



# **VERBUM DEI MISSIONARY FAMILY**

## **STATUTES OF THE VERBUM DEI MISSIONARY FAMILY**

**25th of November 2012**

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DECREE OF APPROVAL  
OF THE STATUTES OF THE VERBUM DEI MISSIONARY FAMILY

*The Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity is an essential part of the Verbum Dei Missionary Family, to which belong other members of the faithful who share the same spirituality and mission.*

*The Fraternity impulses, orients and is guarantee of the Family and, united in the one same evangelical spirit, realizes in and with her its genuine apostolic identity, in joint fidelity to the charism received (CFMVD 8).*

With joy, we have confirmed in the Ordinary General Congreso IV of the Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity, that the Verbum Dei Missionary Family is flourishing in many parts of the world, consolidating and expanding itself. It is a great richness to assume with hope the missionary impulse that God indicates to us at this time; we feel the strong desire to continue reaching many, each time being more in communion with the same spirituality and mission.

As Verbum Dei Missionary Family, God calls us to aspire to the perfection in love and "to propagate, through the ministry of the word, this same fraternal love, vital nucleus of the Kingdom of God, throughout the world." (CFMVD 9). In this year of faith, in which the Church invites us to give reason for what we believe (cf. *Porta fidei* 10), the Verbum Dei Missionary Family wants to respond with mind, heart and strength, to the supreme mandate of Jesus: "Go and make disciples of all peoples." (Mt 28:19).

As one more step in the path towards the suitable juridical configuration for the Verbum Dei Missionary Family, the Congress has decided to approve these Statutes *ad experimentum* for six years.

As such, through this present decree,  
In virtue of n. 198.3 of the Constitutions of the FMVD,  
And as President of the Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity,  
Following the decision of the Ordinary General Congress IV

**I APPROVE AND PROMULGATE**

The Statutes *ad experimentum* of the Verbum Dei Missionary Family

We invite all to study this document, circulate and put it into practice, so that we may reflect together and seek the best way to mutually help each other "in the radical following of Christ and to reproduce him in his way of life and mission" (CFMVD 9).

Given in Rome, 25<sup>th</sup> of November of 2012  
Solemnity of Christ the King

Lucía Aurora Herrerías Guerra  
President

## **1. VERBUM DEI MISSIONARY FAMILY**

### **1.1 Origin of the VDMFA**

1) The Verbum Dei charism originated between the years of 1958 and 1962 with the apostolic movement of preaching called "Convivencias", formed by Fr. Jaime Bonet in the diocese of Mallorca(Spain). It received its first official recognition on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January, 1963, and approval as an institute composed of three Branches on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September, 1969. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of April, 2000, Pope John Paul II gave the approval of pontifical right to the Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity as an institute of consecrated life.

In this history and in that of the beginnings, there have been lay persons in communion with the Fraternity, who have felt called to share the spirituality, mission and charism of Verbum Dei in an living way. This has led to the consciousness of a wider family that extends beyond the Fraternity and in a close relationship with it, is consolidated as the Verbum Dei Missionary Family.

### **1.2 Identity of the VDMFA: at the service of the Word of God**

2) The Verbum Dei Missionary Family is an institution of the Catholic Church at the service of the Word of God, to which belong all the faithful who share the same spirituality and mission of Verbum Dei. The Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity, essential part of the Verbum Dei Missionary Family, promotes, orients and is guarantee of the Family and, united in the same evangelical spirit, realizes in and with her its genuine apostolic identity, in a joined fidelity to the charism received<sup>1</sup>.

3) The identity of the VDMFA is expressed in its own name: to be "family", profoundly "missionary", at the service of announcing the "Word of God". The VDMFA gathers in her womb, persons or groups of all states of life, age, culture and social condition, who participate in one same vocation to be "Verbum Dei". All of us are united by the common call to identify ourselves personally and in community with Jesus, revealing the face of our One and Triune God in our lives.

4) It's goal is the living-out and propagation of the Kingdom of God through prayer, testimony of life and the ministry of the Word<sup>2</sup>, forming apostles of Christ and creating evangelizing communities. The VDMFA, with the motto of the first disciples of Jesus: "We will dedicate ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word", and the spirit of the first Christian community<sup>3</sup>, concretizes and centers its specific mission in the Word of God.

5) Those who participate in this common vocation of the VDMFA are united by the same ideal and commitment to aspire to perfection in charity, propagating to all the world this same fraternal love, vital nucleus of the Kingdom of God<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> CFMVD 8

<sup>2</sup> Act 6,4.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Act 2, 42-47; 4, 32-35.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. CFMVD 9; LG 40.

- 6) The specific elements that characterize the VDMFA are:
- 1) The fundamental equality in the baptismal consecration that makes us all sons and daughters of God, disciples and apostles of Christ, and that establishes the intimate insertion in the life and mission of the universal Church;
  - 2) The one same contemplative-missionary spirituality that arises from the personal experience of God and his call, which generates a style of life according to the Beatitudes, with loving solidarity and a missionary heart;
  - 3) The one same missionary goal centered in the service of the Word of God;
  - 4) The sense that the VDMFA as our own family of faith in the Church, making of this community a real school of life, communion and missionary love;
  - 5) A path of formation for the integral growth of the person and of the community as a whole;
  - 6) The assimilation and participation in the Verbum Dei charism from the spiritual and historical heritage of its founder, Fr. Jaime Bonet.

### **1.3 In the Church and for the World**

7) The VDMFA participates in the mission of the universal Church, contributing in such a way that each person may live the plenitude of their vocation to love, to be a disciple and apostles of Jesus, inserting them as an active member of the Church and of society.

8) The evangelization through the Word of God is unfolded as a transforming dynamism in persons, realities and of society in each of their atmospheres: familial, social, educational, economic, political, ecological, health, cultural and spiritual. In a world where selfishness and the lack of generosity are evident and produce various forms of poverty and injustice, our mission contributes to social transformation from the proper guidelines of the Gospel and the social doctrine of the Church.

## **2. STRUCTURING THE VERBUM DEI MISSIONARY FAMILY**

The VDMFA as a whole, in its complementarity, is an expression of the Verbum Dei in its plenitude and seeks to make visible the being of the Church, in the image of the Trinity, always open to the needs of the world and the signs of the times.

### **2.1 The Local Family and the Universal Family**

9) The VDMFA is structured as a communion of complementary and inseparable circles, local and universal. The fundamental accent, in the practical realization of the coordination and administration of the VDMFA, rests on the local organization, given that the VDMFA originates and unfolds in a particular geographical space. The organization of the one same universal family is vital in that the Verbum Dei spirit and mission may unite the members of the VDMFA in the charism. Together with these circles, channels will be sought for a regional, national and international organization of the VDMFA that serves as a bridge between the local reality and the universal dimension.

## **2.2 Ways of Belonging in the VDMFA**

10) The Verbum Dei Missionary Family is composed of different ways of belonging that are suitable to the call and situation of each person, and in a communion in the service of the Word of God. Its members live their baptismal consecration and bond to the VDMFA in a plurality of ways of belonging: Missionary Fraternity, Lay missionaries/disciples, Lay consecrated missionaries.

### **2.2.1 Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity**

11) The Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity is an institute of consecrated life of pontifical right, which is an essential part of the Verbum Dei Missionary Family<sup>5</sup> and is composed of the Branch of female celibate missionaries, the Branch of celibate male missionaries and the Branch of married couples.

12) The Fraternity has been approved as a new form of consecrated life<sup>6</sup>. The specific meaning of the ecclesiality in the Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity is expressed integrating, in a single institutional form composed of three Branches, the different states of life in the Church in the same spirit and mission. Each Branch, in communion with the others, projects their apostolic dynamism, in the name of the Fraternity, towards all persons and peoples.<sup>7</sup>

13) In the Fraternity, the celibate members are incorporated through the vows and the married couples are integrated through sacred bonds according to their married state. In both states, the bond will be initially temporary, and after a process, perpetual.

14) The ways of belonging, formation processes and bonds to the Fraternity will be defined and regulated by the Constitutions of the Fraternity.

### **2.2.2 Lay missionaries/disciples<sup>8</sup>**

15) Among the different ways of belonging to the VDMFA, there are the lay missionaries/disciples, persons committed in Verbum Dei as their response to the call of God in a lay vocation to announce the Word, and who desire to follow Christ and make him known through their situation, environment and state of life, living the Verbum Dei charism and the teachings of the Church.

16) The lay missionaries/disciples of the VDMFA are guided by the present statute and desire to live their baptismal consecration in plenitude through the Verbum Dei spirit and mission. It is a call of God in a vocation that is fully missionary and lay<sup>9</sup>, inserted in society. Those who participate in through this reality include youth and adults, singles, married or persons in other situations of life.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. CFMVD 8.

<sup>6</sup> According to canon 605 of the Code of Canon Law.

<sup>7</sup> CFMVD 2.

<sup>8</sup> In some places of the world they are called DISCIPLES.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. LG 31-33.

17) They can be lay missionaries/disciples those persons who, after a free and mature discernment that is verified by their responsables in an itinerary of formation and life, are bound to the VDMFA through temporary or stable commitments<sup>10</sup>. According to the cultural or communitarian situation, they may be done privately.

18) Each local VDMFA, while being united by certain minimum criteria of belonging common to the universal VDMFA, will study the most suitable ways of connection according to the time and place it develops in, following as a criteria the stages of life, the diverse forms or states of Christian life, ministries and paths of formation.

19) In the same spirit of communion that is characteristic of the nature of the VDMFA, the bond of a member to the universal VDMFA corresponds to their belonging to whichever group, associated reality or local community of the VDMFA.

### **2.2.3 Lay Consecrated Missionaries**

20) As a reflection of the communion of the Church, unity is rich in variety, the Holy Spirit promotes also other forms of self-giving in persons who remain fully in the lay state of life within the option for consecration.

21) The LCMs respond to a lay vocation, apostolic and missionary, opting to consecrate themselves to God in the midst of their environments, according to the Verbum Dei spirit and mission, through the living-out of the evangelical counsels of poverty, obedience and chastity, feeling themselves called to live their missionary vocation inserted in society.

22) The LCMs are persons who aspire to evangelical perfection according to the Spirit of Verbum Dei and ratify their option with promises. Through the promise of voluntary virginity for the Kingdom of Heaven, they seek to unite themselves to God in an integral and definitive manner.<sup>11</sup> The objective of their peculiar consecration is their proper sanctification and the help in the sanctification of many through the dedication to prayer, testimony of life and the ministry of the Word in consonance with the charism, the spirit and mission of Verbum Dei. An important scope of this dedication is made concrete for the LCMs in the collaboration with the apostolic works of Verbum Dei and the help to other members of the VDMFA, being yeast and bridges of a wider missionary action.

23) They can be lay consecrated missionaries those adult persons who after a free discernment, verified by their responsables, and after the educative stage established by their itineraries of formation and life, make temporal or stable promises with which they are bound to Verbum Dei. The LCMs are regulated by the Norms of the LMCs.

## **3 SPIRITUALITY OF THE VDFMA**

24) The Verbum Dei spirituality is the specific way inspired by the Holy Spirit to live the Gospel according to the proper way of the Verbum Dei charism. Each person has been

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<sup>10</sup> Children and adolescents may participate in the wider VD Family, but not as members of the VDMFA which requires a certain age to make a suitable discernment.

<sup>11</sup> Mt 19,12.



created to dialogue with God and to entrust themselves to His Love<sup>12</sup>. The Verbum Dei spirituality is rooted deeply in the personal experience of the love of God that brings us to love as He has loved us; it is centered in Christ, the one sent by the Father, and is the path of identification with Him, through the power of the Holy Spirit, where our way of living, praying and realizing the mission is determined.

### **3.1 Features of the spirituality of VDMFA**

25) Union with God in Christ is the greatest source of energy, fidelity, enthusiasm and joy of each member of the VDMFA. From this union arises the true following of Christ, and in the same way the realization of an authentic Christian family. The personal encounter and familiar relationship of affectionate intimacy with God ensures that our ministry of the Word be always accompanied by a clear testimony of life according to the Gospel.

26) Our contemplative-missionary spirituality is not only in function of our personal sanctification, but of the sanctification of the life of many and at the service of the whole Church of Christ and humanity. Our life, centered in the person, life and Gospel of Christ, necessarily acquires the fundamental spirituality of Jesus in his prayerful attitude that makes of the Man-God an adorer of the Father and, from the Father, a gift and offering for the whole humanity. Guided by the same Spirit of Jesus, we are sent in the same mission to announce the Kingdom of God.

27) The dynamism of the Word orients the way of life and of realizing the mission of the VDMFA: to pray the word, assimilating it, living it out and creating communion with it, announcing the Gospel, celebrating the life that it generates, teaching others to do the same so that they may participate in an active way of the evangelizing mission of the Church.

28) The Christian life, expression of the baptismal consecration, is for the members of the VDMFA, characterized by a style of life like that of Jesus. He, who passed through this world doing good lived his human condition according to the spirit of the Beatitudes and the evangelical counsels: in a simple lifestyle, in purity of heart, in a fervent and humble search for the will of God and obedience to the Holy Spirit.

29) This personal transformation creates in the Missionary Family a style that is solidary, fraternal, prophetic, welcoming, characterized by evangelical joy and hope; with a life inserted in the world as yeast in the dough, at the same time free from the non-evangelical categories of the world.<sup>13</sup> Our life well-founded in God will be transformed into love towards others as our lifestyle.

### **3.2 Sources of Our Spirituality**

30) The specific spirituality of the VDMFA is configured from the four sources, object of our special devotion, based on Sacred Scriptures, in the Tradition and Magisterium of the

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. GS 19.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Jn 17, 14; Letter to Diognetus, chap. V, Funk 1, 317-318.

Church. They are the Indwelling of the Trinity in us, the Holy Eucharist, the Crucified Christ-Mystical Body of Christ and Mary.

1) the Trinity in us will constitute and form the first home, source of fraternity, "house of prayer for all peoples" and school of prayer of the true disciples of Christ. From there, within ourselves, gushes forth the spring of living water that wells up for the eternal life of many. The loving presence of the Trinity marks the rhythm of our fraternal life in a totally new and transcendent tone. Their company is ineffably rich and pleasant in whichever path or crossroad. It is the true and permanent "viaticum", the best companion on the journey, leaven and seed of Christian fraternities in all the world.

2) The Eucharist: it is the spring that signifies and realizes the communion of all men into One. It is the sacrament and fundamental sacrifice constitutive of the Church and as such, of the VDMFA. The Eucharist will be for the VDMFA source and summit of its fraternal life and mission. The living encounter, close and intimate with the person of Christ in the Eucharist, transforms our days in prolonged echoes of the living word that we have heard from his mouth. In this way, the VDMFA, nourished by the Eucharistic Bread, makes all people brothers and sisters, creating in this way a universal family.

3) The Mystical Body of Christ: the Love of the Father, the voice of the Holy Spirit, the constant dialogue with Jesus and the attentive gaze of Mary project our lives and urge us to apply them integrally over the Crucified Christ of today or the Mystical Body of Christ. The encounter with the Total Christ – Head and members – opens us to the most appropriate "composition of place" for our daily prayer and mission, and binds us to this living Christ who needs us and claims all of our being, being the most pressing cause and strongest reason for our preaching.

4) Mary, Mother of God and of the Church: Mary will always occupy a unique and decisive, indispensable and irreplaceable place in the VDMFA. Her presence will accompany our laborious missionary journeys sustained by a living and proven faith and by the joy of a strong redemptive love. She will promote in our VDMFA the sense of her spiritual and apostolic fruitfulness, forming Jesus in us and in our brothers and sisters. Every year, the members of the VDMFA will celebrate her feast on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March: The Annunciation to our Mother and the Incarnation of the Son of God.

### **3.3 Means of Spirituality in the VDMFA**

31) Our Verbum Dei missionary identity is configured by the habitual practice of the four exercises: exercise of prayer, the exercise of fraternal love, the exercise of the cross-humility and the exercise of the ministry of the Word<sup>14</sup>.

32) From the practice of these exercises all the means of spirituality of the missionary family are developed: personal prayer and in community centered in the Word of God, practices and gestures of faith that help a life of faith, frequent participation in the sacraments of the Church, review of the day, devotion to Mary, retreats and spiritual exercises, spiritual accompaniment, revision of life, spiritual reading, as well as other means of spiritual life in the Church.

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. CFMVD 82.

33) The VDMFA has the spiritual exercises as the habitual means and practice of life and propagation of our own spirituality. It is the singular instrument by which the Holy spirit configures and actualizes permanently the features and the proper character of Verbum Dei as house of prayer and as a permanent school of the Word prayed and preached.

34) The Revision of life is an effective means for living out the fraternal and communitarian commitment, helping us to realize the authentic meaning of a family forged in the love of Christ<sup>15</sup>. It is a true contagion of faith and of the love of Jesus. In it, respecting the freedom of each one, we commit ourselves to defend and to maximize the potential of each person, their values and talents, to better respond to the vocation and mission to which the Lord has called us together in a common ideal.

35) The spiritual life will grow with the participation in events that help in an integral spirituality and an ecclesial and fraternal living.

36) From a creative fidelity, the lay missionaries/disciples will discern the application of the means and paths of spirituality that sustain and nourish their life as followers of Christ in Verbum Dei according to their way of belonging.

#### **4 MISSION OF THE VERBUM DEI MISSIONARY FAMILY(VDMFA)**

37) The VDMFA aspires to live their dedication to prayer and ministry of the Word in the spirit of the First Christian Community and of the Twelve Apostles in their dedication to prayer and ministry of the Word, with the untiring missionary zeal of St. Paul, in his proclamation of the Word, formation of apostles and creation of evangelizing communities.<sup>16</sup>

##### **4.1 Dynamism of the Verbum Dei Mission**

38) The proclamation of the Word of God, preceded and accompanied by prayer and witness of life, will always be the best means for the propagation of the faith. We will sow the good seed of the Word in all fields, trusting in the growth that God gives, knowing that the Word, like "the rain which falls from heaven will not return empty," because certainly, "the Word of God is alive and effective and sharper than any two-edged sword."

39) This missionary intentionality at the service of the Word is expressed in different ways, each one living the mission from their specific vocation, with their capacities and talents, sensitivity and possibility, integrating themselves in the social media where the members of the VDMFa find themselves.

40) The life and path taken by Jesus and the Twelve, and the group of disciples who accompanied them, are the inspiration for our apostolic dynamism. Jesus formed the twelve apostles to be with him and to be sent out to preach, becoming his witnesses. The

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 13; 1 Jn 3, 16.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. CFMVD 65.

desire to form apostles among all peoples is a specific element of our charism that becomes the method and intention of our mission.

41) The ordinary methods of evangelization, which are also the most profound and effective, we use in our ministry of the Word, are:

- 1) The spiritual exercises: to live the experience of the love of God, the transformation in Christ and commitment to the Kingdom.
- 2) School of Apostles: we will form schools of apostles in every city<sup>17</sup>, following Jesus as closely as possible in his concrete mission of living and preaching the Good News of the Kingdom in his method and scale of values.
- 3) In addition to these means of the ministry of the Word, we will use other essentials elements of our "Verbum Dei" charismatic heritage, highlighting especially: the Encounters, Schools of the Word, the preaching of the Theme-set of Life and Love.

Through these means we help people to learn to discern the will of God<sup>18</sup>, to aspire to perfection in love<sup>19</sup> and preach the Good News of the Kingdom <sup>20</sup>, according to the real and subjective condition and possibilities of each person.

42) The dedication to the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, through life and words, results for the VDMFa, in the formation of small Christian communities inserted and in communion with the local Church. Following the example of St. Paul, we seek to promote and form disciples that contribute to the development and continuity of these communities of Christian life and mission. The intention of our mission aims thus to a stable evangelization in as many places and circumstances possible. The joint labour among all the members of the VDMFa in collaboration with the local Church is indispensable.

#### **4.2 Platforms of the Verbum Dei Mission**

43) The tasks and ways of fulfilling the Verbum Dei mission may be very varied depending on place and time of the proclamation of the Gospel and according to the signs of the times. In order to accomplish its mission, the VDMFa will use apostolic platforms and their other works, and the means and methods proper to the charism.

44) The common mission adopts various forms and spaces according to the call, creativity, possibility of its members and different sensibilities of the people and persons to

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Lk 8, 1.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Lk 8, 1.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Mt 5, 48.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Lk 9, 2.

whom it is addressed. This opens up a wide range of aspects and dynamic processes that make it possible to give and receive the same Word of God.

45) In function of the greatest impact of the charism in society and in the world, the lay missionaries of the VDMFa, under the authority of the corresponding Responsibles, may establish, manage and administer those institutions and proper physical or juridical structures that are convenient for the development of the specific mission. They should be distinguished as institutions established or managed in their own name from those in the name of the VDMFa. Both are regulated by the numbers 95-96 of the present Statutes.

46) The four main areas where you can create and increase the potential of apostolic platforms are:

1) **Platforms specific to the Fraternity:** They are spaces of mission born out of the exclusive dedication to prayer and ministry of the Word of the members of the Fraternity. They include the work done in the proper works of the Fraternity such as centers of evangelization, apostolate houses, Missionary Formation Centers. The work of the Fraternity, however, goes beyond the borders of Verbum Dei and has a wider scope of action than the mission carried out internally of the VDMFa or their own works.

2) **Platforms born of the work of lay missionaries / disciples of VDMFa:** they can be deployed from the world of ordinary relationships in the VDMFa, in the workplace, recreational spaces and everyday life where the mission can be structured from the thousand variations of fraternal charity, and where everyday spaces of relationship are possible mission.

The areas that can embrace the apostolic platforms in the Family can go yet further: to influence the transformation of the social and public sphere, in the economy, in culture, in the social life, etc. The members of the VDMFa may create realities or institutions that socially impact the world. These apostolic initiatives can take different forms: personal (a member of the VDMFa in their own name), or as an initiative of several members associated to the VDMFa in the name of the Family. The Local Apostolic Council is the body which will discern whether the initiative can be classified as belonging to the VDMFa.

3) **Insertion and collaboration with the local Church:** the Verbum Dei charism has as a first area of application, inserted into platforms of local churches where we work in different pastoral or mission areas that comprise: catechist formation, different areas of pastoral work(youth, college, Bible, family, prophetic, missionary), formation, animation and accompaniment of consecrated life, theological formation in church institutions, pastoral formation, pastoral spirituality (spiritual exercises, retreats ...) in accompaniment; providing formation and

assistance to other religious communities, ecclesial movements with our spirituality, generating groups with VD identity and spirituality in parishes and different spaces of the church. Also, ecumenism and interreligious dialogue are part of the mission of the Verbum Dei with what this may involve.

**4) Platforms from the social and cultural world:** the reality of the world itself in which we accomplish our mission, with their cultures and subcultures, can open different platforms of insertion to the VDMFa members (especially for lay missionaries / disciples the VDMFa) through the diverse social and cultural contexts: social media (radio, television, magazines, newspapers, websites ...), comprehensive social development projects, collaboration with NGOs, civil associations, conducting or participating in cultural events, social or recreational.

### **4.3 Ministries and means in carrying out our mission**

47) In the VDMFa, there are different missionary services or ministries to realize a mission centered on the Word of God. These ministries seek to unfold, in an organized and stable way, the possibilities of each member for mission, ensuring the fidelity of each one in their peculiar call and promoting them as much as possible most from the communion of the various ministries.

48) The development of such apostolic ministries, considered essential in the work of the VDMFa, involve:

- 1) The suitable preparation for performing a particular ministry.
- 2) The concrete commitment, with a defined time period.
- 3) The recognition by the Responsibles together with the local Council declared before the entire local Family.

49) Each lay missionary / disciple of FAMVD in dialogue with God and with the community will discern the way in which they feel called to collaborate with the Verbum Dei mission with love and creativity. It will be the task of the local government of the VDMFa to ensure the necessary formation to achieve this objective and that of the stability and recognition of the ministries.

50) These ministries, while being ways to perform the mission, in the dynamism of Verbum Dei, are also ways in which the disciple of Jesus nourishes their life of faith, proposing others the same way to grow in love of God and neighbour.

51) The ministries will be an expression and unfolding of the Christian baptismal consecration in its three dimensions: prophetic, priestly and kingly, always from the specific Verbum Dei charism.

52) The greatest efficacy in proclaiming and spreading the Kingdom will determine the spirit, actuation, methods and instruments of apostolate. The local Family, from a suitable discernment and according to local possibilities, will launch various ministries so that each member may realize an aspect of the Verbum Dei mission, in communion with the other members of the VDMFa.

## **5 FRATERNAL LOVE LIVED IN THE VDMFA**

53) The name "family" expresses certain common roots from the Trinitarian source of love, a sense of identity and belonging and a certain closeness in relationships. This signifies friendship, gratuitous, committed and unconditional love; it entails environments of trust in which each one may grow as a person and as a disciple of Jesus, where the closeness of the other and the gift that each one is for the whole VDMFA can be enjoyed. The term "missionary" introduces this family in the dynamism of charity that is always open, passionate for the world, in a tension towards what not yet is, and yet knowing how to rejoice with gratitude over what already is, as Jesus himself.

54) The personal and communitarian living of the Trinitarian love is, for the VDMFA, the source of communion, making present his Kingdom among us. This is, in effect, the distinguishing mark of the VDMFA, as a Christian community: "The multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul" and "there was no one among them in need."

### **5.1 Foundations of Fraternal Love**

55) The living out of the fraternal love established by Jesus, centers the existence of the VDMFA in making the Kingdom visible and committing ourselves to it. The shared love of the Trinity unites us with stable bonds of love and friendship, and make it possible to present to the world, in a credible way, the project of love of God the Father: that we may come to love as Jesus has loved us, under the power of his Spirit.

56) The unconditional love of God, who first loved us, brings us to desire that all his children may participate in the family of God. His love for humanity, is a love of a father and mother, a faithful spouse, a brother and friend, and lays the foundation of the warmth of home and the gratuity of relationships that unite the families of God.

57) With the spirit of the first Christian community, the VDMFA is gathered around a table, of prayer in common, the Eucharist, the fraternal communion and of goods, the teachings, being seed of small evangelizing communities that go transforming the world from in the power of the Word of God<sup>21</sup>.

58) The growth in love, be it personal or communitarian, entails a path of advances and regresses, fruit of a constant and renewing effort, founded on the grace of God and in a special way in His mercy. The presence of Mary, Mother of the Church and of Verbum Dei, is fundamental in this patient path to gestate a family according to the categories of the Gospel.

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Hch 2,4.

## **5.2 Spheres of Communion**

59) The living out of fraternal love implies different forms of expression for the members of the VDMFA, according to their state, culture, personal situation, or ministry that they realize in the Verbum Dei mission. To be experts of communion implies the daily exercise and learning of charity, that is a gift and at the same time, a task and decision.

60) In all spheres where each member moves, they are called to live the spirituality of communion as a witness and artisan of the project that God desires for the whole humanity. These spheres include their family of origin, their relationships of friendship, study and work, the relationships in the VDMFA, in the Church and in society. The members of the VDMFA will also live in respect for creation, that they may feel as co-administrators and not owners, making responsible use of the natural resources and participating actively in the fight for an equitable, just and harmonious distribution of the same.

## **5.3 Fraternal Life in the VDMFA**

61) The VDMFA will constitute the same for each member, a net of support, an atmosphere of home, and above all, in the midst of the dispersion of life in the great urban nuclei, where the proper Christian identity remains dispersed in the midst of globalized contexts. The members of the VDMFA feel co-responsible for one another, living the fraternal love that Jesus proposes, mutually helping each other to discover and develop to the maximum their human vocation to love and their baptismal consecration. The charity of Christ brings us to welcome and value the individuality and diversity of each one, promoting their personal and communitarian response.

62) The fraternal love is translated in mutual help to live the Verbum Dei charism from the concrete reality of each one. This implies, according to the different ways of belonging, a communion of material and spiritual goods, necessary so that all may live the charism from their possibilities. Our commitment in the help to form and capacitate ourselves to carry out faithfully the mission to live and announce the Kingdom is translated also in gestures and in co-responsibility with our brothers and sisters in the various dimensions of human life and of growth in the community.

63) The living out of fraternal love that is born of the heart of God is opened to mission, making it its own. The determination to live the fraternal love is already mission in itself. Therefore, it is essential:

- to create spaces in which all may be heard and where each person is valued, whether they have an active role in the community or if for various reasons they are less present;
- To translate communion in concrete gestures that express trust and welcome that each one can give, knowing how to be grateful for the gift and self-giving of each person;
- To work actively our defects and limitations in an atmosphere of mutual help, creating at the same time, channels for building-up and fraternal correction;



- To cultivate fraternal relationships among different persons and groups that make up the VDMFA, taking care of the communication and mutual knowledge among members, sowing relationships based on transparency, trust and openness;
- To generate spaces of gratuity in which we may simply enjoy being together.
- Common moments of prayer and liturgical celebration, as a means to nourish and strengthen a fraternal love in Jesus' manner.

64) The members of the local VDMFA, in the different ways of belonging, live their itinerary of faith and mission from this sense of family, at the service of a local and universal community, avoiding any individualistic attitude that is closed-in on itself. Their identity and mission is realized in a communitarian project, integrating the development of the individual or specificity of each group with the communitarian dimension and the common projects. The VDMFA will promote encounters among the different groups that constitute it in order to favor important aspects of communion: mutual knowledge, living our fraternal love, common deepening in the charism, praying together, a sense of shared belonging, a growing missionary capacitation, harmonizing and projecting together and communitarian celebration.

## **6. ITINERARY OF FORMATION OF THE LAY MISSIONARIES/DISCIPLES OF THE VDMFA**

65) The VDMFA is structured as a dynamic community that participates in a progressive process of formation inasmuch in the global aspect of the Family as in the personal aspect of the members being formed. The formation of the lay missionaries of the VDMFA in a local community is not merely the sum of individual processes, but is one that responds to a common project and that would have common features, derived from the proper identity, charism and mission of lay missionaries/disciples of the VDMFA always present in the process of growth in the common call.

### **6.1. Objective and Dimensions of Formation**

66) The formation process is oriented towards the integral maturity of the person and of the VDMFA, taking into account the following fundamental dimensions: formation in the Verbum Dei charism, human and professional, spiritual, doctrinal, in communion in all their pastoral and apostolic spheres.

### **6.2. Stages of formation of the lay missionaries/disciples of the VDMFA**

67) The formation involves every moment of one's life in its different stages and situations, implying that the formation needs to be progressive, integral and diversified according to the circumstances or contexts in which each member or reality of life of the VDMFA finds themselves.

68) In order that the formation may be solid and produce a fruit of interior unity, it will be sought that each member of the VDMFA elaborate a project of life and of formation discerned and dialogued with the persons responsible for the formation in the local community. This project has to be in harmony with their life situation and has to be evaluated regularly.

69) The formation processes have to be sufficiently gradual and systematic. At the same time, they need to be flexible and open enough to apply them to the diverse socio-cultural realities.

70) In the VDMFA there are three fundamental stages distinguished: initiation, discipleship and apostolic stage.

- 1) Initiation Stage: This is the formation which the VDMFA offers to people in the first moments of contact and knowledge of the Verbum Dei charism (School of the Word).
- 2) Discipleship Stage: The formation in the discipleship stage includes the period from which the person freely wishes to commit themselves to the VDMFA until the person does a stable commitment in the VDMFA (School of Apostles).
- 3) Apostolic Stage: This stage includes in a permanent way those who have made a stable commitment in the VDMFA.

### **6.3. Responsibles in the formation of lay missionaries/disciples of the VDMFA**

71) The formation process will be the charge of the local responsible together with the Apostolic Council or the persons whom they may delegate (formation team).

## **7. FROM THE CALL OF GOD TO THE BINDING OF THE LAY MISSIONARIES TO THE VDMFA**

### **7.1. Call and Discernment**

72. The vocation in the VDMFA is born of the response of each one to the personal call of God to be Verbum Dei. It is God who calls us and gathers us<sup>22</sup> in the one same missionary family.

73. From the encounter with God and the intuition of the greatness of the treasure of faith, the persons go through a path of prayer, in which the Holy Spirit brings them to live a life of the Gospel and to realize the mission. This process has to be gradual with progressive and visible steps that are ratified in: life options, a sense of belonging, a formation itinerary and the assumption of responsibilities.

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<sup>22</sup> In the biblical sense of the word 'to convoke,' it is to say to gather in a same vocation.

74. After a process of initiation in the VDMFA, the persons who have done an initial journey may make a temporal commitment as lay missionaries/disciples of the VDMFA. Later, when they have confirmed the call of God, desiring from the heart and with freedom to belong to the VDMFA, they may make a stable commitment that introduces them fully and definitively in her as lay missionaries/disciples of the same.

75. When the person manifests a desire to acquire a certain link in the VDMFA, be it temporal or stable, this is accompanied with a commitment of discernment of the proper vocation. In this path and with suitable formation proposals, the sense of identity and belonging to the VDMFA is gradually developed through assuming certain rights and responsibilities. Through communitarian discernment, the person will opt for a temporary or stable bond as a lay missionary/disciple of the VDMFA or through other ways of vocational response to belong to the VDMFA or to other contemporary ecclesial realities.

76. The discernment of the process and admission of the lay missionaries to the VDMFA will be under the tutelage of the Responsible of the local community of the Fraternity, or the persons whom they may delegate.

## **7.2. The commitment of the lay missionaries/disciples to the VDMFA**

77. The option of belonging and the temporal or stable *commitment* is made before the corresponding Responsible of the local VDMFA according to the way of commitment that is suitable to the culture, state and situation of the person and the local community through which they will form part of the VDMFA.

78. From the *commitment* and sense of belonging to the VDMFA, the lay member/disciples is committed to live the spirit and the proper means of the Verbum Dei charism according to their particular call. The VDMFA, in its different modes of belonging, commits itself, on its part, to the spiritual accompaniment, formation, help in the practical mission and living out an atmosphere of fraternal love and solidarity with its members.

79. If a lay missionary/disciple of the VDMFA with a stable commitment, through mature reflection, discernment and dialogue, considers that they should leave their commitment with the VDMFA, they will make a necessary request to their Responsible of the local community. Once the reasons are pondered, the Responsible will confirm their decision to leave the VDMFA and the acquired commitments.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Expulsion of a lay member: The Responsible of the local community, with the consent of the Apostolic Council, may expel a lay missionary member/disciple of the VDMFA. The following are considered sufficient cause for the dismissal of a lay member:

a) For grave causes: such as abandoning the faith, a manifested rupture with the Church or grave and persistent moral situations.

b) For total or partial violation of the fundamental norms of the family Statutes or the rupture of communion with and in the Family, always in the context of grave matters externally imputable.

## **Commitments of the lay missionaries/disciples of the VDMFA**

80. The commitments of the lay missionaries/disciples of the VDMFA, in the measure of their possibilities, are:

- 1) Daily personal prayer based on the Word of God.
- 2) At least one retreat or spiritual exercises in silence per year, as the privileged moment of encounter with the Lord, through the Word and as a space for personal growth.
- 3) To participate in the fraternal activities of the VDMFA (e.g. monthly mass, Family Days, etc.)
- 4) Commitment to live, be formed and support the Verbum Dei mission according to their own possibilities and needs of the local and universal Family.
- 5) To live in communion with Christ and with the Catholic Church through participation in the sacraments, with regularity in the Eucharist and Reconciliation.
- 6) Spiritual discernment and personal growth through the revision of life or the spiritual accompaniment or both.
- 7) To help financially in the common works of the VDMFA and of the VDMF, in a regular way and according to each one's possibilities.
- 8) To make an explicit commitment (public or private) before God and the corresponding Responsible of the VDMF.

## **8 COORDINATION AND ADMINISTRATION IN THE VDMFa**

81. The coordination of the VDMFa will constitute a fraternal service lived in function of the charism, potentiating the baptismal consecration, communion and missionary living of its members and communitarian realities that constitute it. The structures of coordination will be based on the principle of communion, co-responsibility and representation.

82. The organization of lay missionaries/disciples of VDMFa will always be in communion with the local authority of the members of the VDMF to ensure missionary communion.

83. All governing bodies of the Fraternity will promote the configuration, growth and consolidation of the Verbum Dei Missionary Family, always seeking co-responsibility and communion among all.<sup>24</sup>

### **8.1. Coordination in the local community**

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Before the expulsion, the situation will be explained to the interested party with clarity and charity, in a dialogue ordered to their desired recovery. If this is not possible, expulsión will proceed.

<sup>24</sup> Cf CFMVD 186.6

84. The team of coordination of the VDMFa in a local community (urban or rural center with one or several communities), organizes the different fields of life and mission of the VDMFa in that community. This team will be representing both the VDMF and other VDMFa realities of the place.

85. In places where the **presence of lay missionaries / disciples** of the VDMFa develop without members of the Fraternity, the government of the Fraternity in the Zone, Region or Area where such a **community of lay missionaries / disciples** of VDMFa is found, will determine which member of the Fraternity or local community should be their reference point for local coordination.

86. The local Responsible of the Fraternity will in turn be responsible for the VDMFa. In exceptional cases, the local responsible may delegate the coordination of the VDMFa to a person of the Fraternity.

87. The *Apostolic Council of VDMFa* is a deliberative body of great importance in the local Family.<sup>25</sup> It will have a proportionate number of members and the VDMF and the VDMFa, representing the different realities of the local community. The lay missionaries/disciples of the Apostolic Council have to be members with a stable commitment in the VDMFa or with a temporary commitment in which they may have an assimilation of charism and the sufficient time in VDMFa to perform this service.<sup>26</sup>

88. The Council will help in the coordination, growth and unfolding of the VDMFa. At the start of the year, the Apostolic Council will program the year, taking into account the spiritual, fraternal, formation, apostolic projection, communitarian services, resources and restructuring, elaborating a common apostolic project for a set time. At the end of each period, the progress of the programmed objectives at the start of the year will be reviewed. This coordination does not include the specifics of the consecrated life of the VDMF.

89. The Council may take on its own particular characteristics according to the local communities, safeguarding the following objectives:

1) Plan and coordinate the various apostolic activities and formation of the VDMFa, from an atmosphere of prayer and missionary projection;

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<sup>25</sup> In the realities in which the VDMFa is not mature (for example, in a community of the VDMF recently founded) the possibility of creating an “apostolic commission”, secretariat... or some body that may prepare the way for the creation of an apostolic council in the future, can be contemplated. In this, the burden of responsibility and the decision of the members of the VDMFa have to be less.

<sup>26</sup> The way to constitute the apostolic council will be determined and regulated by the *Norms of the Apostolic Councils*, approved by the General Council on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June of 2012, leaving room to diverse methods according to local situations.

2) Establish a calendar and program of development of the Verbum Dei mission at the local level;

3) Meet frequently to analyze and boost the development of Verbum Dei mission according to the growth and the personal and communitarian situation of the Local VDMFa;

4) Provide that local members of the VDMFa be elements of continuity of the apostolic work in a dynamic of live school of formation and missionary responsibility;

5) Coordinate, promote and nurture the communion with the local Church.

90. Each group of Local VDMFa may have a *Coordinator*. The ultimate responsibility for the appointment of Coordinators corresponds to the local Responsible of the VDMF, after hearing the opinions of the Apostolic Council of the VDMFa and prior survey with the VDMFa members participating in this reality. The Coordinator's role is to accompany the development of their group and to represent it before the Apostolic Council.

91. The local Assembly is a consultative body in which all the members of the VDMF and the stable lay missionary members or members with temporary commitment can participate, according to the criteria of the local council of the Family. They meet with a minimum frequency of twice a year. The Assembly aims to collect suggestions for the creation and evaluation of a common apostolic project, and in this way to address important issues in the life of the Family.

## **8.2. Universal Coordination**

92. The organization of the one same universal family is vital, in order that the Verbum Dei spirit and mission may unite the VDMFa members in the charism. The President of the Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity is *ipso iure* President of the Verbum Dei Missionary Family.<sup>27</sup>

## **8.3. Administration in the VDMFa**

93. The Responsible of the Fraternity in the local community, if possible, will form a team of administration, made up of members of the VDMF and lay missionaries/disciples of the VDMFa that will properly manage the assets and resources of the VDMFa. For that, to:

1) Create and manage a local administrative fund of the VDMFa.

2) Submit annual budgets and balances of the Apostolic Council of the VDMFa.

3) Ensure that the management of the ordinary or extraordinary administration be done according to the universal law and the proper law of the Verbum Dei Missionary Family.

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<sup>27</sup> CFMVD 200.

94. The role of the administrative fund will:

- 1) Promote the formation and mission of the VDMFa members.
- 2) Sustain the common works of the VDMFa.
- 3) Manage a solidarity fund for internal needs and those of the Family.
- 4) Help sustain the VDMF members.

95. The associations, foundations, NGOs, and other works that are founded in the proper name of a group under the VDMFa need the permission of the Responsible of the VDMFa upon consultation with the Apostolic Council.

To use the name of Verbum Dei, there must also be written permission from the Responsible of the corresponding intermediate authority and the confirmation of the President of the VDMF, hearing the opinion of the General Council. Authorization implies the written report of the local Apostolic Council.

96. Associations, foundations, NGOs, and other works of VDMFa will be regulated by a particular norm approved by the General Council and following the laws of the country in which they reside.

97. The proper works of VDMFa that are founded or managed on its behalf, should always have the written authorization of the Responsible of the corresponding intermediate authority and the confirmation of President of the VDMF, after hearing the opinions of the General Council, taking into account the written report of the local Apostolic Council. Among these are the houses of spirituality for missionary formation and foundations or associations for their sustenance and support.

98. The VDMFa Lay missionaries cooperate economically as a sign of their identity and communion, each according to their bond and possibilities, and through discernment in community.

99. In the local sphere of the VDMFa, the Apostolic Council of the VDMFa, with the consent of the General Council of the Fraternity, may create associations VDMFa considering the cultural, geographical or stage of growth.

100. The General Congress of the Fraternity shall approve the statutes of international associations which enjoy wide recognition in the universal VDMFa. The creation of an international association guarantees universality and fidelity to the charism of the persons who compose of it from their situation of life.

## **ANNEX: OTHER FORMS OF PARTICIPATION IN THE VDMFA**

### **VERBUM DEI DIOCESAN PRIESTS**

1. In the Missionary Family environment, seminarians and diocesan priests may also find a place and support in their spiritual life and mission. The Verbum Dei diocesan priests may form part of the VDMFA, living their diocesan mission from the Verbum Dei missionary spirituality and with the proper means of the specific charism according to the diverse possibilities of application in the diocese where they are incardinated.
2. The diocesan priests, without neglecting any of the proper dimensions of the ordained ministry, participate and share the spirituality and means of spiritual and apostolic life, centering their attention in the centrality of the service of the Word of God.
3. After a process of formation in the charism, they may link themselves to the VDMFA, from their own priestly call, binding themselves through certain commitments, always with the knowledge of their bishop.

Part of their apostolate may be the intention to build the VD movement.

## **THE WIDER VERBUM DEI FAMILY**

4. There are those who participate and benefit of the Verbum Dei charism, persons who feel a connection to the charism, without expressing it in defined commitments, or without participating fully in the fundamental dimensions of the VDMFA. We have the greatest esteem for all of them, in an evangelical spirit of mutual enrichment and they may be considered as part of the one wider family, which we call Verbum Dei Family.

5. The VDMFA, under the guidance of the directives of the Catholic Church and from the orientation of the Vatican II Council regarding the levels of ecclesial communion, open spaces to a communion in mission with itineraries of faith beyond their ecclesial frontiers:

A. Commitment to the ecclesial ecumenical initiatives, sharing from the spirituality and mission of Verbum Dei, the path towards unity with brothers and sisters of the Churches and communities of other confessions.

B. Commitment with non-baptized persons or believers of other religions that may want to participate in a progressive path of searching and knowledge of God from through the Verbum Dei charism. The spaces of the charism shared with these persons will be part of an itinerary in which the Verbum Dei Missionary Family wishes to collaborate in the integral human growth of each person and in the living-out of their vocation to love, feeling that they are part of the Family in a profound respect for their peculiarity and profession of faith.





## ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Vaticano II, <i>Apostolicam Actuositatem</i>
BIVD	<i>Breve Ideario Verbum Dei</i> (1969)
CEC	<i>New Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>
ChL	John Paul II, <i>Christifideles Laici</i>
CFMVD	Constitutions Fraternidad Misionera Verbum Dei (2012)
CIC	<i>Code of Canon Law</i> (1983)
EN	Paul VI, <i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i>
EVD	<i>Verbum Dei Statutes</i> (1987)
FC	John Paul II, <i>Familiaris Consortio</i>
VDMF/FMVD	Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity
VDMFA/FAMVD	Verbum Dei Missionary Family
GS	Vatican II, <i>Gaudium et Spes</i>
LG	Vatican II, <i>Lumen Gentium</i>
RMi	John Paul II, <i>Redemptoris Missio</i>
SC	Vatican II, <i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i>
VC	John Paul II, <i>Vita Consecrata</i>