
IN DIALOGUE

GOING IN DEPTH UPM 2025

LESSON 2 *by Renata Simon and Francisco Canzani*



Welcome back for part two of the ‘In Dialogue’ section, which was created to encourage an exchange, dialogue and an in-depth analysis of the topics covered in the UPM lessons.

Thank you for everything you have sent us: impressions, suggestions, questions. As many people have suggested, at the end we will share some excerpts from the General Statutes of the Work of Mary for you to read and meditate on personally.

Some feedback about the second lesson

*Thank you for the very valuable and universal lesson. It provides the basis for understanding what the Statutes are and the responsibility of each of us in the Work of Mary, to keep them alive and up to date.

*I would like to extend my/our gratitude to you for the UPM lessons on the Statutes. I certainly would not have thought that such a complex topic could be presented in such an attractive way.

*Many thanks for your valuable work:

- You made us all feel included, even the newcomers
- It's so true, that we need this “going in depth” so as to acquire a new responsibility in living the statute. Yes, after a very long time, I immediately started to read it with great joy.
- Every time, for me it's a new change of direction, starting with the premise.
- It seems like a historic moment, living this preparation for the next assembly with the entire Movement and the statutes in my hand!

STATUTES OR STATUTE?

In regard to the Work of Mary, why do we speak of Statutes, in the plural, and not of Statute, in the singular, as is the norm for associations, bodies, institutions?

This question surprised and challenged us. Indeed, it is interesting and relevant. An immediate answer would lead us to say that there is no substantial difference between saying Statute or saying Statutes, in the plural.

In a quick research we did, we saw, for example, that the decree of approval of the 29th of June 1990, signed by Cardinal Pironio, uses the wording “statute”. Instead, that of the 15th of March 2007, signed by Cardinal Rylko, speaks of General Statutes.

Therefore, we think that we are indeed dealing with the statute of the Work of Mary that is unique for all those belonging to it. This statute bears the name General Statutes. This official name - among other things, printed on the booklet that contains our rules - refers to a multiplicity of rules that form the unique foundation of our life. In conclusion, we can't find any substantial difference between the terms “statute” and “General Statutes”. They can be used interchangeably. However, we prefer the term “General Statutes”, and this has entered our tradition.

This, however, is beautiful because it expresses the variety of norms that guide us and it gives a more dynamic idea of our life, constitution and organisation, which corresponds to the reality of such a varied Movement.

Renata Simon and Francisco Canzani

STATUTES AND REGULATIONS

If the entire Movement is already described in the Statutes, why are there different regulations for different realities? What are the characteristics of the one and of the other?

The Statute of the Movement - or the General Statutes - apply to all those who belong to the Work of Mary. They are the foundation that contains the norms that reflect the unity of the Movement, the common patrimony that we have, regardless of the fact of belonging to a specific branch of the Movement.

The General Statutes contain our spirituality in all its points and aspects – and we repeat that they are common to everyone - also the norms referring to the central government of the Movement, as well as other rules applicable to everyone regardless of their particular vocations.

The regulations, on the other hand, bring together those norms that refer to specific vocations or different branches. They are specifically for focolarini, volunteers, gen, those involved in wide-ranging movements, priests, religious, etc.

The regulations come "after" the Statutes, which are the Magna Charta of everyone in the Movement and of the entire Work of Mary. Therefore, the Statutes basically make us a family and then, we are distinguished by vocations, specific commitments and various missions.

Renata Simon and Francisco Canzani

STRUCTURAL CHANGES

Can a Movement/Association make structural changes ad experimentum before the recommendation of the relevant internal commission as well as the approval of the General Assembly and the Dicastery?

In the case of structures provided for in the Statutes, any changes, even if ad experimentum, must be authorised by the appropriate authority to approve them, i.e. the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life.

Tiziana Merletti

AUTHORITY

Could you elaborate on the subject of authority? Apart from the aspects of leadership and membership, which you mentioned, do you think there are other factors on which we should focus?

In my talk I spoke of leadership and membership in reference to the process of changing the Statutes. Instead, when speaking in general about the exercise of authority, there are certainly many other aspects to be explored. Here are some examples: the concept of obedience that we are all called to live, whatever role we have to exercise; the personal paths of the leaders so that they become increasingly aware, all-encompassing and generative; the style of communication; accountability and transparency in justifying their actions; the relationship that exists between the various structural levels; the responsibility in carrying forward the three typical dimensions, that is, administrative, relational and prophetic in creative faithfulness; the public witness of being generators of unity...

Tiziana Merletti

TWO CURRENTS

Sr Tiziana, in your lesson, you referred to the two different approaches to the statutes. It seemed to me that only the most “progressive people” listen to Jesus in the midst: is this what you meant? Could you explain further?

My intention was to speak specifically about an important and inescapable emotional dimension that all groups experience when tackling a fundamental Code such as the Statutes. The fact that the Holy Spirit was working when a Foundress drew up the Statutes, the Church itself guarantees this with its approval. The fact that the same Spirit continues to speak, suggesting changes, needs to be the subject of deep and responsible discernment among the members. One thing is certain: openness of mind and heart are needed to overcome fears and resistance; spaces and moments of open dialogue; accompaniment of the communities with interventions, even involving professionals, if necessary, to deal with tensions and conflicts; a lot of honesty when it is the moment to speak and a lot of faith when it is time to accept the decisions of the General Assembly.

Tiziana Merletti

A FOCUS ON THE STATUTES

Art. 3 – The Work of Mary mirrors, in a certain way, the features of the Church, as a child reflects the profile of its mother. This is so because it is oriented toward the renewal of individuals, of the Church and of society, because of the variety and universality of the people who are part of it, and because of its goals, aspects, dialogues, and concrete works.

Art. 5 – The general goal of the Work of Mary (Focolare Movement) is perfection in love, to be reached by living the fundamental points and various aspects of its Gospel-based spirituality as they are expressed in these Statutes and in the regulations of the sections, branches and movements.

Art. 7 – The Work of Mary (Focolare Movement) places itself under the special protection of Mary Most Holy. She is venerated in all her wondrous prerogatives, imitated as a model to which everyone can conform, loved as the mother of the Church and of every person, and invoked as mother of unity.

READING THE STATUTES

In response to the need, expressed by many, to study the text of the statutes directly, each month we will look at some parts of it together. In this first in-depth look, we will read together the Table of Contents so as to discover its structure.

TABLE OF CONTENTS (from the 2007 Statutes)

Part One:	NATURE, PURPOSE, SPIRIT	
Chapter I	Nature of the Work of Mary	(art. 1-4)
Chapter II	The Goals	(art. 5-6)
Chapter III	The Spirit	(art. 7-9)
Part Two:	STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION	(art. 10-22)
Part Three:	CONCRETE ASPECTS OF THE LIFE OF THE WORK OF MARY	
Premise		(art. 23)
Chapter I	Communion of Goods, Economy and Work	(art. 24-34)
Chapter II	Outreach and Apostolic Activities	(art. 35-45)
Chapter III	Union with God and Prayer	(art. 46-53)
Chapter IV	Nature and Physical Life	(art. 54-59)
Chapter V	Clothing and Housing	(art. 60-63)
Chapter VI	Wisdom and Studies	(art. 64-67)
Chapter VII	Unity and Means of Communication	(art. 68-72)
Part Four:	THE ORGANS OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT	
Chapter I	The General Assembly	(art. 73-80)
Chapter II	The President	(art. 81-90)
Chapter III	The Co-Presidente	(art. 91-95)
Chapter IV	The Central Governing Body of the Work of Mary	(art. 96-100)
Chapter V	The General Council	(art. 101-107)
Chapter VI	The Central Delegates	(art. 108)
Chapter VII	The General Councillors	(art. 109-114)
Part Five:	THE ZONES	(art. 115-128)
Part Six:	SECTIONS, BRANCHES, MOVEMENTS	
Chapter I	The Sections and the Branches	(art. 129-133)
Chapter II	The Movements	(art. 134-140)
Part Seven:	GUIDELINES FOR PERSONS OF OTHER CHURCHES AND ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES BELONGING TO THE WORK OF MARY	(art. 141-145)
Part Eight:	NORMS REGARDING RELATIONS WITH FOLLOWERS OF OTHER RELIGIONS	(art. 146)
Part Nine:	NORMS REGARDING RELATIONS WITH PERSONS WITH NO PARTICULAR RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION	(art. 147)
Part Ten:	RELATIONSHIPS WITH ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITIES	(art. 148-153)

As we can see, there are a number of key elements to be taken into consideration. The Statutes begin by describing the juridical nature of the Movement and its general and specific goals, as well as its spirit. Of special importance is the general goal: **perfection in love**, and the specific goal: **unity according to Jesus' prayer to the Father** (see *Jn 17:21*).

Our five dialogues are privileged freeways to follow so as to help to achieve unity. The first part of the Statutes describes the general, fundamental aspects, since they are the basis, or root, of the rest of the rules contained there.

After a description of its structure and the definitions of those who make up the Work of Mary, we find a broad, insightful and detailed examination of the concrete aspects of our lives, starting with economy and work and concluding with unity and means of communication.

In the **seven aspects**, both the more spiritual and the more practical components of each are highlighted.

In part four, the governance of the Movement is described, with its various bodies and the responsibilities of each of them. Of charismatic importance are the descriptions of the figure of the President and the Co-President. This governance structure reflects Chiara's inspirations as to how the Movement was to be governed - **always with and by Jesus in the midst** - and its breadth represented in its various branches that all have a place in the General Council. It is worth reading this part carefully to understand how the Movement functions in its governance and what can be expected from each of the bodies and roles described.

Part five analyses the governance of the Movement in the different geographical areas which, as we all know, have changed throughout history. Zones, zonette and areas have had specific boundaries that have changed over the years. In this part it is also fundamental to appreciate the spirit of unity that guides the Movement in the local area and is expressed in the relationship of Jesus in the midst between the zone delegates and in the Zonal Council.

Part six speaks about the different branches, i.e. sections, branches and movements, which are an expression of the diversity of the Movement and are its beauty. Everyone has a place in our Work of Mary. The rights and the duties of those belonging to the sections, branches and movements are explained here.

Part seven concerns those of different Churches and ecclesial communities who belong to the Movement. As Christians, we have a common baptism, which incorporates us into Christ, and we all belong to the same Church of Christ. There is, however, a diversity of ecclesiologies and disciplines. Nevertheless, all Churches are on the way towards full communion. The presence of Jesus in the midst, as our spirituality teaches, could contribute to this communion.

Parts eight and nine speak of people belonging to different religions, or with no particular religious affiliation, who adhere to the spirituality of the Movement, to the extent that their conscience and religious affiliation allows them to, and who also share its commitments to universal fraternity.

With them we can live the experience of Fratelli tutti (Brothers all) that Pope Francis has been proposing to us in recent years.

As a final consideration, in our Statutes you will find many statements of a spiritual nature and some that touch on more concrete aspects. This is normal, because our spirituality, which guides us, becomes incarnate in us and among us and is expressed in the Statutes, in juridical language, through norms that help us to live the Ideal better.

In lesson 1 the **Premise** was read more than once

Other articles were also read

The premise to every other rule

*Mutual and constant love,
which makes unity possible
and brings the presence
of Jesus among all, is,
for those who are part
of the Work of Mary,
the basis for their life
under every aspect:
it is the norm of norms,
the premise to every other rule.*

Chiara Lubich

Art. 2 – The Focolare Movement which bears the name Work of Mary because of its characteristic spirituality, modelled upon Mary, gives Christ spiritually to the world in the diversity of its composition, its worldwide spreading, its relationship with Christians of other Churches and ecclesial Communities, with people of various religious faiths and with persons with no particular religious affiliation, and for the fact that its President is a lay woman. These all demonstrate its special bond with Mary Most Holy, the mother of Christ and of every person. It wishes to be, as much as possible, a presence of Mary on earth, almost a continuation of her.

Art. 64 - Those who are a part of the Work of Mary will seek first and foremost to possess true Christian wisdom.

They will ask God for this; they will live evangelical love (Jn 14:21); with Christ they will embrace his cross and his abandonment (see Lk 14:27) so that the presence of the Risen Lord may shine forth in their hearts, bringing with it the gifts of the Spirit.

They are to strive to be united among themselves, so that Christ who is present where there is mutual love, may enlighten their thoughts and minds (see 1 Cor 2, 12-16).