

**CONSTITUTIONS**

**HISTORIC PREAMBLE**

1. The Militia Mariae Sanctae was founded in 1945 by a layman who later became a Benedictine monk [and Abbot], Dom Gerard Lafond, and with the advice of the Reverend Father Dom Gabriel Gontard, then Abbot of St. Wandrille de Fontenelle.

The purpose of the founder was to create for our time a new chivalry, "regular and militant," adapted to the needs of the modern world, dedicated to Mary, for the service and defense of Church and neighbor, in order "to expand the borders here on earth of the Kingdom of God" (Leon Gauthier, "Chivalry"). He called his foundation the "Order of the Knights of Our Lady," in Latin “Militia Sanctae Mariae,” and assigned to it the three following chivalric goals: SERVE THE FAITH - DEFEND THE CHURCH - PROMOTE PEACE AND CHRISTENDOM. He wrote the "Rule of the Knights of Our Lady."

2. The Militia Sanctae Mariae was canonically erected as a confraternity in the crypt of Notre-Dame Sous-Terre in Chartres Cathedral by Bishop Michon, Bishop of Chartres, on December 24, 1964.

It was established in Germany at the Alte Kapelle in Regensburg by Bishop Rudolf Graber on July 19, 1968, in Switzerland at the Cathedral of Notre-Dame de Valère by Bishop Nestor Adam, Bishop of Sion, on 8 April 1969, in Portugal at the chapel of St. Francis by Bishop Gerald Marie Da Silva, Archbishop of Braga, on October 20, 1975, and in Spain at the Shrine of Our Lady of Pena by Bishop Juan Antonio del Val, Bishop of Santander, on 23 in July 1984. The Militia Mariae Sanctae also has members in other countries of Europe and America [and Africa].

3. Following the Letter No. 209-215 of 22 June 1972 addressed to Archbishop Roger Michon by the Secretariat of State of His Holiness, the XVth Chapter General of the Militia Sanctae Mariae, meeting in Chartres on August 15, 1972, noted the desire of the Holy See to recognize just two orders of chivalry, namely the Sovereign Military Hospitaler Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta, and the Equestrian Order of Saint Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

Furthermore, it was declared that the Militia Sanctae Mariae did not identify with the definition in generally use in chanceries that an order of knighthood is an ancient institution, of honorific character, which emanates exclusively from a sovereign authority or itself has such sovereignty.

Consequently, the XVth Chapter General defined the Militia Sanctae Mariae as the regularly and militant company of the Knights of Our Lady. The Chapter General further stressed that the MSM does not seek for itself or for its members any titles, honors, or privileges. A simple confraternity or association of the faithful, it wishes to revive in its members, by means of spiritual observances, rituals, studies and appropriate activities, the true spirit of chivalry in service of Christianity.

4. Under the wise leadership of Bishop Michon and of its founder, the MSM validated its views in light of the Proceedings of the Second Vatican Council and the teachings of the Roman Pontiffs providing authentic interpretation in every way faithful to the tradition of the Church.

After the Holy Gospel, the MSM considers the Second Vatican Council’s Apostolicam Actuositatem Decree on the Lay Apostolate as its basic charter, particularly Chapter Two, Items Nos. 5, 6, 7 and 8, in the following passages:

(No. 5) The redemptive work of Christ, which mainly concerns the salvation of man, also includes the establishment of the temporal order. The mission of the Church, therefore, is not only to bring men the message of Christ and his grace, but also to penetrate and perfect the temporal order through the evangelical spirit.

The lay faithful fulfilling the mission of the Church therefore exercise their apostolate both in the Church and in the world, in the spiritual and in the temporal orders. Although these orders are distinct, they are bound together in the one divine plan, as God himself wishes to reclaim the whole world into a new creature in Christ, beginning here on earth and achieving fullness in the last days...

(No. 6) At a time when new questions are arising and spreading grave errors which radically undermine religion, morality and human society itself, the Council strongly urges the laity, according to their talents and doctrinal training, to play a more active role in the spirit of the Church, in the deepening and defense of Christian principles, and in their application to the problems of our time...

(No. 7) The laity must take as their own responsibility the establishment of the temporal order. Illuminated by the light of the Gospel, led by the spirit of the Church, and motivated by Christian charity, they must act in this area by themselves in a determined manner...

(8) Lay people must profoundly esteem and help according to their means, charities and social welfare initiatives, whether private, public, or international...

In this spirit, the MSM has focused to date on promoting among its members a spiritual and liturgical life and a deep and appropriate doctrinal formation. It has defended and continues to vigorously defend fidelity to the Church and filial obedience to the Pope.

In addition, it has engaged in its apostolates through the press, and founded and runs a number of associations to support and assist the Church of Silence, prisoners and refugees, Christian Europe, for the world of work, and dialogue with other monotheistic religions.

* August 15, 1985.

Article 1 - Statement of Intent  
1. I. In this end of the second millennium which Pope John Paul II described as "a new Advent of the Church and the world" (Redemptor hominis, 1, 7, 20, 22), the situation of the world and of the Church is characterized by:  
- Extending throughout the world of all social and political problems;  
- The influence of totalitarian or liberal materialism;  
- A generalized state of war with an ideological threat of armed conflict that could cause the destruction of humanity;  
- The failure of ideologies and the beginning of a "return of the sacred"; and  
- The meeting of the various religious and philosophical traditions of mankind.

1. 2. This calls the birth of a new chivalry which will fight for God and man, created in God's image. In particular:  
- To defend mankind, humiliated by the false ideologies, using all moral means to inform and illumine public opinion;  
- To defend human life and dignity, from conception to death;  
- To defend religious freedom;  
- To combat all forms of fanaticism, taking care not to succumb to fanaticism itself;  
- To foster a spirit of resistance to totalitarianism and terrorist violence;  
- To awaken the memory of peoples with respect to their Christian origins, culture and traditions, or, at least, to natural law;  
- To promote dialogue between representatives of major religious traditions, first amongst Christians (through ecumenism) and then between the monotheistic religions, and finally with all religions and traditional cultures;  
- To search and highlight, within these traditions, all of the stepping-stones of revealed truth;  
- Finally, to promote "truth as a force for peace" (John Paul II) and eschatological hope of the coming of Christ in glory.

I. 3. Such a program requires the assiduous work of a militant Christian forged by the Code of Chivalry who is altogether:  
- A man of strong faith and intense spirituality, dedicated to Mary, and firmly attached to Christ and the Church;  
- A man of tradition, rooted in his land and his people, but open to the true values of others;  
- A man of honor, whose word is "yes when it is so, not when it is not" (Matthew V, 37), who wages war against all lies;  
- A fighter, fully engaged in the struggle for man's salvation in Christ against the totalitarian ideologies and against Satan;  
- A peacemaker, seeking by all means to bring people together in truth and charity;  
- A servant of the poor, and defender of the oppressed and the persecuted; and  
- A brave, humble and magnanimous man, who knows his limits, but trusts in the omnipotence of God, and thus attract the esteem and confidence of his fellows.

I. 4. The MSM aspires to offer a lifestyle that enables the flowering of vocations for such Chivalry in our time. Its purpose is to train knights for the Third Millennium, and to help enable and direct their fight for God and man.

Article 2 – Definition

2. 1. The MSM is “militant and regular company” of brothers, dedicated to the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church, Our Lady.

2. 2. As a “regular” company, the MSM offers its members:  
- The consecration of their whole life to Christ the King through Mary;  
- The knightly code of honor;  
- The spiritual direction of the "Rule of the Knights of Notre Dame", inspired by the Rule of St. Benedict, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, and St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort;  
- A traditional ritual for the celebration of the Hours of Our Lady, the holding of chapters, processions, pilgrimages and, to varying degrees appropriate to each member, receptions, professions, and the Benedictio novi militis. The observance of these rituals powerfully contributes to making the MSM a sacred space where the man of the [Third Millenium] learns to live among symbols, to enter the tradition, to enter the "way of the knight," and to pursue his own spiritual Quest;  
- Fraternal life, both centered on the sharing of prayer, study and joint activities, and on mutual aid; and  
- The study of the sacred sciences -Scripture, Patristics, Theology, Liturgy- the social doctrine of the Church, and other disciplines and techniques necessary to further the purposes of the MSM.

2. 3. As a “militant” company, the MSM organizes its own activities in harmony with its purposes (Article 2.2.), either:  
- Directly or through its territorial structures;  
- Through its Specialized Internal Sections; or  
- Through associations it has founded and runs.  
It also encourages the individual apostolic initiatives of its members.  
The MSM has no political objective, either for itself or for its members. Illumined by the living Magisterium of the Church, docile to her constant teaching, it analyzes the situation of the world, and sets its own goals and the modes of action, which in no way bind the Holy See or the Catholic hierarchy.

2. 4. As a company dedicated to Mary, the MSM teaches its members love and chivalrous service of the Holy Mother of God. All members offer their prayers to God through the Hours of Our Lady and the Holy Rosary. All members entrust all their actions, large and small, to her. Because they know that it is through Mary and the Holy Spirit that God wishes to establish the Kingdom of Christ the King.  
Members of the MSM also have recourse to the ministry and the protection of St. Michael the Archangel and of all the holy angels of God. They also have a special devotion to St. Joseph, to St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort, and to St. Maximilian Kolbe.

Article 3 - Members of the MSM  
The MSM includes:  
- Members required to perform all the observances of the Rule, forming the *Observantia*;  
- Members subject to a simplified compliance, forming the *Familia*.  
- In addition, its various supporters form a "sphere of influence of the MSM".  
All of these categories comprise lay people, clergy and the religious.

Article 4 - The Observantia  
4. 1. The Observantia includes lay men and women, priests and permanent deacons.  
4. 2. The male members are lay Catholics aged eighteen years or more, in good standing with the law of the Church. After three months of probation, they are received into the bosom of the MSM for a training period of two years minimum. This period, called brotherhood-at-arms, ends through tests of the brother’s knowledge, after which he may be introduced to the next level.  
4. 3. On the favorable opinion of the local Chapter and its Prior’s decision, the brother-at-arms may be allowed to make, for a period of three years (renewable by simple extension), the three interrelated following promises:  
- Conversion of life, and the commitment to live all the circumstances of life according to the laws of chivalry and according to the Rule;  
- Loyalty and obedience to the leaders of the MSM within the limits of the Constitutions and Directories, including a duty of fraternal mutual aid to all members;  
- Defense of the Church, with particular regard to the Faith, the Church hierarchy, its institutions, and its rights, even at the peril of one’s own life, and the commitment to respond to any call of the Sovereign Pontiff to accomplish any mission, even if painful or dangerous, that His Holiness may require of him.  
The brother-at-arms then becomes Squire, and fully-fledged member of the MSM.  
4. 4. After hearing the opinion of the local Chapter of Honor, Preceptor and Prior, the Master may call to profession and to the Benedictio Novi Militis any Squire he deems worthy to be Knight (Rule, Ch. II ), who has at least three years of service in the Squireship.  
4. 5. Given the male chivalric vocation, the hierarchical offices of the MSM (Master, Priors, Preceptors) are reserved for knights, although the office of Preceptor may [exceptionally] be assigned by to a Squire. The Master and Priors may not hold an office of leadership in political parties (Can. 317 § 4).  
4.6. The priests and permanent deacons who wish to associate more closely with the MSM are received into the Observantia as Chaplains of Obedience and Deacons of Obedience, the rights of their Ordinaries and Religious Superiors remaining unaffected.  
4.7. Wives or widows of lay members and of permanent deacons within the Observantia may be received as Sisters or Ladies, depending on the status of their husbands within the Observantia. They may lead or facilitate the confraternities and specialized sections of the MSM and participate in all of its activities.  
The adult daughters of lay members may be received as sisters.  
4.8. Single or widowed members of the Observantia who wish to spend their entire life in service to God and the MSM may be allowed to make private annual (renewable) vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. They are then available to the Magisterium of the MSM for any mission.  
4.9. The lay members of the male Observantia are required to observe the following rules:  
- Every day  
 - At least one hour of the liturgical office of the Knights of Our Lady;  
 - A time of silent prayer.  
- Every week:  
 - Participation at least once in the week, besides Sunday, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass;  
 - Meditation on the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary;  
 - Spiritual reading of a passage of the Rule;  
- Each month:  
 - Assistance of the Preceptoral Chapter.  
- During the year:  
 - Mass and Communion on the occasion of the Solemn Feast of the MSM (the Assumption of Our Lady, August 15) and its five major feasts: Christ the King (the last Sunday of Ordinary Time), Sacred Heart (Friday after the 2nd Sunday after Pentecost), the Immaculate Conception (December 8), St. Michael the Archangel (September 29), and the Nativity of St. John the Baptist (June 24).  
4.10. Sisters and the ladies (4.7) assume some or all of the above observations.

Article 5 - The Familia  
5.1. The members of the Familia, which may be men or women, belong to one of the following bodies:  
5.2. The Meiny of Notre Dame (Domus BeataMariae Virginis) or youth of the MSM, composed of young people between seven and eighteen years of age who are to be trained - body, mind and spirit - in the tradition of Marian chivalry: the pages of Our Lady, on the one hand, and the cadettes of Notre Dame, on the other.  
5.3. The Corps of the Servants of Our Lady, whose members pledge themselves to live by the spirit of the Code of Honor and the Rule and to pray the rosary. The Servants of Our Lady may attend chapters and participate in the MSM activities of their choice.  
The single or widowed servants who wish to devote their entire lives to God in the service of the MSM may be admitted to make private vows of poverty, chastity and obedience within the limits of their state, renewable yearly.  
5.4. The Corps of spiritual support or Prayer Friends and Spiritual Supporters of Our Lady, composed of priests, religious, religious communities, the seriously ill and disabled, whose role is to spiritually enrich the action of the MSM.  
5.5. The priests and permanent deacons who provide the support of their ministry to the MSM without associating themselves to the Observantia (see 4.5) are members of the Familia with the title of Chaplains or Deacons of Devotion.

Article 6 - The Mouvance  
6.1. The mouvance (or sphere of influence) of the MSM is made up primarily of those who belong to associations led by the MSM, or bring to them their moral or material support.  
6.2. It is made in the second place of all those who declare themselves or feel in line with the MSM: supporters, readers of its publications, etc.

Article 7 - Territorial structures  
7.1. The MSM is territorially structured as follows:  
- At the local level, Preceptories; and  
- At the national level, Priories.  
The national groups not yet established as priories are primarily delegations and the provinces.  
The unity and direction of all of these structures is provided by the Magisterium.  
7.2. Members of a preceptory, under the guidance of the preceptor assisted by the chaplain, i meet in Chapter once a month at least.  
The various preceptories in a same region meet together in chapter at least once every three months.  
7.3. Each priory is canonically erected in a central sanctuary, generally dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, by its Ordinary, who receives the title of Prelate of the MSM.  
7.4. Each priory is governed by a prior, assisted by a chaplain, assistants and an elected council. The priors are elected for six years by the knights of each priory, and may be re-elected. Their election is confirmed by the Master.  
Prioral Chapters meet once a year.  
7.5. Priories enjoy relative autonomy within the framework of the constitutions and directories, and respect of the attributions of the Magisterium.  
They cultivate the traditions of their nation.

Article 8 - the Magisterium  
8.1. The MSM is governed by a Master elected for six years by a panel whose composition is determined by the Customary. He may be re-elected. His election must be confirmed by the competent ecclesiastical authority.  
8.2. The central sanctuary of the MSM is the Crypt of Notre-Dame de Sous-Terre of the ancient Cathedral of Notre-Dame de Chartres. The Bishop of Chartres is the Primate of the MSM.  
8.3. The Master of the MSM governs with the assistance of:  
- The Magisterium, composed of officers selected by him,  
- The Chaplain General,  
- An elected Council,  
- Priors, and  
- the Chapter General.  
8.4. The Master is the guardian of the unity of the MSM.  
He ensures compliance with the Constitutions and Directories, in fidelity to the founding spirit. His main prerogatives are:  
- The direct exercise of authority over agencies such as:  
- The Commandery of the Immaculate;  
 - The Information Service of the Magisterium;  
 - External Relations Training Seminars;  
 - Member Groups (Article 4.8); and  
 - Sections and International Confaternities established by the MSM.  
- The establishment and the direct or indirect governance through their officers, of the national MSM structures prior to their erection into priories;  
- The establishment of priories, confirmation of the election of MSM priors, the consideration of prioral reports and the preparation of resulting directives, and the inspection of priories by himself or through visitors;  
- The definition of general guidelines for the MSM and the monitoring of their application according to the directives of the Church;  
- The calling and direction of the Chapter General and of the International Congress, under the conditions set by the customary  
- The convening of the Chapter of Justice, and the control of the execution of judgments arising therefrom;  
- The promulgation of the Customary, in particular after each amendment.

Article 9 - The Directories  
The content of these constitutions is specified by directories, namely:  
9.1. The spiritual directory is its ne varietur founding text, the “Rule” of the Knights of Our Lady, written by the Founder, approved at the time by the first Primate of the MSM, Bishop Roger Michon, and promulgated by Master Jehan de Penfentenyo of Kervéréguin;  
9.2. The Customary, modifiable by the Chapter General;  
9.3. The Ritual, established by the Founder, from the monuments of the liturgical tradition and of Chivalry.

Article 10 – Authentic Interpretation  
10.1 The authentic interpretation of these constitutions and directories is given by the Founder whilst he is alive and, afterward, by the Chapter General in the spirit of the Founder.  
10.2 The authentic interpretation is based on the Latin and French (original language) texts.

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