

CHAPTER 7

THE GENERAL CHAPTER

Can. 596,1
Can. 631; 1,2

103. Constituted as an image of the whole Institute, the General Chapter is, since the days of the Founder, the ultimate expression of the communion that exists among all the Brothers. It perpetuates among them the living fidelity to the special charism of the Institute.

Being responsible for the entire Body of the Institute, the Chapter is qualified to undertake in its name a periodical evaluation of the life of the Institute, to provide for its continuing adaptation and renewal, and to set out the main guidelines for future action. In addition, the Chapter elects the Brother Superior and the Brothers Councillors. It has the power to take all suitable legislative and administrative measures that concern the establishments and the members of the Institute.

104. An ordinary General Chapter is held once every seven years. It is normally convoked by the Brother Superior General.

If, because of unusual circumstances, it is not possible to hold an ordinary General Chapter at the end of the seven year period, the Brother Superior

General shall have recourse to the Holy See for a temporary prolongation of his mandate and that of his Councillors.

105. When circumstances require it, the Brother Superior General or, if the need arises, the Brother Vicar General or, failing this, the General Councillors, may convoke an extraordinary General Chapter, provided the decision to do so is supported by a majority of the Councillors, voting in secret.

Can 631

105a. *About two years before an ordinary General Chapter is to be held, the Brother Superior announces an approximate date for its opening. At the same time, he informs the Institute of the measures being taken to ensure its preparation.*

For this purpose, the Brother Superior and his Council appoint a Preparatory Commission to study and organise the preparation of the Chapter.

This Commission collects all the information deemed opportune from the Brothers generally and from the various administrative units of the Institute, as well as from study groups or specially appointed commissions.

106. The members of the General Chapter are as follows: those who are members by right; those who may possibly be appointed by the Brother Superior and his Council; those, comprising the greater

number, who are the delegates of all the Brothers of the Institute.

The members by right of the General Chapter are: the Superior General, former Superiors General, the General Councillors and the Secretary General.

With the consent of his Council, the Brother Superior may name up to ten supplementary delegates so as to ensure a better representation of the diversity of the Institute.

Can. 631,2
Can. 663

106a. *The number of delegates to be elected, based on the statistics of the Institute on the date of the publication of the Circular of Convocation, is determined as follows:*

1° *The number of delegates is a function of the number of Brothers in the District. It is fixed at one more than the whole quotient of the number of those Brothers by the number N fixed by Brother Superior and his Council.*

2° *Each sub-District or Delegation officially constituted elects one delegate.*

3° *Brother Superior and his Council fix the number (N) in such a way that the total number of elected delegates be not fewer than one percent and not greater than one and a half percent of the number of Brothers in the Institute.*

107. Every Brother with vows in the Institute on the date of publication of the Circular of Convocation is an elector. Every Brother perpetually professed in the Institute on the date of publication of the Circular of Convocation can be elected .

107a. *In each District, sub-District or Delegation the Chapter or, failing this, the Brother Visitor, Auxiliary Visitor or Delegate with the consent of his Council, determines the rules of procedure for the election of the allotted delegate or delegates, as well as for that of their substitutes, bearing in mind the following norms:*

In order to be elected, a delegate must obtain an absolute majority of the votes validly cast. However, if a third ballot is necessary, a relative majority will suffice.

Substitutes, in the same number as the delegates, are elected by a separate vote.

A full report of the results of the election should be sent without delay to the Brothers of the District and to the General Secretariat.

Any derogation from the preceding norms requires the approval of the Brother Superior and his Council.

108. Approximately one year before the date fixed for the opening of an ordinary General Chapter, the

Brother Superior, after taking the advice of his Council, sends out the Circular of Convocation .

108a. *The Circular of Convocation makes known the names of the members by right, as well as the number of delegates to be elected in each of the Districts, sub-Districts and Delegations.*

Can. 631,2 **109.** The Brother Superior is by right the presiding officer of the General Chapter.

109a. *At the proper time the General Chapter itself proceeds to elect its own officers. However, the Brother Secretary General is the Secretary of the Chapter.*

Can. 631,3 **109b.** *The General Chapter is fully responsible for the organisation of its work. This organisation can be greatly facilitated by the suggestions, recommendations, studies, working schedules and draft documents provided by the Preparatory Commission.*

109c. *Brother Superior General and his Council as well as the General Chapter may invite persons to participate in the work of the Chapter as experts or as consultants.*

Can. 631,3 **110.** All the Brothers of the Institute are invited to participate in the work of preparing for an ordinary

General Chapter. Each Brother has the right to send to the Brother Superior or the Secretary General whatever notes or position papers, duly signed, he may judge useful.

Can. 631,3
Can. 633

110a. *The General Chapter takes into account any surveys made among the Brothers, especially those coming from Chapters held at District, Delegation or Regional level, with a view to providing the General Chapter with better information. Account is likewise taken of the duly signed observations sent in by communities or individual Brothers to the General Chapter, the Preparatory Commission, or the General Secretariat of the Institute.*

111. The Brother Superior makes a report to the General Chapter on the manner in which he and the Council have carried out their mandate. This report also includes the activities of the General Services of the Institute.

B 3°
Can. 119,1
Can. 625,1
Can. 631,1
Can. 164 -179

112. The ordinary General Chapter elects the Brother Superior General. It fixes the number of General Councillors, which must not be less than six. It elects first of all the Brother Vicar General, who is the first among the Councillors. It then proceeds to the election of the other members of the Council.

Each of these elections must be determined by an absolute majority of the votes validly cast, no matter

how many ballots may be necessary.

Can. 631,2 **112a.** *The election of the Brother Superior General may be preceded by a period of consultation, the modalities of which are specified by the General Chapter itself.*

Can. 631,2 **112b.** *To prepare for the election of the Brother Vicar and the others members of the General Council, the newly elected Brother Superior General gathers all the useful information and makes it known to the capitulants.*

If he judges it opportune, he may suggest that a straw vote be taken within the Chapter and then present to the electors the names of the Brothers whom he judges suitable for the role.

Can. 631,2 **113.** The Brother Superior and the members of the General Council in office retain their mandate until the election of a new Brother Superior General.

114. Prior to submission to the Holy See for definitive approval, amendments to the Bull of Approbation, as well as proposals to add, modify or suppress articles of the Constitutions, require a majority of two-thirds of the votes validly cast by the General Chapter.

Amendments to the Statutes are effected by an absolute majority of votes, unless otherwise specified.

In addition the General Chapter determines the norms to be followed in preparing Directories that will serve as collections of those elements of Institute legislation that are not contained in the Constitutions and the Statutes.

Can. 631,2

114a. *The General Chapter can also make a certain number of decisions without incorporating them into the Statutes. Such decisions shall remain in force as norms or directives until the following ordinary General Chapter, which will evaluate their suitability.*

Can. 631,2

114b. *All capitular decisions must be promulgated by means of an official circular.*

They become effective three months, at the latest, after such promulgation.

Can. 631,2

114c. *The formal act constituting the General Chapter, the act of closure of the Chapter, as well as the acts for the election of the Brother Superior, the Brother Vicar and the other General Councillors, must be submitted to the approbation of the Capitulants and signed by them.*