

# The Determination of GC XVIII from the Constitutions

November 2019  
February 2020

## Introduction

The Determination *‘To follow Jesus Christ closely who chose poverty for himself’* can, with the action of the Spirit, illumine and change our life.

The following work offers us the possibility of making a first reading of the Determination with our Constitutions as background.

For this we propose a reflective reading of the Determination. In doing so, their numbers make reference to other numbers of the Constitutions (CFI), the Complementary Norms and Directives (CND) and, in some cases, additional reference to the Experiential and Updated Reading of the Formula (EURF) are done.

We want to offer help to discover the richness of a background that contains a brief, simple and actualized Determination, which has tried to "make our charismatic identity more visible" (3), to go in search of "the essential" (6).

We remember that *“what fills and satisfies the soul consists, not in knowing much, but in understanding the realities profoundly and savoring them interiorly”* [SpEx 2]. This proposal is situated in this perspective and along this line. We do not intend to "know more" from our sources, a theoretical knowledge. We want to approach them to savor them, to pray over them - personally and in groups - and to take advantage of reading, reflection, prayer, including a sincere examination that we keep doing about our life, so as to communicate among us and encourage each other to live that which we want to be lived.

So, here we have a help to enrich our reading of the Determination

- a motive to prepare for the action of the Spirit
- a possibility to warm the heart with our charismatic sources
- an opportunity to probe the vitality of our following of the Lord
- the occasion to encourage a rich sharing that animates us to a greater commitment.

We present it as sheets:

- ✓ Each exercise starts with a presentation of some numbers of the Determination in parenthesis, and one should read them in the order that they appear.
- ✓ The sheet then refers to some numbers in the CFI. One is invited to read them slowly, pray over them and allow the Lord to interpellate our lives.
- ✓ Some questions are formulated for the purpose of helping in the reflection and deepening of what is read. They are not to be answered one by one. We can take note of what are suggested to us by some and keep making our own account of where the Lord leads us and what new steps He invites us to take. They can also serve as aid in our sharing.

Whether it is a personal exercise or sharing in an encounter, it can be very useful to begin by spending a few minutes to quiet down, to focus, to become aware of how we arrived at that moment, that reflection or that meeting, of “*where am I going and to what,*” and to end by asking:

- What animates me to ask the Lord as grace?
- What has been the strongest feeling in me?
- What moves or motivates me?

Each province or community, as it sees fit, can program and use these sheets or exercises freely in order to profit more from them.

## The Constitutions, 'light and guide' on the way of the Lord

*GC XVIII invites us to deepen in our identity in order to live in the midst of the world as true Hijas de Jesus (1), wants the entire Congregational Body to remain in its well-being (2), encourages us to make more visible a charismatic identity weakened not so much in the tasks as in the being (3). Hence the invitation to read some numbers of the CFI, CND and EURF, in order to discover our identity in them.*

✚ Slowly read the numbers of the Determination mentioned above in parentheses and then the numbers 4, 5 and 6. Let them resonate in you and notice where you feel more identified with, more reflected, and in what you don't feel much or feel less.

After this reading, read calmly **CFI2** as one who asks for the grace to "be received", to "*belong to our Congregation (...) and to serve God our Lord in it...*" In the Formula of the Institute, Mother Candida reflected her experience of life penetrated by the Gospel and explained for us, in three wishes, the evangelical options that the Spirit had led her to take.

- What meaning do you think does the *third paragraph of the Formula*, or the third wish of Mother Candida have? Looking at the aim expressed in the previous paragraphs, what do you think Mother Candida intends with those words?

✚ The end of No. 6 of the Determination points to our reality, refers to attitudes that we sometimes manifest in our daily lives in a fairly natural or normal way. Yes, through what is expressed there, we look at **CFI 144, 145**,

- Are we capable of discovering the contrast between a frequently lived reality and what our vocation offers us?
- What concrete realizations could our life have if we take to our daily practice of something of what our Constitutions tell us here?
- In the light of following the Lord, how is my *freedom* in the face of material goods? Do I know how to use them "*inasmuch as*" they lead me to the aim? What is my inner attitude when sometimes 'I feel the external effects of poverty'?
- What movements arise in me before the vital experience of '*sharing the condition of the poor*'?

To conclude

I end by thanking the Lord for the gift of what has been experienced. I become aware of the feelings that have arisen in me. I take note of that which was stronger. To where does it lead me?

### The Determination as an invitation to deepen on our identity.

✚ The Determination, understood as an invitation or call; moreover, as “*a necessity, an urgency, a charismatic healing*” (7), leads us to understand the CFI as the heart of an identity that we wish to live as a gift from God. Through the Determination, as through a mirror, we look into the depth and there it is!... what Mother Candida wanted from us!

**CFI 3** gives us a key in reading the rest of the Constitutions.

- What helps do you discover that are offered to us Hijas de Jesus in order to “*preserve, direct and carry forward in His divine service this least Congregation...?*”
- How should the CFI be understood then?

✚ Most of us, members of the Body are sisters definitively incorporated by perpetual profession. When we start our reading of the CFI and in encountering parts III and IV, we remember our sisters in an initial formation that will become permanent. We can look at the catalogs and pray for them. But without a doubt, something that is going to help them very particularly is to consider that what is being asked of them is being asked of us all; in fact, we are asked to be ‘help’ for each other to progress in the way of the Lord (**CFI 94**), the witness as a stimulus for those who begin our way.

- **CFI 52** “*Anyone who enters (...)* Everyone who for me has given up home... What good news does it offer us?”
- **CFI 64:** “*All should love poverty as a mother,*” “*according to the measure of holy discretion,*” “*as Jesus Christ himself...*” They are expressions that give a value to poverty in our vocation. What value or force do you believe poverty has in our vocation?
- “*To practice this virtue,*” “*learning not to have the use...,*” “*to place at the service of all...*” “*not to dispose of anything...*” Why do you think they talk about learning? What do these lessons entail? Do you think there are other learnings similar to this throughout our entire lives?

✚ **CFI 78 and 79.** From the beginning of our religious vocation we are invited to set our gaze at the mission and exercise discernment so that, in function of the mission, there should be no lack of “what is necessary”. To carry it out we always count on a “mediation”. If we look at **CFI 163**, as Hijas de Jesus we are still being asked the same.

↪ **CFI 89, 102, 103:** Poverty is presented as a 'lifestyle', a mode of relationship with things, with creation, with persons, with God. It forms part of a totality. The poverty of Jesus is availability and obedience to the Father ...

- *How do you understand, in this respect, self-denial? What weight or strength does the rectitude of intention acquire in relationships, in mission, in study, and also in other tasks and in other aspects of life?*

To conclude

I end by thanking the Lord for the gift of what has been experienced. I become aware of the feelings that have arisen in me. I take note of that which was stronger. To where does it lead me?

## We move towards the core of the Determination

The Determination does not speak to us of poverty in itself. It speaks of "*following Jesus Christ who chose poverty for himself*" and as such, reveals to us the love of the Father (8), the plan of the Father, a hope destined for all his children. Our vocation is rooted in sharing with Jesus his spirit of being Son, which brings "*life in abundance for every living being*" (9).

✚ **CFI 136** The reflective reading, "savored," the prayer of this number of the Constitutions can bring us to the contemplation of the incarnation in the SpEx [102-109]. In the light of this number of the Constitutions, savored *interiorly*, I can ask myself what is the plan of my life, how my relationship is with the Father, how is it present in my plans, or if I am in His ... I can ask myself what are my vital plans and what role God plays in them. And so, to continue:

- What do I love so intensely that if it disappears I get discouraged and fall apart?
- Is it Jesus who encourages my hope, beyond the "detachments" that life asks for?
- What traits of Jesus attract me and would want me to reproduce?
- I want to follow in His footsteps, what footsteps? Have I realized that Jesus is heading to Jerusalem, that his journey does not lead Him precisely to success and recognition but to the cross?

✚ **CFI 137, 138** To pray over these numbers is to rekindle in us the beginning of the second week of the SpEx [91-98]. "*Honors, fame, esteem of many ...*" is not what "*Christ our Lord has loved and embraced*" ...

- What is it that Christ has loved and embraced, what is that which He wished for?
- What does our world love and embrace?


Ask the Lord for the grace to discover "my loves", "my embraces", my desires ... What experience do I have of insults, false testimonies, affronts ... and what have I done with all this experience? Where it has led me and where do I want it to lead me to?

- When does this type of experiences appear and what role did they play in the life of Jesus? Do I want to take the step and assume with Him and like Him all of this, for the good of others, as the "*path that brings all men to life*"?

**CFI 138** points to every Hija de Jesus a process that is always open. This vocation is not finished, it is always moving towards the end, "the best is yet to come", it carries with it inscribed the dynamics of love which always wants "more".

Dialogue with the Lord and end by reciting "Eternal Lord of all things, I make my offering, **with your favor and help**, that ..." Write down how I feel at the end of this "exercise" and to what I am moved by this feeling.

Christ is *our greatest wealth* and the reason for the poverty that we have freely chosen (10), leads us to part with our own lives, "*making the entire oblation for God our Lord (...) ready to go to whatever part ...*" . "*To go to live and proclaim the gospel.*" "Availability leads us (...) to get out of ourselves and go to those most in need (...) to share the mission of Christ" (13).

 **CFI 139** offers us an important characteristic of our poverty. It is radical, it requires a *complete oblation of oneself* and "it is to go".

- Have I lived this at some point in my life?
- How have I lived it? How would I live it if the opportunity presented itself today?
- How can we prepare ourselves or exercise ourselves in this type of poverty?

We can also read **CFI 158, 192-194, 198**.

CND 126, 127

EURF 44

We can end by praying the formula of perpetual vows (**CFI 130**) and ask to be able to live this grace as something genuine in our vocation.

To conclude

I end by thanking the Lord for the gift of what has been experienced. I become aware of the feelings that have arisen in me. I take note of that which was stronger. To where does it lead me?

## We look at the third paragraph of the Formula

The Determination asks us to live “*true evangelical poverty*”. It refers to the third paragraph of the Formula and presents it as a *grace that is asked for* and for which one aspires. It is an *integrative dimension*, capable of giving quality to “*other aspects of our life in which we also feel the need for conversion*” (11). This radical way of living poverty, from the depths, is still an experience that touches deeply the affect (12) and has its consequence in our living together and in the relationships we establish with people, because it arises from the experience of God as Father and the call to follow the poor and humble Jesus. We are touching our “Principle and Foundation” and the source of true freedom (14).

➤ Part VI of Constitutions sets out in detail everything related to our personal and community life, as *sisters definitively incorporated* into the Congregation. The third chapter is entirely dedicated to poverty and we clearly understand how it integrates both dimensions.

- We can carefully read and like the numbers **CFI 144-154**, while we capture the infinite nuances offered to us of “*true evangelical poverty*” that we are called to live. Which ones do you discover?
- We would receive a grace if the Lord would make us discover what we are not living well - personal, community, apostolic - what do you see regarding this?
- And it would be another grace if we discover how it affects us in other dimensions: our freedom, apostolic life, way of relating to people, dealing with others and those at home, consideration of the sisters, our hopes and true interests, the focus on health, consumption, etc. Are you animated to share something from this perspective so that all of us may be helped?

CND 86-89 are especially illuminating. We can also see CND 83-85.

To conclude

I end by thanking the Lord for the gift of what has been experienced. I become aware of the feelings that have arisen in me. I take note of that which was stronger. To where does it lead me?



### Closer to true evangelical poverty

Through the Determination we enter into the Constitutions. Surely, from the process we are doing, we encounter exigencies of poverty for the Daughter of Jesus, that poverty that Mother Candida wanted for her Institute. The challenge will be to discover the beauty of the poverty of Jesus Christ and how it enriches us, makes us people who are more free, with fewer needs, who take care of relationships with others and with creation, forgetting our own selves and always willing to welcome in everything the will of the Father.

The poverty to which we are invited makes us better people and more daughters, more like Jesus. It is the grace that we must ask for insistently.

It is important to remember the origins of our Foundress: the living conditions of her family, the need to work to help her family, the lack of resources of all kinds to initiate her vocation as foundress ... That poverty experienced in her personal trajectory opened her up to a great trust in God the Father, from her experience as daughter, in the style of the Son.

When we say that our poverty is in relation to the mission or that for us the means and goods are at the service of the mission, we do not mean that our following of the poor Jesus is not very demanding (15). The charismatic experience of M. Candida permeates everything, including the economy and the management of goods (16). The Formula makes clear to us that the mission is its perspective and horizon. The mission does not mitigate poverty, it configures it, it asks us for simplicity and austerity, it calls us to be a humanizing presence, of solidarity and justice. It makes the mission evangelically effective.

👉 The mission is the great theme of Part VII of the Constitutions. **CFI 187** looks back at the Formula. **CFI 188, 189** speak of our evangelizing mission. **CFI 206** has a very clear relationship *with the third paragraph of the Formula*. Returning to **CFI 2** at this time can give us an even richer and fuller perspective of the poverty we are called to live.

- How do we explain in the Christian community, that the Hijas de Jesus want to follow the poor Jesus and share the condition of the poor, that we have nothing and yet we do not lack what we need and have houses, buildings...?
- If you had to define the “*true evangelical poverty*” that we are asked to live, what traits would it have? How would our life in poverty be defined according to what was read?

To conclude

I end by thanking the Lord for the gift of what has been experienced. I become aware of the feelings that have arisen in me. I take note of that which was stronger. To where does it lead me?

## Ficha 6

### What Laudato Si tells us

Integral ecology offers us a new way of being in the world (17), it is as old as the gospel, which keeps gaining space in our hearts if we prepare for the Spirit to work in us.

Laudato Si – a reflection strongly rooted in the OT, in the person of Jesus, and in the Magisterium of the Church, especially in the social doctrine of the most recent Popes - manifests a conception of the world and of the person who goes against the flow of culture of relativism, who denounces it as *"a pathology that pushes a person to take advantage of another and treat him as a simple object"* (LS 123). *"Because one cannot propose a relationship with the environment isolated from the relationship with other people and with God"* (LS119).

It is rightly said that *"for Francis, the destruction of the environment has exactly the same moral roots that generate poverty, inequality and violation of human rights in the world, roots that are found in the ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis of humanity."*<sup>1</sup>

✚ The Determination relies on the action of the Spirit, which will impel us to discern how to live it, wherein lies its truth and its "wisdom" to more transparently and clearly show the presence of God and glimpse towards where religious life is journeying today (18).

- *Share the interests of Christ, the right intention in the works, the good of others, universal love, the preference for the most needy ...* We now return to the Constitutions with a new approach, that of LS. At the bottom of both texts we find the wisdom of the gospel.

**CFI 211-215, 217-221, 224.** Is it possible to read these numbers and all part VII of Constitutions with the focus of LS?

- No. 17 of the Determination can lead us to make concrete the greater commitment to the restoration of creation, to consider the need for reconciliation and healing of relationships, hospitality, the responsible use of goods ... What possibilities are being opened to you?

CND 89, 125, 134, 135, 136

EURF 45, 46

---

<sup>1</sup> Entrevista a Eduard Ibáñez, director de *Justícia i Pau Barcelona*, 2015.

To conclude

I end by thanking the Lord for the gift of what has been experienced. I become aware of the feelings that have arisen in me. I take note of that which was stronger. To where does it lead me?

## Ficha 7

### At the end of this first part of the journey

The reading, prayer, reflection, sharing ... that we do regarding the Determination and Constitutions, is to warm our hearts to listen more easily to God's wish for us today (19). The government is asked to make it dynamic, accompany and help evaluate. (20); the communities, are to welcome proposals, to keep on searching, not to expect from others what they can already do, with the aim of “being” witness from day-to-day (21); for each one ... to look for means that can bring us closer to the source of our **freedom, availability, simplicity and joy** (22).

✚ GC XVIII, in line with part ten of Constitutions, has sought to *"preserve and develop the Congregation in its well-being."* The last part of CFI begins by talking about the "means" to achieve that end.

- **CFI 318, 319 y 320** tell us about “means” that constitute a paradox with respect to what any other organization or company in our world could understand. What are they and how do we live them?
- From **CFI 322** until the end we find a list of very important means to *“preserve and develop...”* List the ones you discover and reflect if we are giving them the importance they have for our life as Hijas de Jesus.

*"You are few in number and even less in quality in the eyes of the world ..."*, said Fr. Herranz in December of 1871. Since 1970 the Congregation has decreased in the number of its members. Today we are approximately half. In some places, when looking at the photos of the past, we cannot help remembering who left and the youth who moved on. There is much good to thank in our history.

✚ Let us take care that the gaze at the past does not make us fall into a yearning that conceals another perspective: the one in which God also leads us, Hijas de Jesus, on this ‘path of decline’.

- Is it not leading us to look more at Him and to be ready ourselves to live and serve as He did (23)?
- What would we want our wealth to be?
- Where could we find the strength that we do not find in the number of members?
- What can we do to “cooperate with the grace?”

Let us place our lives as “daughters”, let us place the life of the Congregation, in the hands of the Father and encourage each other to follow Jesus Christ more closely, *who chose poverty for himself, with Mary and Mother Candida* (23). Let us thank this “*light and guide in the way of the Lord*” (CFI 331) this “*gift of the Church*” (CFI 332) which are our Constitutions and that it is He who gives us the grace to live them.