



Rome, May 31, 2011

To the Whole Congregation

Approval of the Congregation's Proper Liturgical Calendar and Ritual of SSCC Religious Profession

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are writing to let you know that the Holy See, through the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, has approved two important documents relating to the liturgical life of the Congregation. They are our proper Calendar (approved on March 31, 2011) and the Ritual of Religious Profession (approved on April 13, 2011).

The approval is the fruit of the work entrusted by the two General Governments three years ago to a commission headed by Felipe F. Lazcano. We want to thank them for their constant dedication and good work.

The preparation of these two documents is one of the responses that the present General Governments wanted to give to the request of the 2006 General Chapters, which recalled the importance of preserving and updating the Congregation's spiritual patrimony. What's more, celebrating in a particular way the same liturgical feasts and having one ritual for religious professions strengthens our communion, nourishes our faith and roots us as a Congregation in the mystery of Christ which is realized in the liturgy.

SSCC Proper Liturgical Calendar

The first liturgical calendar of the Congregation was approved on July 5, 1825. Over the years, various changes were introduced. The most recent liturgical calendar was approved by the Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship on January 8, 1976.

With the development of the new Constitutions another step was taken as regards the liturgical orientations of the Congregation. In their 1985 Constitutions the sisters included Statute 20, on the particular feasts that they celebrate. That Statute was modified in the General Chapter of 2000 including in greater detail the feasts of the protectors. On the brothers' part, the new Constitutions of 1990 also include Statute 18 on the celebrations proper to the Congregation.

The proper Calendar just approved takes those Statutes as the basic reference, incorporating the feasts that were not in the previous liturgical calendar (from 1976). Included are celebrations from the General Roman Calendar as well as others more proper to the Congregation. The approval of the Holy See refers to these "proper" celebrations. The other celebrations included in our Statutes, which do not require a special formula, do not need to be approved as they are already in the Roman Missal.

It is good to keep this distinction in mind:

- a) Celebrations which appear in the document approved by the Holy See (Proper Calendar).
- b) The complete list of celebrations that are special to the Congregation (which includes the ones proper to it and others that belong to the whole Church). That list includes the titular feasts, patrons and protectors of the Congregation.

Both lists can be found in an annex to this letter. You might be surprised to see on July 10 the celebration of *Saints Augustine Zhao Rong, Priest and Companions, Martyrs*. This is a technical point. Since we celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Peace on July 9, we are allowed to celebrate the universal memorial for that day (*SS. Augustine Zhao Rong and companions*) on the following day, July 10.

The texts for our proper celebrations (Mass, Readings and Liturgy of the Hours) have already been presented to the Holy See. When we receive the approval, we communicate that to the Congregation and they will be published.

Ritual of SSCC Religious Profession

The Congregation's first Ceremonial was approved by Pope Leo XII on September 27, 1825. It was a ceremonial for the reception of the habit, profession of vows, renewal of vows, the chapter of faults and the blessing of the red adoration mantle. It is interesting that the texts were the same for the brothers and sisters, with the exception of the blessing of the veil for the sisters. The formula of profession was essentially the same that we continue to use today.

The Founder spoke of the method used and the purpose intended:

We have especially chosen prayers which could stir up devotion toward the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the most Sweet Heart of Mary. We have adopted for our use some blessings and prayers formerly used in other Congregations, which appear to better correspond to the purpose of our Institute; we have only added what would seem to particularly express our perpetual consecration to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

We have taken as our principal goal to enkindle the piety of the brothers and sisters of our Congregation.

We desired that even in the ceremony of their reception our novices appreciate what zeal must direct their souls, what charity must inflame their hearts, what fervor must animate their payer and what obedience must accompany all their actions.

We also wanted our professed, in make their vows, to understand that during their whole lives, they must be fervent in psalmody, constant in adoration and reparation for the insults made to the divine majesty and finally compassionate toward the suffering of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Most Sweet Heart of Mary. In this way our brothers will be renewed in spirit of their vocation, each time in putting on their religious habit, they will remember the prayers used in blessing those garments.¹

That ceremonial was used for decades by both branches until the publication of the Roman Ritual of Religious Profession (1970) after the Second Vatican Council. The Decree of Approbation of that Ritual urges religious institutes to adapt it to their own spirituality, *"taking into account that the rite of profession must express the nature and spirit of each religious family, they can adapt this ritual so that it clearly shows their proper character."*² That adaptation is what has now been approved. In general, it maintains the structure of the Roman ritual, while introducing SSCC accents and nuances in the

¹ Annales des Sacrés Cœurs 1963, p. 278.

² From the Decree of the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship approving the Roman Ritual for Religious Profession (February 2, 1970).

questioning of the candidates, the giving of symbols, gestures of welcome, in some prayers and, of course, in the formula of profession itself.

What we wanted was to have a profession ritual which would help us celebrate religious profession as consecration to the Sacred Hearts.³ We wanted a ritual which manifests and strengthens our identity, promotes communion and encourages us in our mission. The same motivations that the Good Father expressed in his petition in 1824 continue to be valid for us today.

The Ritual, which has been approved, is a ritual for the whole Congregation and that involves being attentive to the reality of the two branches, brothers and sisters, and to the variety of cultures in the places where the Congregation is present. The unity of the Congregation is something we give attention to right from the time of initial formation. In fact there are novitiates where the brother and sister novices receive formation in the Congregation's history and spirituality together. In different places it is already the usual practice for brothers and sisters to celebrate first profession, final profession and sometimes renewal of vows together. For that reason the Ritual has three chapters: one for celebrations of the brothers, another for celebrations of the sisters and a third for celebrations together.

Both the Proper Calendar and the Ritual of religious Profession will be published by the General Governments in the three official languages of the Congregation. We ask the Major Superiors to take the responsibility for having translations done in other languages. We ask you to be patient because, beside the painstaking task of translating, each version must receive express approval of the Congregation for Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. At present the ritual in Spanish is already available on the Congregation's webpage.

Fraternally in the love of the Sacred Hearts,



Rosa Mª Ferreiro ssc
Superior General



Javier Álvarez-Ossorio ssc
Superior General

APPENDICES

- Official approval of the Congregation's Proper Liturgical Calendar.
- Calendar of the Congregation's special celebrations.
- Official approval of the Ritual of SSCC Religious Profession.

³ Cf. Constitutions 13 (Brothers) and Constitutions 13 (Sisters).