

CONSTITUTION
for a
SOCIETY OF PILGRIMS

*Overcome evil with good, falsehood with truth, and hatred
with love.*

– Peace Pilgrim, undated

Offered on the Altar
at Loretto Chapel,
Santa Fe, New Mexico

by its founder,
Rev. Alan R. Kemp, D.Min
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On this the 21st day of October, 2006

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This heavenly city ... calls citizens out of all nations, and gathers together a society of pilgrims of all languages, not scrupling about diversities in the manners, laws, and institutions whereby earthly peace is secured and maintained, but recognizing that, however various these are, they all tend to one and the same end of earthly peace. It therefore is so far from rescinding and abolishing these diversities, that it even preserves and adopts them, so long only as no hindrance to the worship of the one supreme and true God is thus introduced. Even the heavenly city, therefore, while in its state of pilgrimage, avails itself of the peace of earth, and, so far as it can without injuring faith and godliness, desires and maintains a common agreement ... regarding the acquisition of the necessaries of life, and makes this earthly peace bear upon the peace of heaven; for this alone can be truly called and esteemed the peace of reasonable creatures, consisting as it does in the perfectly ordered and harmonious enjoyment of God and of one another in God.

– St. Augustine of Hippo, 354-430 C.E.

The City of God: Excerpts on the Two Cities

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PROLOGUE

The allure of the spiritual journey is a universal impulse. All are called to reunion with what we may call God, the Divine, or the Holy. Throughout history, many of those who have answered “the call” have done so in the context of living a consecrated life as members of a religious order, institute, society, congregation, or community, which have served as frameworks for the journey. This has been so both East and West.

Some suggest that in the West what are called “institutes of consecrated life” and “societies of apostolic life” are in decline because the assumptions on which they depend no longer correspond to the realities of the age in which we live, including: God rules from on high; topdown hierarchical systems provide the necessary structure for the journey; knowledge is transmitted from teacher to learner; and religious doctrines are divinely revealed (and therefore not subject to human reason and questioning) (O’Murchu, 2005).

The purpose of this constitution is to provide a framework in which the contemporary seeker can pursue the goal of perfection as a “monk in the world” (Teasdale, 2002); follow his or her chosen spiritual path; live a life set aside for service to God; and do so freely and in association with fellow sojourners. It is based on the assumptions that there is profound meaning and purpose in life; spirituality is universal; nothing in creation is static; everything is changing; growth requires change; change is neither altogether random or deterministic, but cyclical; and our preferred destination involves personal and social growth as well as awakening to a deep relationship with underlying truth and mystery. In short, we seek to grow as human beings, ascend spiritually, find Peace within ourselves, and promote it in the world.

CHAPTER 1 MISSION

The Mission of the Society of Pilgrims shall be to promote both personal virtue and goodness in the world, through love of God and neighbor, 'neighbor' being broadly defined as all the people of the world. We shall endeavor to accomplish these goals through acts of compassion and by responding to evil with good, falsehood with truth, and hatred with love (Peace Pilgrim, undated).

While the following list is by no means complete, acts of compassion, as commonly understood in the West (Ecumenical Order of Charity, 2005) include feeding the hungry; giving drink to the thirsty; clothing the naked; nursing the sick; visiting those who are shutoff and isolated; working for freedom, justice and peace; instructing the ignorant; counseling the doubtful; comforting the sorrowful; forgiving injury; reconciling people with God; binding up the wounds of the disenfranchised; and praying for all.

We honor those who seek righteousness, make peace, are pure of heart, grant mercy, walk in the way of humility, as well as the poor in spirit and those who mourn, for we recognize them as the inheritors of God's beneficence.

CHAPTER 2 UNIVERSAL SPIRITUALITY

Religious are called to be citizens of whatever place they inhabit, children of the cosmos who do not recognize any absolute claims except those of God and hence can transcend the artificial boundaries humans have introduced to divide up land, resources, peoples, and even religion itself.

– Sandra M. Schneiders

cited in D. O’Murchu, 2005, p. 150

In the tradition of Thomas Merton, Dom Bede Griffiths, Father Francis Mahieu, Wayne Teasdale, and countless others, the Society is born of the Western Christian tradition. It proclaims the universal presence of God’s Kingdom yet it is profoundly dedicated to promoting an interchange between Western and Eastern spiritual traditions such that we might uncover universal truth, find common ground, and promote Peace among pilgrims of diverse paths. In this vein, we welcome into our midst all sincere seekers.

O’Murchu (2005) describes the universal spiritual allurements as being like a primordial homecoming to something we have always sensed and a place we should have never abandoned. He suggests that the universal spirituality evoked in our creative witness to the Kingdom of God can be seen in an unfolding consciousness in which we understand spirituality as *universal*; that we human beings are *interdependent* of each other and all other expressions of creation; that creation itself is unfolding in *holistic* unity; that we must strive for *ecological health*; and that as “creatures of the clay,” we have our being within an *earthly spirituality* we share with the rest of God’s creation.

CHAPTER 3 PRESENCE & PROPHETIC VOICE

O'Murchu (2005) suggests that “ ... Religious are missioned to be people of value, acting as catalysts ... ” (p. 161). He suggests, it is the role of people living a consecrated life to celebrate those values which enhance the growth of the Kingdom of God, thereby bringing fresh hope to the world. In addition, he suggests the witness of Religious should hold to account those forces that desecrate the sacredness of creation – injustice and oppression – which he suggests evolve out of “the deluded compulsion to dominate and control everything in the universe” (p. 169).

As “monks in the world” (Teasdale, 2002) and spiritual pilgrims, Members are encouraged to discern for themselves how to be both presence and prophetic voice by truly living our Rule of Life – endeavoring to overcome evil with good, falsehood with truth, and hatred with love (Peace Pilgrim, undated).

CHAPTER 4 COLLEGIALITY

Relations between members of the Society shall be governed by the principle of collegiality – based on the recognition of our humanity and equality – not on position, rank, or authority. While some Members may be tasked for special responsibilities within the Society, even those serving in leadership roles shall be servants to the rest, not masters. Relationships between Members should therefore be guided by principles that foster mutual respect and integrity, including the following (O’Murchu, 2005):

1. We are all engaged in a dynamic, interactive, and cooperative spiritual endeavor in which all are equal.;
2. Everyone is endowed with wisdom. Evoking and developing it will often best occur in a collegial context and therefore is a mutual responsibility;
3. Cooperation is more important than competition;
4. Mature relationships with God, each other, the environment, and with self require a healthy sense of self-sufficiency, which helps insulate one from the extremes of codependency and feeling the need to dominate others;
5. One’s own successes should be measured by growth and accomplishment, not by comparing them to other people’s achievements;
6. We should be aware that each of us is human, endowed with creaturely limitations. Therefore, it is better to take lots of little steps than big unattainable ones. Let us rejoice in our human accomplishments;

7. Authenticity means being open and congruent – the outer self matching the inner – guided by an inner sense of integrity, love, and truth;
8. We human beings have feelings. Therefore, we should strive to be in touch with them without wallowing in them or projecting them onto others;
9. When empowered, we should develop the grace to “grow” this power by giving it back to others, not leaving them to feel weak or diminished;
10. We should live our lives in a way that fosters soulfulness and an abiding awareness of our own creaturely vulnerabilities. In this respect, we should strive to accept our own vulnerabilities and be tolerant of those of others;
11. Recognizing our moral and spiritual values to be at our core, we should be mindful of the indignation we feel in response to the wrongs we see perpetrated in the world, channeling these feelings so as to accomplish the greatest and highest good.
12. We should be quick to experience and express gratitude to God and each other for all we have.

CHAPTER 5 INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY

While some may find their place in residential communities, monks in the world (Teasdale, 2002) should expect to live out their spiritual and corporal lives singly or as house holders in family units. Therefore, the living laboratory of the monastery must give way to the idea of a monastery without walls, making it necessary for the monk in the world to develop “intentional community” – the kind of community that mindfully engages willing collaborators in the process of spreading the Kingdom of God.

O’Murchu (2005) suggests that community exists for a threefold purpose. To help discern God’s call; to identify factors that get in the way of growing the Kingdom of God; and, to determine the resources and practices necessary for the task. He suggests, communities need several important qualities to accomplish it:

1. The wisdom and skills that invoke the adult self in each other;
2. The ability to foster a climate of trust and challenge;
3. A willingness to grow deeper in faith through prayerful reflection, regular reading, devotion to contemplative stillness, and a regular review of our corporate prayer structures;
4. Fidelity to theological study and reflection;
5. An informed awareness of what hinders and fosters cultural growth;
6. An openness to using whatever resources are available to help us discern “the signs of the times.”

CHAPTER 6 ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK

1. We shall be called “Society of Pilgrims” for short, a more complete name being “Society of Pilgrims of Peace and Ascension.”
2. The Members shall be those who seek perfection as “monks in the world” (Teasdale, 2002), complete an approved formation program consisting of Postulancy; a Novitiate; and who are bound by the Rule of Life as expressed in this Constitution through temporary or perpetual vows of Stability, Conversion of Life, and Integrity; and, who have not resigned, died, or been dismissed for cause. The particulars of how the formation process shall be organized and how the Vows shall be understood are detailed in the Rule of Life (Chapter 7).
3. The Servant-Moderator shall act as the chief executive, charged with the task of accomplishing the will of the Society as expressed by its Council, and in consultation with the Members.
 - a. The first Servant-Moderator shall be the founder.
 - b. In the event the Servant-Moderator resigns; dies; or loses capacity, as generally understood by law, the next most senior Member of the Council, calculated from time of profession, shall call an election within thirty days in which all Members shall have the opportunity to vote on a successor.
 - c. A successor shall be elected to a six year term with a two thirds majority of all Members voting. If no one is elected on a first ballot, discussion shall continue and the senior Council member shall call for new ballots until a new Servant-Moderator is elected.
 - d. The senior member of the Council shall function as acting Servant-Moderator during any interim.

- e. Successor Servant-Moderators may be elected for one additional six year term.
4. A Council made up of up to twelve Counselors shall make all decisions on behalf of the Society. The Servant-Moderator shall always be one member of the Council. In the early days, it is expected that the membership of the Society as a whole shall also function as the Council. As membership in the Society grows beyond twelve, the Members as a whole shall decide how many of their number, and who among them, will serve on the Council. Should this occur, terms will be for two years. No decision of the Council on any matter shall be binding on the Society without prior consultation with the Members, via the phone, e-mail, in writing, or at the General Assembly (Chapter 8).
- a. Meetings may be held face-to-face, via conference calls, through the mail, by e-mail, or other methods.
 - b. No business may be conducted without a quorum of at least half of all Council members participating.
 - b. While the goal is always unanimous consensus, for any decision to be binding it shall require a simple majority of those Council members voting.
 - c. This Constitution may be amended with a two thirds vote of the Members of the entire Society.
5. With the approval of the Council, Local Chapters may form wherever Members may find them helpful. In the event local chapters are formed, the parent organization shall then be considered a General Chapter. In this event, this Constitution shall serve as the Constitution for the General Chapter. Local Chapters shall establish their own by-laws, which must be approved by the Council of the General Chapter.

6. The Society shall seek incorporation as a legal entity in the State of Washington. This Constitution shall be considered integral to the articles of incorporation.
7. The Society shall have the authority to contract in the same manner and to the same extent as a natural person to buy, sell, lease, mortgage and in every way deal in real and personal property in the same manner as a natural person may, and without the order of any court; to receive bequests and devises for its own use or upon trusts, to the same extent as natural persons may; and to appoint attorneys in fact.

CHAPTER 7 RULE OF LIFE

Prospective Members shall normally complete a program of religious formation to include Postulancy, Novitiate, and Profession, as detailed below. In exceptional circumstances, such as when a candidate has already completed a postulancy and novitiate in another religious community, the Servant-Moderator shall, in consultation with the Council, be authorized to relax the normal procedures.

The formation process is based largely on the *Steps Toward Inner Peace* recommended by Peace Pilgrim (undated). They are in alignment with the world's great wisdom teachings and religious traditions.

1. Postulancy. Any person wishing to become a Member of the Society may become a postulant, or aspirant, by making application. Those seen to have potential as Religious shall begin a period of discernment and preparation, which shall last no less than six months, but which may extend over a somewhat longer period. During this time, the postulant will consult with a preceptor and embark upon the following four preparations:

a. Right attitude. By this we mean endeavoring to face life squarely, go below the surface, striving to uncover for oneself the verities and realities of life. The postulant is challenged to address whatever personal problems that may exist. The postulant should also be prepared to join with others in an effort to solve collective, or social problems. No problem, personal or social, should be avoided.

b. Authenticity. As Peace Pilgrim has said, there is nothing new about good beliefs except the putting them into practice. Responding to natural laws of human conduct propels one toward harmony with oneself and others. In this step, we simply ask you to put into practice all the good

things you already believe.

c. Vocation. By this we mean endeavoring to determine one's place in the bigger scheme of things. This may include decisions about religious life, one's life work; whether to be celibate, ascetic, or assume the role of "house holder" in the context of a committed relationship.

d. Simplicity of living. In this preparation we ask the postulant to consider one's possessions and activities. As Peace Pilgrim observed, unnecessary possessions are really unnecessary burdens. Cluttered lives are out of harmony with the natural order of things. In this step we ask the postulant to consider the distinction between what one wants and what one actually needs in order to achieve one's purpose, one's vocation, in life. In this step, we ask the postulant to simplify their life, so as to bring their inner and outer life into better harmony.

2. Novitiate. In the Novitiate, the Novice takes on the outward tunic of a Religious and an inward commitment to a process of purification. The Novitiate must last for at least one year before Profession may occur. Barring compelling reasons, the Novice and Vocations Director should be able to discern in no more than three years whether or not the candidate should make Profession of Vows. During the Novitiate, the Novice's work will focus on four purifications:

a. Purification of the bodily temple. In this purification we ask the Novice to look at their lifestyle in terms of diet, exercise, sleep, work, stress, etc. Wherever there is a lack of harmony, we suggest the Novice take steps to put them right, changing eating habits, getting proper sleep, exercise, and a balanced amount and type of work.

b. Purification of thoughts. In this step we ask the Novice to go beyond right speech and right behavior, to think right things, i.e. positive, but reasonable, thoughts about others, oneself, life in general, and God.

Peace Pilgrim suggests that just as negative thoughts can have an adverse effect on one's overall well-being, positive thoughts can yield beneficial effects. In this purification, we suggest looking at all one's thoughts and relationships. We encourage the Novice to do whatever can be done to resolve hard feelings and reconcile with anyone with whom he or she has a conflict.

c. Purification of desires. Peace Pilgrim suggests we focus our desire on bringing oneself into harmony with the natural laws of human conduct and one's vocation, or calling.

d. Purification of motives. In this purification we ask the Novice to look at the motivation for their behavior. We ask the Novice to take steps to ameliorate any motives which are driven by greed, self-seeking, self-glorification, or even the attainment of inner peace, if it be selfish. Instead, we ask the Novice to shift his or her focus outwardly, to others, encouraging him or her to make serving others their primary motivation.

3. Profession. Once the candidate has completed the Novitiate and is resolved to enter the Society as a Member, the Novice writes a brief letter of application and the Vocations Director submits a recommendation to the Council, which will poll the Members. If the Members agree, the Council will ask the Servant-Moderator to accept the candidate's Vows on behalf of the Society.

At this stage, the formation process comes to fruition with the four relinquishments, outlined below. Together with the Preparations and Purifications, the four Relinquishments shall be considered integral to our Rule of Life and the Vow of Conversion of Life, although conversion is really an ongoing process of spiritual transformation, which likely had its inception long before.

a. Relinquishment of self-will. With this relinquishment the candidate subordinates the lower, “selfish” self, to a higher “selfless” self that is concerned with higher good. This includes transforming the not-good things one feels motivated toward so the higher self can take control of one’s life.

b. Relinquishment of feelings of separateness. With this relinquishment the candidate acknowledges that none of us are really separate from the rest of humanity and the universe. Rather, he or she, comes to accept that we are all part of a bigger whole. With this relinquishment, the candidate embraces the oneness of all and endeavors to work toward the good of all.

c. Relinquishment of attachments. With this relinquishment, the candidate acknowledges that material objects are here merely for our use and agrees to transform the attachment to them such that they become for him or her merely tools with which to accomplish higher good. With this relinquishment, the candidate also acknowledges that he or she can not possess any other person or group and pledges to let go of any need to control other people, groups, or social institutions.

d. Relinquishment of negative feelings. With this relinquishment the candidate resolves to live in the present moment, acknowledges that one’s own feelings of hurt and anger really come from one’s own wrong actions, reactions, and inactions. In doing so, he or she also comes to see that when others do or say harmful things they do so out of a similar malaise, making it easier to overlook trespasses and act in the spirit of love.

In addition to the Vow of Conversion of Life, the candidate makes Vows of Stability and Integrity at the time of Profession. In this way, we honor the three traditional Benedictine vows (Stability, Conversion of Life, and Obedience), but adapt them to present understanding, the charism of our Society, and the contemporary social environment. With the Vow of Stability, the candidate promises to continue the spiritual journey as a “monk in the world” (Teasdale, 2002) and Member of the Society for a specified period of time or in perpetuity. With the Vow of Conversion of Life, the candidate promises to continue the ongoing process of spiritual transformation in accordance with our Rule of Life. With the Vow of Integrity, the candidate pledges to listen for and respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, Spirit of Truth, and Conscience; be faithful to the charism of the Society; consult with its Members on matters of mutual importance; and honor the decisions of its leaders with respect to the administration of the Society as a whole.

In addition to professing Vows publicly, the candidate shall deliver a written declaration attesting to the same, which is to be placed on the Altar. Upon completion of the Profession of Vows, the Member is clothed with the scapular, which shall serve as an outward sign of that which has already occurred inwardly. The Servant-Moderator shall retain the written declaration on behalf of the Society.

CHAPTER 8 OUTWARD SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

1. The habit. Religious dress shall serve as an outward sign of an internal reality. It symbolizes one's commitment to the Rule of Life and is a visible sign of hope to others.

For liturgical use, the habit of the Society shall be an ankle-length, off-white, tunic with hood, which shall be worn by Novices and Professed Members. In addition, Professed Members shall wear an off-white scapular. The cincture may be white or off-white. For regular use, an ankle-length, dark navy blue, tunic with hood (and scapular for professed Members) shall be the norm. The cincture may be a simple black belt or navy blue rope cincture. Blue has been adopted for regular use because it is in the tradition of Peace Pilgrim, who wore a short navy blue scapular over her clothing as a symbol of her message of peace. For more casual wear and general use, we have adopted a "working habit" or "half habit," a waist-length blue denim jacket with hood. This may be worn over street clothing. When participating in non-liturgical Society functions or when representing the Society in public, Members are asked to wear the blue habit, clerical attire, or working habit, as seems most appropriate.

2. The Servant-Moderator may carry a simple wood rondel, or staff, as a symbol of office.

3. Appellations. The terms "Brother" and "Sister" shall apply to Members of the Society, unless the Member is otherwise ordained or in Holy Orders, in which case he or she may also use the clerical title appropriate to his or her faith tradition.

4. Written designation. When corresponding or referred to in public literature, Members who have professed Vows shall be identified with the letters, "sp" (Society of Pilgrims) after their names.

CHAPTER 9 RELIGIOUS OFFICE & MINISTRIES

1. Exercise of religious office. We recognize that Members will come from a diversity of spiritual paths. Those who hold ordinations, Holy Orders, or religious offices may exercise those offices and/or officiate at services or liturgies on behalf of the Society when asked to do so, so long as this is also in accord with the norms of the Member's other religious jurisdiction and/or faith tradition.

Nothing in this Constitution shall preclude a Member from walking with integrity on his or her chosen spiritual path so long as the Member is also faithful to the Vows made as a Member of the Society of Pilgrims.

2. Ministries. Professed Members who wish to establish formal ministries under the legal umbrella of the Society may do so by applying for a Charter. Applications shall be approved by a majority vote of the Council. Members with chartered Ministries shall provide an annual written report to the Council.

CHAPTER 10 ASSOCIATES & OBLATES

Persons who feel aligned with our charism and the mission of the Society but who do not feel called to life as a professed Member may seek affiliation as an Associate or Oblate. Associates are those who have an affinity with our charism and are friends of the movement. Oblates, as the name implies, choose to make a gift of themselves and their time to the Society. The Members of the Society – local or General Chapter – shall determine who is admitted. Associate or Oblate status may be ended at any time by either a consensus of the Members or the Associate or Oblate him or herself.

Associates and Oblates share in the life of the Society as mutually agreed. They are to be addressed by their given names. Associates and Oblates do not generally wear the Society habit, although he or she may or may not wish to wear an alb during liturgical functions. Associates and Oblates are welcome to participate in Convocations and the General Assembly as non-voting participants.

CHAPTER 11 CONVOCATIONS & GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Since Members will be monks in the world” (Teasdale, 2002) and will likely live apart from each other, an annual Convocation of the Society shall be held at a place that seems most convenient to the membership. Convocations shall be a “coming together” of Members and Associates – a time for renewal, prayer, and fellowship, in addition to being an opportunity to meet in General Assembly.

General Assembly. The General Assembly shall be our chief consultive body. It will consist of all professed Members (each of whom shall have an equal voice), is called and chaired by the Servant-Moderator or designee, and meets every year during Convocation (or more often if necessary).

To call the General Assembly into session, other than during a regularly scheduled Convocation, the Servant-Moderator, or designee, will choose a location which is the most convenient for the majority of the Members to attend without undue hardship. The Servant-Moderator, or designee will solicit topics for discussion thirty days prior to the meeting and communicate an agenda at least seven days before the session. The Servant-Moderator, or designee, will publish the minutes of the General Assembly within thirty days after the session adjourns.

CHAPTER 12 ENDING SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Society may end through resignation, death, or dismissal for cause. Members are free to resign at any time by making a short written request to the Servant-Moderator. They may be dismissed for cause by a vote of the Council if the Member behaves in a way that is blatantly and persistently inconsistent with their Vows or that causes public scandal to the Society.

Anyone ending their membership in the Society should understand, however, that when Vows are professed they are promises made to God. As such, whether the Vows can be dispensed with is a matter between the pilgrim and God. It is not something a representative of the Society is empowered to accomplish.

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