



Elements of a Community Pathway
for Institutes of
Consecrated Life in Canada

December 2023

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The stages of such a pathway

These stages are not necessarily experienced in a linear fashion, nor in the order in which they are presented.

1. Awareness of the reality
2. Entry into a forward-looking approach
3. The transformations to be considered
4. Partners for supporting congregations

1- Awareness of the reality

A clear-sighted, lucid assessment of reality calls upon us to enter into a process of community transformation, and eventually to opt for structures of government and lifestyles capable of adjusting to an ever-changing reality.

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iii. Financial capacity to ensure the mission and care of its members until the death of the last member (Can. 114.3)

2. Ability to provide internal leadership — the two structures absolutely essential to the life of an Institute are the ability to hold a General Chapter and the ability to elect a Superior General and Council.

3. Internal autonomy to fulfill its mission (Can. 114.3): to have a sufficient number of qualified members, and the ability to respond to any requests for services from, for example, bishops.

The decisions to be made

It's worth remembering from time to time that a lack of long-term viability does not mean an absence of membership vitality.

In the light of the current situation, decisions need to be made concerning:

- Recruiting new members
- Spiritual heritage



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COMPLETION

When an institute notices certain major weaknesses (rapid numerical decline, lack of vocations, difficulty in assuming leadership on its own, or even economic difficulties), it is appropriate to conclude that it is facing, in the more or less short term, its completion.

What does that mean?

First of all, the term. Completion is derived from the Middle English verb to compleet, which comes via the Old French complir, meaning to complete an act, which in turn came from the Latin complere (to fill, to fill up). This gives rise to the following dynamic: completion is the act of completing or finishing; the state of being complete (the term accomplish comes from the same roots).

The etymology of completion opens us up to its full dimension, which, it should be noted, does

- entering into a cr

The journey's path will include :

- A. A balance between personal and community development
- B. The spiritual and psychological dimension
- C.

- The members live their Institute's own spirituality until the very end.
- The charism, a gift of the Spirit to his Church, is still alive and must be reinterpreted for its relevance in today's context.
- Continuity of the mission (embodied in apostolic works).
 - a. Transfer of responsibilities (management, administration, day-to-day operations).
 - b. Passing on of the spirituality and values to laity, who will carry on the mission.

Defining orientations

In order to define orientations, it is first of all important to establish clearly what belongs to the congregation's canonical entity and its civil entity, and to establish a clear distinction between the governance of our institutes and their temporal administration. We will then be able to define orientations or guidelines for:

- The destination of temporal goods for the continuation of the mission.
- Options for governance, government, administration and facilitation, in order to foster the serenity of an ever-flourishing life for the members.
- Options to support the life of members (accommodation, health care, pastoral care).

The board of directors of the civil entity must adopt a policy by-law on orientation in which the

WHEN WE LOOK AT THE SITUATION CLEARLY, THE NUMBER OF DECISIONS TO BE MADE AND THE PATHS TO BE FOLLOWED, WE HAVE TO ADMIT THAT WE NEED HELP, THAT WE CAN NO LONGER "SUCCEED" ON OUR OWN.

LAST WILL & TESTAMENT

Congregational directives related to the congregation's patrimony

One of the purposes of the process of completion of a religious institute is called "last will and testament". What exactly is it?

The completion process is based on a realistic assessment of the situation of an institute that is experiencing a variety of major weaknesses.

The institute has already embarked on a journey to name its reality, to assume it, and to set out in search of renewed governance and transformation. Services already exist, and each institute must remain creative so that, during its reflection, solutions surface.

The community's last will and testament is the result of this comprehensive undertaking. Throughout the process, the legacy of each institute's charism becomes clearer. Considering the institute's vulnerable situation, the transmission of this charismatic heritage becomes essential. It is truly a time of great intensity, a moment turned towards life, a kairos. With open hands and open hearts, the institute seeks to identify when, how and to whom it wishes to bequeath what the institute's charism has generated. We're talking about its spiritual, missionary, communal and financial heritage.

The adoption of a last will and testament concludes an institute's commitment to its process of completion. While its various

time of vulnerability, still living it as an act of mission.

When an institute can no longer provide for its own governance until its demise, the help of others is required. A commissary, assisted by councillors, is then appointed by Rome in the case of a pontifical institute, or by the local bishop in the case of a diocesan institute. The

3- The transformations to be considered

It is crucial at this stage to remain in a creative dynamic in which each Congregation listens to God to imagine and create its own future and, in so doing, the future of consecrated life — the solution won't fall out of the sky and it won't come from Rome!

RETHINKING GOVERNANCE IN TERMS OF TRANSFORMATION

When some people have problems, they go into “solution-seeking” mode. How can the situation be remedied as quickly as possible?

Others, faced with a problematic situation, seek to identify the cause or causes, clarify the path that led to the emergence of a particular difficulty, and question whether it is temporary or recurrent. The dynamic is then transformed: it is less a matter of finding an immediate solution (although this may be temporarily necessary) than of entering into a much deeper process of transformation with a view to adapting to the real situation.

When it comes to the governance of our religious institutes, we have to recognize that the same two alternatives apply. Experiencing the lack of personnel to take on the various tasks of leadership, we spontaneously go into “solution” mode. What can we come up with in the short term to solve, if only temporarily, our problem?

What the current situation of Canadian religious institutes calls for is a thorough rethinking of governance, from the perspective of adapting it to our reality.

Think of a series of circles getting smaller and smaller towards a central point. At the moment, the leaders are focusing their attention on the situations they have to deal with: a destabilized world; a collectivity that no longer corresponds to the values advocated by our religion; the virtual world that is turning people’s relational universe upside down; a complex — even explosive — social reality in some places; the Church and its values and practices that are increasingly contested, if not ignored; national difficulties in various respects, a rapid decline in

GOVERNANCE

Options offered by canon law

The Code of Canon Law offers various options to Institutes facing a leadership renewal problem and moving towards its completion; these options are listed below; their consequences or implications must be well understood.

N.B. : These options only seem viable in the short term for many Institutes in Canada; in the medium and long term, we need to move towards alternative (collaborative) arrangements.

- A. Suppression cf. Can. 120, 123, 584, 634
- B. Agreggation (clustering) cf. Can. 580
- C. Federation cf. Can. 582
- D. Union cf. Can. 121, 582
- E. Merger cf. Can. 121, 122, 582
- F. Commissary (or apostolic administrator)

For many congregations in Canada, completion will eventually mean the dissolution and disappearance of the congregation in the country. A number of modalities can be envisaged for the transition period.

- i. Reconfiguration (Can. 114-117)
- ii. Modification of the constitutions or juridical character of the Institute (Can. 587, §2)
- iii. Dispense with holding a general chapter — hold rather an assembly
- iv. Management of the institute (Commissary + council) appointed by the bishop for an Institute of diocesan right, or by the Holy See for an Institute of pontifical right

Whichever option you choose, you'll also need to consider any members "separated" from the Institute without having requested or received a dispensation or the Indult of Separation. These are often delicate situations that need to be handled with great care. It would be wise to consider consulting the canonical support services to deal as appropriately as possible with these sensitive situations.

The Generalate

The Generalate usually includes the General Council's place of residence and its administrative centre.

Two options to consider for an international Institute whose generalate is in Canada:

- A. Keeping the Generalate in Canada — you'll then need to analyze the difficulties inherent in obtaining visas if you need to bring in leaders from abroad, the challenges associated with their integration and interculturality, and the impact their departure has in their country of origin.
- B. Moving the Generalate elsewhere while the Institute can still find leaders within its own ranks — in this case, you'll need to consider issues involved in transferring financial support from Canada to other countries.

An Institute could consider separating the administration (administrative offices) and the place(s) of residence of the members of the General Council, a formula already tried out by some Institutes. For example, you might opt for:

- “Relocating” the General Council: the Superior General and the Council no longer live together (each can live in their country)

Modalities will be chosen in which collaborative stewardship and governance provide complementary roles in assuming congregational leadership. Here are a few examples:

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with dioceses and with the laity) and new models of collaboration to perpetuate consecrated life. With this in mind, we could draw inspiration from the document produced by the Dicastery: *New Wine in New Wineskins* (2017).

The Dicastery's meetings with the religious conferences from various countries in 2022 and 2023 suggest that it is open to researching and experimenting with new forms of governance under the following conditions:

- A. That this research and experimentation be carried out in consultation with the local bishop, the Canadian Religious Conference and the Dicastery.
- B. That the entire process be transparent, with frequent communication with the Dicastery.
- C. That the spirit of canon law be respected.

ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

Impact on civil entities

Changes to the canonical structure will have to be reflected in an adaptation to civil law, as the civil entities of the Institutes are subject to federal and provincial laws. The Institutes will take care to include in the official documents of the civil entity all the provisions expressing the orientations (concerning lodging, care of the sisters, burial, cemeteries, archives, devolution of residual goods, etc.) that they wish to see respected by the leaders of the civil entity when no member of the Institute will have the capacity to sit on the board of directors.

Temporal assets

Sound management of ecclesiastical assets requires us to consider the procedures for alienation of temporal assets, including current assets and those that may be inherited in the future. Resources can be found in the documents produced by DICLSAL: Guidelines for the Administration of the Assets in Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (2014) and Economy at the Service of the Charism

and Mission (2018). Canonical references: Can 1254; 1257 - §1; Can. 634; Can. 635; Can 670

Elements to think about:

- Succession (or destination) of assets (cf. Can. 120 and 123) — distribution plan for financial resources
- Debts and contingent liabilities:
 - Pensions payable to retired employees
 - Current civil lawsuits
- Contingency and works funds
- Fixed assets vs. asset disposal (alienation)
- Solidarity between congregations to support those less well-off

Others aspects to consider :

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4- Partners for supporting Congregations

At the beginning of the process

These pathways include capturing the objective data of reality, the decisions to be made, the ways of continuing to embody the charism and how to pass it on.

Réseau Compassion Québec

Website to be announced

hgauthier@reseaucompassionquebec.ca

T: 514-842-9606

Canadian Religious Stewardship (SRRC/CRS)

www.crs-src.org

T: 613-858-3092

CRC theological commission

secretariat@crc-canada.org

Canonical questions

Center for Canonical Services, Saint
Paul University's

<https://ustpaul.ca/fr/faculte-de-droit-canonique-centre-de-services-canoniques->

Governance issues

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Management and administration issues

Association des trésoriers et trésorières
des instituts religieux (ATTIR)

<https://attir.ca/>

T: 514-948-0846

Association of Treasurers of Religious
Institutes (ATRI)

<https://www.atri.on.ca/>

Cell.: 705-840-6605 (talk or text)

Gestion Providentia

<https://gestionprovidentia.ca/>

T: 514-842-9606

Canadian Religious Stewardship
(SRRC/CRS)

www.crs-src.org

T: 613-858-3092

Transfer of works

Gestion Providentia

<https://gestionprovidentia.ca/>

T: 514-842-9606

Canadian Religious Stewardship
(SRRRC/CRS)

www.crs-src.org

T: 613-858-3092

Réseau Compassion Network
(Manitoba)

<https://reseaucompassionnetwork.ca/>

T: 204-410-4960

Catholic Health Alliance of Canada
(CHAC & its PJP member)

<https://www.chac.ca/fr/>

T: 613-567-1200

Catholic Congregational Legacy Charity
(CCLC, en Ontario)

<https://chco.ca>

T: 416-740-0444

