or appoint a member of the Episcopal Council as Suffragan Bishop to serve communities that need episcopal oversight but have either not yet elected an Ordinary or otherwise fall under the jurisdiction of the Presiding Bishop until such time they are reasonably able to elect their own Local Ordinary bishop. In cases of ethnic/language or rite specific populations that are found with an established Diocese, then the Ordinary shall be responsible to meet the needs of the specialized community by assigning a Vicar.

K. In the event of resignation, death, incapacitation, or ongoing or permanent indisposition of the Presiding Bishop, the senior voting member bishop (by consecration date) of the Episcopal Council shall serve as Interim Presiding

Bishop until a new Presiding Bishop is elected in accordance with procedures of this Constitution.

L. The Presiding Bishop may be removed from their position for misconduct, malfeasance, any egregious act, gross negligence, or incompetence, only after due process has been afforded to them under the jurisdiction of the Episcopal Council.

M. The Presiding Bishop shall serve for a period of forty eight months, beginning the first day of the month following their Affirmation, which shall take place during the Holy Synod. A bishop may serve no more than two consecutive terms as Presiding Bishop.

Article V: Guidelines for Ordination and Incardination

5.1. All Clergy to be ordained or incardinated shall sign an assent to this Constitution, to the Belief Statements and Affirmations of the Catholic Faith, and specifically assent to the Creedal Statements before being ordained and/or incardinated.

5.2. Guidelines for Ordination may be amended by the Episcopal Council.

5.3. The Local Ordinary shall administer these Guidelines in addition to any other requirements for Ordination set forth by their Member Diocese within the context, needs, and circumstances of the Faith Communities under their jurisdiction.

5.4. Guidelines for the Reception of Candidates for Holy Orders and/or Incardination. Once a candidate has completed a written inquiry or equivalent conversation with the Local Ordinary, they should complete the following requirements:

- A. Submit a formal Letter of Intent.
- B. Submit a curriculum vitae or resume highlighting: Educational background, work experience, and ministerial experience.
- C. Submit original transcripts of undergraduate and post-graduate education.
 - i. For Presbyteral ministry: A minimum list of educational competencies should be met before continuing: a Masters of Divinity degree or equivalent degree of theology, presbyteral certification process, or an equivalent as determined by the Local Ordinary.
 - ii. For Diaconal ministry: A minimum list of educational competencies must be met, as determined by the Local Ordinary.
- D. A theological examination may be administered, in writing, in order to determine a candidate's theological proficiency.
- E. Submit a copy of the candidate's baptism, confirmation and ordination certificates, as applicable.
- F. Undergo a psychological evaluation using the following instrument: 16 Personality Factors administered by a designated psychologist with their clinical observations and interview with a designated psychologist. The expense of this evaluation will be incurred by the candidate.

i. Additional appropriate evaluation tools may be warranted at the discretion of the Local Ordinary, such as:

- a. PPCA (Personal Problems Checklist for Adults), and/or
- b. MMPI (Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory), and/or
- c. FIRO-B.

G. Submit to a Sexual Misconduct Inquiry (SMI).

H. Undergo a standard criminal background check, administered by the office of the Local Ordinary.

I. Submit an autobiographic statement regarding the reasons the candidate feels called to serve in the ministerial office of deacon or presbyter.

J. Submit a minimum of five letters of recommendation from those that have had a ministerial relationship with the candidate seeking ordination and/or incardination. This would include individuals who may have been involved in the ministerial formation of the candidate as well as individuals who have served as co-workers in ministerial work.

K. Submit a letter of support from the candidate's spouse or partner.

5.5. Once the above requirements are completed satisfactorily, the candidate can expect the final stages of discernment as follows:

A. A three person Evaluative Team will be assigned to the candidate by the Local Ordinary. The Evaluative Team serves with the Local Ordinary as the decision-making body in regard to application for reception into the Communion. This Team will review the candidate's file, including all the above-mentioned materials. The candidate will be individually interviewed by each of the members of the Evaluative Team either in person or via video technology.

B. Completion of a course concerning the polity of the Communion.

C. Completion of a sexual misconduct prevention course.

D. Candidates are ordinarily presented by the laity and clergy of a Faith Community or an applying community. Members of the faith community are invited to submit letters of support or concern regarding the ordination

and/or incardination of the candidate to the Local Ordinary. A statement and petition signed by a majority of the members of the faith community would suffice.

E. In the circumstance that an established community is not presenting a candidate for ordination and/or incardination, the Local Ordinary, after consultation with and the affirmation of the Episcopal Council, may ordain and/or incardinate the individual.

F. A date for the liturgy of Holy Orders and/or rite of incardination is not established until the entire process is completed and only in consultation with the Local Ordinary, the Faith Community of call, and the candidate.

Article VI: Guidelines for the Selection of Bishops

6.1. Guidelines for Selection of Bishops shall be developed by the Episcopal Council and adopted as appropriate under the canons of the Local Diocese. The administration of the process for Local Ordinary elections shall be managed by the Diocese and include the following minimum vetting and elections processes:

A. Testimony (Testimonium): Listening to the testimony of the clergy and laity and neighboring bishops of the Candidate within the Diocese.

B. Voting (Suffragium): The vote of all the Members within the Diocese including the bishops.

C. Affirmation (Iudicium): Confirmation of all the Members assembled, Laity, Clergy and Bishops, at the Diocesan Synod. This shall be followed by the Ordination and/or installation by the bishops.

Article VII: Guidelines for the Election of the Presiding Bishop

7.1. Guidelines for the Election of the Presiding Bishop shall be developed by the Episcopal Council and shall ensure the following minimum standards:

A. A Nomination Process Committee shall be formed, comprised of all three voices of the Communion; Bishops, Clergy, and Laity.

i. The Nomination Process Committee shall organize and execute the process of the election in accordance with this Constitution.

ii. The Committee will insure that the vetting process is completed in a fair, transparent, and impartial manner.

iii. They will schedule the election process to take place prior to Holy Synod.

iv. They will schedule the Affirmation process to take place as part of the Order of Business at the Holy Synod.

7.2. The vetting and elections process shall include, at minimum, the following:

A. Testimony (Testimonium): Listening to the testimony of the clergy and laity and neighboring bishops of the Candidate.

i. As part of the process each parish, religious order, and specialized ministry shall have the opportunity to propose to their delegates names of current Member Bishops in good standing for consideration as potential candidates for Presiding Bishop. Those delegates shall forward those Bishop candidates' names to the Nomination Process Committee.

ii. The Nomination Process Committee will vet the potential candidates to make sure they are in conformity with the requirements of this Constitution including but not limited to background and psychological evaluations. Such information will be held confidential and shall solely be used for the vetting process. With regard to psychological evaluations, the Nomination Process Committee will be limited to knowing only if one has already been completed as part of the ordination process and if the candidate has been cleared by a psychological professional. If one has not been conducted, one will be requested of the potential candidate to complete a psychological evaluation through the office of the Local Ordinary.

iii. All potential candidates will be contacted and asked to submit their current Curricula Vitae, references for background checks, biography, and other required documents such as proof of education, mental health report, letters of recommendations, answers to questions posed by the Nomination Process Committee.

B. Voting (Suffragium): The vote of all the Members including the bishops of the Communion.

i. If the initial list of potential candidates is more than three candidates, then the Nomination Process Committee will establish a primary voting and election process. The top three candidates in that election will be voted on in a final election. The House of Laity and House of Clergy delegates shall administer and tally the voting numbers for each candidate and forward it to the Nomination Process Committee.

ii. The Nomination Process Committee shall then submit the names to the Communion for final election (Suffragium) to determine the Final Candidate who shall be presented at the Holy Synod for the Affirmation (Iudicium) process.

iii. Questions that may be asked of the Candidates for publication and dissemination to the Communion may include the following: Leadership attributes that the Candidate will bring to the Office of the Presiding Bishop, How the Candidate perceives the role of Presiding Bishop as Chief Pastor of Communion, The Candidate's vision regarding the mission and ministries of the Communion, How the Communion makes the Gospel relevant in the lives of people in light of current world events, The role of spirituality and prayerfulness in the Candidate's life, Diplomatic capabilities in growing the Communion as an international Communion and growing global ecumenical relations.

a. No more than 6 questions will be submitted to each candidate in any of these areas.

iv. After the Candidates have responded, the Nomination Process Committee shall assemble an election booklet to be given to all delegates and leadership, the Episcopal Council, and the current Presiding Bishop. The Election Booklet, which may be delivered

electronically, posted on the Communion website, or by other means approved of by the Committee, shall contain the picture, the Curricula Vitae, the biography, and responses to the questions of each of the candidates and shall then be made available to all members of the Communion.

v. The Nominating Committee shall create opportunities to meet with the candidates, each with their own respective Town Hall meeting where, in a structured and orderly fashion, the delegates may ask questions of the candidates. These Town Hall meetings shall take place prior to the voting (Suffragium). No Candidate may sit in on another Candidate's session.

vi. All pre-election activities and all activities on the day of elections should be aimed at prayerful discernment and seeking the presence of the Holy Spirit.

vii. Any Conflict of Interest between a Nomination Process Committee member and a Nominee shall disqualify the Nomination Process Committee member from any tallying or balloting tasks.

viii. The Presidents of both the House of Clergy and House of Laity and an elected member of the Episcopal Council who is not a Nominee shall preside over the entire election process.

C. Affirmation (Iudicium): Affirmation by all the Members during the Holy Synod, followed by the installation of the Presiding Bishop.

i. Once the final person has been elected by vote (Suffragium), the Affirmation (Iudicium) process of the newly elected Presiding Bishop will take place at Holy Synod.

ii. For the purposes of the affirmation of the Presiding Bishop, each House Delegate will accurately and faithfully convey the decision of the Faith Communities that they represent.

Article VIII: Amendments to the Constitution

8.1. Amendments to this Constitution may originate in either the House of Laity, the House of Clergy, or the Episcopal Council, or may be brought up for consideration by any Member Faith Community. These will be addressed at the Holy Synod or in extraordinary circumstances, as determined by the Episcopal Council, in consultation with the House Leaders, at an Extraordinary Synod.

8.2. Proposed Legislation to amend the Constitution must pass by a majority vote at Holy Synod.

8.3. Any amendment passing at Holy Synod shall be considered pending until it is signed or vetoed by the Presiding Bishop in consensus with the Episcopal Council. All proposed amendments will be reviewed for wording, fidelity to Catholic Tradition and Constitutionality by the Episcopal Council, in consultation with the Vicar General, and/or the Chancellor within sixty calendar days after the conclusion of Holy Synod. At the conclusion of the review it will be signed by the Presiding Bishop and become part of the Constitution, unless the review has found errors. Should the review determine that errors exist, the entire Communion will be notified and informed of the reasons, the proposed amendment will be vetoed, and the motion to amend shall be held in abeyance.

Member Faith Communities

ASSENTED BY THE GRACE OF GOD,
THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD
AND WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT
IN THE ASSEMBLY OF HOLY SYNOD
ON THIS THIRTIETH DAY OF JANUARY IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 2016
BY AND ON BEHALF OF
THE MEMBER FAITH COMMUNITIES:

The Most Rev. Steven M. Rosczewski
On behalf of the Diocese of Florida

The Most Rev. Martin de Porres Griffin
On behalf of the Diocese of California

DIOCESE of CALIFORNIA:

1. Cathedral of St. John the Beloved, San Diego, CA
2. Including all clergy that are working in Specialized Ministries in Los Angeles, Sacramento and Ainsworth House and Gardens in Oregon.

DIOCESE of FLORIDA:

1. Christ the Servant Catholic Church, Tampa, FL
2. Community of Divine Mercy, Riverview, FL
3. Fr. Solanus Casey House, Gwinn, MI
4. Franciscans of Christ the Servant (osf), Oakland Park, FL
5. Franciscans of the Holy Spirit (tor), Safety Harbor, FL
6. Holy Spirit Synodal Catholic Church, Safety Harbor, FL
7. Sacred Heart Franciscan Outreach, Port St. Lucie, FL
8. Saint Catherine of Siena Catholic Church, St. Louis, MO
9. Saint Sharon Synodal Catholic Church, Clairton, PA