

The Constitution of the Contemporary Benedictines of Peace in and for the Catholic Apostolic Church in North America

Preamble

This Constitution is established to implement provisions of the Holy Rule of Saint Benedict for the purposes of establishing a Benedictine Order within the Catholic Apostolic Church in North America (CACINA) and as an independent Benedictine Order similar to others established outside of the Roman Catholic Church Communion. Ever mindful of our sacred calling to live the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in the manner of St. Benedict, let each member of the Order carefully adhere to that model in all that they do.

Chapter 1

General Norms

1. The Contemporary Benedictines of Peace-CACINA (OSB-CACINA) was established as a Religious Order on the Diocesan level within the Catholic Apostolic Church in North America (CACINA) on January 6, 1997, by the Most Reverend Carl Gregory Purvenas-Smith, Bishop, Diocese of Washington, DC, of CACINA. The Order consists of Monastics, (Monks and Nuns) of the Order, (those who choose the Religious Life and take vows), and Oblates (Lay persons of either gender and secular clergy who choose to formally affiliate with a Benedictine Community, but not take formal vows.) All references to Monastics, Oblates or members of the Order mentioned hereafter shall mean of the Order created under this Constitution. The Order has been established in accordance with the Constitution and Code of Canons of CACINA, hereafter simply called “the Canons.” If any portion of this Constitution shall later be found to be inconsistent with the Canons, this Constitution shall be amended in order to be in conformity.
 - a. The Monastics of the Order are stable forms of living by which members of the faithful, desiring to follow Christ more closely and under the action of the Holy Spirit, are totally dedicated to God, who is loved most of all, so that, having dedicated themselves to His honor, the up-building of the Church, and the salvation of the world by a new and special life; and having become an outstanding sign in the Church, they may foretell the heavenly glory through their lives.

- b. Christian Faithful who profess stability, conversion through a monastic way of life, and obedience by sacred bonds according to the proper laws of the Rule of Saint Benedict freely assume this form of living. The life of the Monastics of the Order is a consecrated life established by competent church authority and, through the charity to which these vows lead, they are joined to the Church and its mystery in a special way.
 - c. The Oblates of the Order, are lay members of either gender and secular clergy who seek to more closely model their lives after the teachings of Christ by following the example of Saint Benedict and his rule. In this, Oblates are supported by Spiritual Advisors. Christian Faithful who profess the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ by simple promises and the Act of Oblation according to the Rule of Saint Benedict and in accordance with the Canons, freely assume this form of living. The life of the Oblate is a dedicated life established by competent church authority and, through the charity to which their Act of Oblation leads, they are joined to the Church and its mystery in a special way while remaining members of the laity or secular clergy.
2. Any member of the Catholic Apostolic Church in North America (CACINA) who has validly received the Sacraments of Christian Initiation, who has been suitably prepared by competent authority, who is endowed with a right intention, who has the qualities required by universal and proper law, who possesses the characteristics and motivations described in the Rule of Saint Benedict, and who is not prevented by impediment can be admitted to the Order.
3. In accordance with the provisions of the Canons and the documents of its erection, the Order enjoys a rightful autonomy of life, especially of internal governance, by which they enjoy their own discipline in the Church and have the power to preserve their patrimony intact. Members of the Clergy of the Order receive their faculties for their duties within the Order from the Abbot General and may minister to the members of the Order within their own monasteries/communities. Provisions of the Canons grant to the General Convention of CACINA and the Synod of Bishops the right to intervene in matters of discipline and governance of religious orders only within strictly defined limitations. Bishops, whether Provisional or Diocesan, may not intervene in the internal governance of the Order.
4. All persons having Ordinary jurisdiction, as defined in the Canons, in a specific locale where a member of the Order exercises public ministry have absolute control and governance over the conduct of that public ministry. The Order clergy serve in a diocese with the specific permission of the Ordinary of that diocese and continue their public clerical ministry at the bishop's pleasure and discretion.
5. Members of the Order, inasmuch as they are dedicated in a special way to the service of God and the entire Church, are subject to the supreme authority of the Church in matters canonical. In addition to the supreme authority of the Church,

individual members are bound to canonical obedience to the lawful superiors of the order and the lawful superiors of the diocese in which they minister.

Chapter II

Admission and Initial Formation

1. The right of admitting candidates to the Order pertains to the local superiors of the Order. In admitting candidates to the Order they shall exercise due vigilance in discerning the call of each candidate. Superiors with the right of admitting candidates will ascertain that each prospective candidate for admission has attained at least the minimum age as specified herein and/or in the Canons, is of suitable character, possesses normally good health of body and mind, possesses right disposition, and possesses the character and maturity required for the Order. If necessary, the testimony of experts as to these qualities may be obtained.
 - a. Only those persons who have attained their eighteenth year, have validly received the Sacraments of Christian Initiation, are of good character and proven fidelity to the Catholic faith and the Catholic Apostolic Church in North America (CACINA) may be received as members of the Order.
 - b. It pertains solely to the Superior(s) to discern the acceptability of candidates for the Order. Local Superiors may be a prior, or prioress, an Abbot or Abbess depending on the designation of the particular community. If an individual candidate does not have a local community to join, the candidate shall make application directly to the Abbot General and shall be a member of the Abbot General's Community.
 - c. It pertains solely to the local Superior and Director of Novices to discern the acceptability of candidates for the Novitiate.
 - d. It pertains solely to the assigned Oblate Director or local Superior to discern the acceptability of the Oblate candidates.
2. Married candidates shall present evidence of spousal consent to their membership in the Order. Married candidates without spousal consent may be admitted only with the consent of the Abbot General.
3. Persons in Holy Orders shall present written evidence attesting to the consent of their diocesan bishop to their admission to the Order.
4. All who enter shall first pass three months as a postulant before admission to the Novitiate. At any time during this period a candidate may voluntarily withdraw or be dismissed from the Order by the local Superior. At the conclusion of this period as a postulant, if the candidate is found worthy the Superior may clothe the postulant in the habit of the Order and the candidate shall enter upon the Novitiate.

5. The Novitiate period shall be one year plus one day, commencing on the day that the candidate is clothed in the habit of the Order. At any time during this period a candidate may voluntarily withdraw or be dismissed from the Order by the local Superior.
6. During the Novitiate the training of the candidate shall be the special responsibility of the Novice Director; or in the absence of a Novice Director, the local Superior.
7. During the Novitiate period the candidate shall learn all that is required of him/her as a member of the Order and the manner of life in imitation of Saint Benedict. The Novice shall especially study the Holy Gospels and the life, writings, and teachings of Saint Benedict, the Holy Rule, and this Constitution. As an expression of the Novice's sincerity, some aspect of ministry to the People of God should also be performed on a regular basis, so that the religious life translates also into loving service. The Novitiate is first and foremost a period of intense prayer and spiritual formation.
8. The period of the Novitiate may be extended for an additional term of a year and one day upon request by the Novice or in the discretion of the Abbot General, at the recommendation of the local Superior. At the conclusion of the additional period of Novitiate the novice must make profession or be dismissed from the Order.
9. Upon completion of the period of the Novitiate, if both the Novice Director and the local Superior and the novice concur that the novice is called to the Benedictine life, the novice shall make profession for a period of three years. After this period of time, the member may make solemn monastic profession.
10. Members of the Order shall profess stability, conversion through a monastic way of life, and obedience as interpreted by CACINA. Oblates shall make simple promises and the Act of Oblation as specified in the Rule of Saint Benedict.
11. On the local Superior's own initiative or on the request of competent ecclesiastical authority, the Superior, with the advice of the Abbot General, may waive or modify these regulations to address individual needs.
12. Persons who have professed in any Benedictine Order in another Catholic communion may be admitted to professed status in the Order on the initiative of the local Superior and the Abbot General after a probationary period which the Superior and the Abbot General shall determine on an individual basis. Those so admitted shall renew their monastic profession in accordance with the usual admission of candidates to the Order.

Chapter III

Conduct of Members

1. In all things let the members of the Order avoid extremes of cost and style, seeking always to be shining examples of the poverty of spirit and detachment from material things which marked the lives of Christ and Saint Benedict.
2. Let members, with utmost caution, refrain from participation in activities that would bring disrepute upon themselves or on Order.
3. Let members be temperate in eating and drinking, and devoutly give thanks to God before and after meals.
4. Let members undertake individual acts of penance and charity, which may include fasting and abstinence. Let the members seek moderation, remembering that the goal of penance is not abnegation but a positive discipline of the body and the turning of the soul to God in love.
5. Members are encouraged to pay special devotion to all Benedictine saints and blessed on the days of their memorials and feasts as set forth in the Order of Prayer (ORDO) adopted for use in their Diocese.
6. Members shall receive the Sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist at least weekly and are encouraged to receive the Holy Eucharist daily when possible. The Sunday Liturgy shall be obligatory for all members of the Order, except when circumstances prevent attendance.
7. Members shall daily pray morning and evening prayers with the community if one exists and it is possible to do so. Members in ill health, naturally are excused from the community prayers.
8. The habit of the Order is an outward sign of our commitment to the Gospel Life. As such, its wear is encouraged at all times. Members shall wear the habit of the Order at all liturgical and official church functions; and may wear the habit of the Order at other times when it is prudent and possible to do so. Members in the Holy Order of Bishop may wear the habit or they may wear episcopal vesture appropriate to their Order in their sole discretion. Members in the Holy Order of Deacon or Presbyter shall wear the habit of the Order in lieu of a cassock. Members may also wear only a symbol of their religious state in life, such as their Medal of St. Benedict or the Benedictine Cross and Medal for fully professed members. The choice of religious garb is solely the discretion of the individual and that person's religious superior.
 - a. The habit of Order for male members shall consist of a tunic extending to the ankles with a hood and scapular after the manner of the Order of the Ancient Undivided Church. The habit is to be made of modest but sturdy material and be black in color. Shoes are appropriate footwear with the habit. The habit shall have a black leather belt worn around the waist of the tunic (the scapular is left outside of the belt).
 - b. Female members of the Order shall wear a habit similar to that as described above which shall be adapted for their gender.

- c. Members are excused are excused from wearing their habit at times when extremes of climate make its wear impractical.
 - d. Oblate members of the Order, in recognition of their secular state, shall wear habits only during liturgical and official functions of the Order. At other times they shall wear their usual garb together with some outward sign of their commitment. Oblates hold the absolute right to be buried in their habit.
9. In their daily lives let members strive to inspire others by good example and to promote practices of piety and good works.
10. Let members avoid taking an oath except when required by civil law. Let them avoid the use of profanity or indecent speech. Let them nightly examine their consciences on these matters and resolve to correct the use of such speech.
11. Let the members contribute, according to their means, to a common fund from which the Order may support its ministry and render aid to those in need. Each community shall be financially independent and self-supporting. Individual communities may decide to contribute to a common fund to be used by the Order at large for common purposes.
12. The Superior shall meet with each member within the community at least once each year, preferably in person, or by telephone when circumstances require. At such meetings let the superior offer counsel and guidance as may be needed. The Superior should share the experience of the Benedictine life and spirit, listen to the member and learn of the member's journey and needs.
13. The local Superior should visit every sick member of the Order under his/her care whenever possible. When such is not possible, the superior must see to it that some member of the Order visits the sick member and that the member is cared for. Let all members who can assemble at the funeral of a deceased member, there to pray for the departed.

Chapter IV

Officers

1. The Order shall be headed by an Abbot General who shall be a superior to the entire Order and who shall be a professed member of the Order in the Holy Order of Bishop or Presbyter, who will, upon certification of the election by the Order, be installed as an Abbot with the appropriate blessing of an Abbot. The Abbot General shall be elected by simple majority vote of the professed members of the Order.
 - a. Other officers of the Order shall be: 1) Novice Director, who shall be appointed by the Abbot General to supervise the formation of Novices.

- b. Oblate Director, who shall be appointed by the Abbot General to supervise the Oblates.
2. The term of all offices shall be 3 years. All offices except Abbot General are optional in the discretion of competent authority.
3. Let no one decline an office without good cause. Let officers never discharge their duties negligently, maliciously, or venally. Let no one seek to obtain or retain an office as a matter of personal right, but let each surrender their office willingly when their time is completed.
4. All officers may succeed themselves in office for as often as they are elected or appointed to that office.

Chapter V

Discipline

1. If a member is admonished or reprimanded by a superior, let the member submit in all humility. If the member persists and does not heed the admonishment or reprimand, let the member be admonished or reprimanded a second and if need be, a third time. If, after three admonitions or reprimands the member persists in inappropriate behavior, let the member be dismissed from the Order.
 - a. Professed members of the Order may be dismissed from the Order by the Abbot General if, after three admonitions to conform their conduct to that required by the Holy Rule and this Constitution or to the Constitution and Code of Canons of CACINA, the members fail to conduct themselves as prescribed by those documents. Professed members may also be dismissed by the Abbot General if they commit offenses against the unity of CACINA to include apostasy, heresy, or schism; are found in violation of the Constitution of CACINA; or are found to be mentally ill. Professed members may also be dismissed if they are adjudicated or plead guilty to any civil criminal charge which is either a felony or which is a misdemeanor punishable by more than one year incarceration.
 - b. Postulants or Novices may be dismissed from the Order at any time in the sole judgment of their respective local superior.
2. If the three most senior members of the Order, by date of their admission to the Order, determine that there is a probability that the Abbot General is guilty of conduct which would cause the dismissal of a professed member as described in this Constitution, they shall meet with the Abbot General and discuss the matter in keeping with paragraph a above. If no resolution is reached, they shall formally refer the matter to the Synod of Bishops of CACINA for their adjudication of the charges.

Chapter VI

Ecumenical Affiliates

1. In keeping with spirit of ecumenism which is the special calling of all members of the Benedictine family, the Abbot General and/or the local superior, in their sole discretion, may admit members of the Benedictine family who are members of other Catholic Communion and who are without Benedictine leadership into an affiliated status with the Order. Those so admitted are not canonical members of the Order or CACINA and do not have right to vote for officers or on other matters affecting the Order or the Church.
2. Ecumenical Affiliates shall be subject to the Holy Rule and Constitutions of the Order and live in obedience to the Superiors of the Order under simple profession of promises; and they shall accept the leadership and guidance of the ministers and officers of the Order so as to foster a spirit of love and peace among the Catholic community and to enhance Benedictine growth
3. Requirements for admission (except membership in CACINA) and formation programs for candidates for the Ecumenical Affiliates program shall be the same as those for general membership in the Order.
4. The permission of their ecclesiastical superiors is required for persons in Holy Orders desiring to be admitted into the Ecumenical Affiliates program..
5. Ecumenical Affiliates may employ the Order initials after their names but may not identify themselves as members or clergy of CACINA.
6. Admission of candidates into the Ecumenical Affiliates program pertains to and is at the sole discretion of those Superiors of the Order having authority to admit members to the Order itself.