

SERVITE Lay DiaKonias

[DIACONIE LAICHE]



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Rule of Life, art.

The Servite *Lay Diakonias* movement began in Arezzo on September 8, 1982. It was launched by Fra Davide M. Montagna. During the following three years it evolved into a new form of evangelical life in the tradition of the Secular Order. On December 18, 1998, Fra Hubert M. Moons associated the *Lay Diakonias* Movement to the Servite Order and approved their Rule of Life.

Who are we?

The Servite Lay Diakonias is a movement made up of lay people who have taken on and share the spirituality of the Servants of Mary.

The Diakonia is a nuclear family that lives in its own house – a sort of little “house church.” To be a “house church” involves the practice of human and Christian values in one’s own home; living these values constantly and sharing them with anyone who enters or visits the house: Praise and Word, love and forgiveness, communion and sharing, hospitality and dialogue.

A Diakonia is an “open house,” open not just to friends and those who share our concerns but to the needs and demands with which life confronts us: caring for young people, helping the marginalized, solidarity with the missions and those suffering catastrophe, ecumenism and dialogue with other religions, promotion of “Justice and Peace.”

Through our domestic community we hope to be mediators between history and the Gospel, serving ceaselessly both mankind and life.

Our school of life is weekly, community Lectio Divina.

Our Spirituality

Friendship, brotherhood, dialogue, working together and sharing our sufferings and hopes. Our essential characteristic is to live a “human life” through a spirit of sharing and respect for the environment.

Mary and Joseph in the house at Nazareth care for and watch Jesus grow. He is the Word made flesh and they are our models. Their exemplary lives help us put the Gospel into practice. Each Diakonia is dedicated to Our Lady and bears a name that reflects some aspect of Our Lady and emphasizes our specific charism as a domestic community.

Hope for tomorrow

Through dialogue we continually broaden our horizons through encounter with brothers of other faiths and culture as well as those who have lost their faith. Through this dialogue we have discovered a fast changing world So many people have counter-cultural values. We feel we are on their side. We are well aware of the demands of history in this new millennium. What can be done about the enormous gap between the southern and northern hemispheres? The drama of poverty? The serious threats to the environment? We strive to make our life-style a critique of a society responsible for these tragedies. We hope to create a new awareness. Through dialogue, sharing, raising and teaching our children - this is our hope for tomorrow.

Rule of Life for every *Diakonia*

With the profession of evangelical life, every *Servite Lay Diakonia* places itself under the protection of Mary and St. Joseph (the married couple present at the Church's origins), of holy Christian families of every time and, in particular, of the Seven Holy Florentines, the lay originators of Our Lady's Order, who left behind life in the violent city, which at that time was corrupted by ambitious wealth and commercial interests, in order to dedicate themselves to pursuing the "pearl of great price" proposed by the Gospel.

This minimal rule contains the orientations on which every *Diakonia* has based its profession and will examine itself with the intention of sharing the same journey in divine and human service.

1 [Common Vocation]

The vocation of every *Diakonia* is to become – through the grace of the Holy Spirit and within its particular historical and geographic context – a true domestic Church, explicitly dedicated to Mary, chosen as a model for life, and to do so through welcoming and following the Incarnate Word. Every *Diakonia* – from the day of its profession – is associated to the Order of Servants of Mary, understood as a friendly and joyful path to holiness which began centuries ago and is recognized by the Christian people.

2 [Rule and Gospel]

The Rule of life, ever new, of every *Diakonia* finds its core each day in a loving and wondrous listening to and meditation upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which disciples of the Lord have announced and born witness to from the beginning, welcoming it and making it fruitful in their homes and apostolic communities. This is still possible today, provided that one lives in docility to the Holy Spirit and approaches the Word with the necessary "virginity of heart".

3 [Marian dimension of the charism]

The charism of every *Diakonia* consists in prolonging today, as persons, married couples and families – the mysterious presence of Mary, sign of the redeemed feminine and exemplary image of virginity, married life (*sponsalità*) and widowhood. To this end, during the profession rite a name is assigned to each *Diakonia* indicating its vocation and service. This name serves as a "refraction" of its particular charism and calls for bearing a particular fruit in the local Churches. It is also remembered in an annual feast, fixed on the common calendar, in connection with a liturgical memorial of Mary.

4 [Conversion and Penance]

The religious journey of every *Diakonia* begins and continues with radical gestures of conversion to the coming Kingdom, which raises renewed awareness of the values of one's earlier, original consecration in the sacraments of baptism and confirmation. The humble and shared practice of penance recreates, on a daily basis, conditions of freedom for re-proposing an authentic "newness of existence" in the Spirit. Each one sustains the particular desire for conversion through a life permeated with compassion (recognized as a typically Servite characteristic) and through frequent recourse to the healing sacrament of reconciliation. Gestures of communion, solidarity and serene encounter with all, - which are to be sought out and cultivated with tenacity and creativity – help one another live the life of grace.

5 [Liturgical Prayer and "lectio divina"]

In imitation of the Virgin, creation's sublime model of prayerfulness, every *Diakonia* will try to make daily responses to the gift of its vocation, lived in a habitual climate of interior silence and peaceful, continuous prayer. Saturday is the privileged day for domestic prayer, the weekly memorial of the "Daughter of Zion" which reopens the endless possibilities of listening to the Word in "lectio divina" and participation in the Sunday Eucharist. The frequency of "lectio divina" encourages knowledge of the Sacred texts; the richness of gifts, reciprocally shared in meditation, is a stimulus towards conversion, a source of growth, and offers new nourishment for communion. On weekdays they remember the holy Mysteries through the intimate and faithful practice of the Liturgy of the Hours, adapted to the home and always open to the participation of all who may wish to join them.

6 [Evangelical Counsels and Charity]

In order to shine with perfect charity, the supreme gift of the Spirit, every *Diakonia* accepts, as a fitting existential norm and the basis of an authentic life, [the practice of] facing each day "the beatitude" of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience:

- a) chastity, understood as a balanced sexual life, in the Holy Spirit, and the serene effort to overcome unseemly erotic energies whether in the period of engagement, or in the experience of life as a married couple, or in widowhood;
- b) poverty, understood as a heartfelt response to the "kenosis" of the incarnate Word and a faithful abandonment to the loving providence of the Father;
- c) obedience, understood as a docile and decisive listening to the Word in the context of religious friendship with a specific spiritual guide.

7 [Education and Fraternal Life]

Every *Diakonia* considers itself a protagonist in the construction of a solid fraternal life, both in the home and with friends, and in the multi-varied reality of the Servite Family. Even the Christian education of children, a means for reaching the full freedom of the "children of God", will be founded upon the living of an evangelical life, assimilated with the parents' continuous renewal of commitment. Care will be taken to offer special hospitality, which is respectful and effective, to young people and to all who today are troubled in their faith.

In prayer and dialogue they should never lose passion for the flourishing of all vocations which the Spirit still raises up in view of the Kingdom.

8 [Ecclesial Service]

The ecclesial service of every *Diakonia* is above all that of remaining a secure point of reference for all individuals who are searching, even restless, for God. In their daily witness of personal hope,

each one should give expression to their Marian name, received at the time of evangelical profession, and do so with persistent and appropriate proposals within the various local Churches. Every relevant commitment to be undertaken, should always be fermented by an ecumenical desire, recognizing in Israel the roots of the Gospel and valuing the positive perceptions of the individual Christian confessions which history has divided. They should also promote sensitivity toward healthy interreligious dialogue with all believers of every great world tradition.

9

[Relationships with the World]

Every *Diakonia* should preserve – in the present and in the future – the tension of a contemplative life, typical of the Holy Seven of our origins, who - in their time - looked beyond the immediate realities of couple and family, work and normal interactions in the city.

The varied and sincere search for an interior “monasticism” should promote, in all places as well, a healthy reconsideration of social and political obligations which every *Diakonia* is free to undertake, always looking forward to the new Jerusalem and the reconciliation of all things possible, which is the “gift of God and source of new life”.

May this world pass – Lord - and may your Kingdom come.

Maranathà! Amen.

EPILOGUE

From the *OSM Constitutions*, n. 319

Since our ideal is to reach the perfect stature of Christ[1], we shall have only relationships of peace, mercy, justice and constructive love toward creatures[2]. In our commitment of service, the figure of Mary at the foot of the cross shall be our model. Since the Son of Man is still being crucified in his brothers and sisters, we, Servants of his mother, wish to be with her at the foot of those countless crosses in order to bring comfort and redemptive cooperation.

In our surrender to an ever greater love, we shall take up our cross each day[3]. Remembering that we are to be judged according to the words “I was hungry and you gave me to eat, naked and you clothed me...”[4], we wish to renounce our own interests in order to follow Jesus in his work of salvation. Although creation still groans in sorrow and anguish[5], we recognize that we are bearers of those forces which free creation from the slavery of corruption and bring it into the freedom of the children of God[6]. This knowledge gives us the joy promised by Christ which no one can take from us[7].

1 Cfr. Ephesians 4, 13.

2 Cfr. Matthew 5, 3-9.

3 Cfr. Luke 9, 23.

4 Cfr. Matthew 25, 35-36.

5 Cfr. Romans 8, 22.

6 Cfr. Romans 8, 21.

7 Cfr. John 16,22.

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