



DICASTERO
PER GLI ISTITUTI DI VITA CONSACRATA
E LE SOCIETÀ DI VITA APOSTOLICA

Vatican City, 19 March 2023

Prot. n. Sp.R. 2452/20

CIRCULAR LETTER
ON THE UTILIZATION OF COMPUTER-TELEMATIC TOOLS
for acts of governance referred to in canons 627, 127 and 166

To the Supreme Moderators
of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life

The Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, on 1 July 2020, issued a circular communicating the Holy Father's granting of the "extraordinary faculty" to derogate, for individual cases submitted to the evaluation of this Dicastery, from canons 127 and 166; with the possibility of the use of computerized-telematic tools, for the meetings of the Superior's Council, to allow the exercise of the functions referred to in canon 627.

This alleviated the difficulty of relocating individuals, caused by the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and consequently, the presence of Council members at the place where they were convened.

The use of computerized tools has proven to be a valuable support to governance; an experience that is open to the future while being aware of adequate training in this area and the responsibilities that such use entails. Therefore, we submit for the attention of the Supreme Moderators some considerations that have emerged from the evaluation of the experience of the use of computerized-telematic tools during the Pandemic period.

1. It cannot be underestimated that frequent use of such means may produce a certain kind of "virtual *governance*" of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life and, in short, and medium-term timeframes, also lead to a mentality and governance practices that take such use for granted. It is to be stressed that the telematic meeting of the Major Superior with his/her Council is to be considered an *extraordinary* modality and "not an *ordinary* solution for the governance of the Institute or the Province."

2. The efficiency of information technology tools should be commensurate with their effectiveness, which should also be evaluated considering the need to ensure fairness in discernment and decision-making processes within the *governance* of the Institute. A few cases are noted that, as a matter of prudence, require the meeting to be **convened in the presence** of the General/Provincial Council or similar bodies. Concretely, it is a matter of safeguarding interpersonal dialogue/communication and shared discernment. These include, as examples: the *delicta graviora* (referred to in the *motu proprio Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela* of 30 April 2001); the norms inherent in separation from the Institute or Society (exclaustration: can. 686 §§ 1 and 3; departure: cann. 691 and 693; and dismissal: cann. 694-701); admission to perpetual profession (can. 658); admission to Sacred Orders and provisions regarding the public exercise of sacred orders and sacred ministry. Last but not least, acts of extraordinary administration as determined by proper law.
3. However, computer-telematic tools-even the most technologically advanced ones-apparently cannot give such guarantees as to ensure with certainty the necessary confidentiality and secrecy; not only that, complications and situations potentially detrimental to legally protected rights could occur (cf. can. 220).
4. Taking note of the positive results of the use of such tools and having evaluated the experience within the governance of the Institute or Society, it is desirable in keeping with the norms of universal and proper law, to regulate the modality of use and operational practices in the use of such tools.

The enormous potential of the means of information communication and, at the same time, their "vulnerability" are well known. Entering into a globally interconnected world means not losing the *sense of presence*, a presence that gives concreteness to the synodality of consecrated life, so that it is walking together and not only networking. "exercising the art of discernment, which always appears as the ability to orient ourselves in a symphony of voices"(FRANCIS. *Message for the 56th World Day of Social Communications*, 24 January 2022).


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