

THE CONGREGATION OF SAINT AUGUSTINE (CSA)

*A Religious Order of the Old Catholic Church under the protection of the
Black Madonna of Perpetual Help*

*"Whatsoever you do unto the least of my children, you do unto me."
(MT 25:40)*



Constitution and By-Laws

The Rev. Dr. Tony Rivera, Presbyter, Old Catholic Church
under the protection of The Right Reverend Edmund Cass, C.S.M.

PREAMBLE

In the spirit of Saint Augustine, we, the Congregation of St. Augustine, dedicate ourselves to a life of communal love, service, and contemplation. Inspired by the compassion of the Blessed Virgin under her title of the Black Madonna of Perpetual Help, and by the wisdom of our Father Augustine, we seek to live as a community bound by charity, truth, and a deep commitment to justice for the poor and the marginalized.

We place this Congregation under her protection as our patroness. In the Black Madonna of Perpetual Help we see the pattern of our life: the Mother who shelters the frightened child who runs to her, and who turns her face toward the stranger and the cast-out. Under her mantle, we ask to become what she is — a refuge that mends, and a welcome that excludes no one.

ARTICLE I – NAME AND NATURE

§1. This community shall be known as the Congregation of St. Augustine (CSA), hereafter 'the Order.'

§2. The Order is a fully inclusive, welcoming and affirming, Catholic religious community within the Old Catholic Church.

§3. The Order embraces three orders. The First Order: Ordained; the Second Order: Consecrated Lay Associates; and the Third Order: Lay Supporters and Associates.

ARTICLE II – CHARISM AND MOTTO

§1. The charism of the Order is *love proven*, expressed through solidarity with the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed.

§2. The motto of the Order shall be: "Whatsoever you do unto the least of my children, you do unto me." (MT 25:40)

§3. Members of the Order are called to embody hospitality, compassion, and justice in every aspect of ministry and community life.

ARTICLE III – MEMBERSHIP

§1. The Order is inclusive of all people regardless of gender, orientation, or background.

§2. The First Order consists of ordained clergy (men, women, trans, or nonbinary persons) who have received at least the diaconate.

§3. The Second Order consists of lay members who commit themselves to the spirituality, practice, and mission of the Order.

§4. The Third Order consists of lay supporters and allies who embrace the charism but do not not required to observe the liturgical and religious practices of the order.

§5. There are three stages of commitment for Ordained and Consecrated members: Postulancy enables exploration of the order without any commitment; Novitiate requires

temporary vows, the donning of the habit, and the requirement to live the rule of the order; Profession requires taking permanent vows.

§6. All members shall make a solemn commitment to the Rule of St. Augustine and the Constitution of the Order.

§7. All members seeking ordination are subject to the rules of the Order and of the Old Catholic Church, and must profess obedience to both the Bishop and the Prior-General.

ARTICLE IV – THE HABIT AND SYMBOLS

§1. The habit of the Order shall consist of a black tunic and capuce and a black leather belt. A white scapular is optional during the novitiate and a black scapular is optional for those in perpetual vows.

§2. On the right side of the belt members will carry the Holy Scriptures

§3. The Logo is a combination of the book, heart, and flames of the standard Augustinian logo. The book represents the Word of God; the flaming heart is the human heart. It symbolizes Augustine's love of God and his fellow brothers and sisters. It is a visual reminder of the Lord's Greatest Commandment to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strength and to love our neighbors as ourselves. The upper half is a cross whose lateral plank ends in wings representing the Holy Spirit. We also believe the flames of the heart are a symbol of the Holy Spirit, thus, the Holy Spirit is both within us and around us.



§4. The crest or coat of arms of the Order can be framed in different forms, but the logo must be present, the motto Love Proven must also be present, and the name of the order, too, must be present.



ARTICLE V – GOVERNANCE

- §1. The Order shall be governed by the Prior/Prioress General, assisted by a Council of Advisors made up of three members appointed by the Prior(ess) General, 6 members two from each of the three Orders, and up to three appointees by the Bishop Protector.
- §2. The first Prior General shall be appointed by the Protector Bishop, serve for a term of six years, and may be reelected twice. Thereafter, the Prior General shall serve a term of six years and may be reelected once.
- §3. Each local community may elect a Prior or Prioress to oversee the day-to-day life of that community under the rules of the Order.
- §4. There shall be no segregation of members based on their gender, sexual orientation, or other identity markers.
- §5. The Bishop Protector shall serve as the ecclesiastical overseer and spiritual guarantor of the Order.

ARTICLE VI – FORMATION AND VOWS

- §1. Formation shall follow a path of discernment, postulancy, novitiate, and profession.
- §2. First and Second Order Members profess vows of communal living, simplicity, fidelity to the Gospel, and obedience, according to their state of life.
- §3. Third Order Lay members shall make promises of simplicity, fidelity to the Gospel, service.
- §4. Perpetual formation and spiritual direction shall be integral to community life.
- §5. Formation shall consist of a structured curriculum drawn up by the Prior(ess) General, the Discernment Director, and the Discernment Council. However, much of the formation must be flexible and customizable according to the need of the members. Formation is perpetual.

ARTICLE VII – RECRUITMENT AND UNIVERSITY OUTREACH

- §1. Recruitment shall focus on building communities of inclusion and service.

§2. Members of either order must be baptized Christians, but members of the Third Order do not necessarily have to be Catholic.

§3. Because Augustine was a Doctor of the Church and a prolific writer, partnerships with universities must be encouraged. Members should encourage students to participate in social outreach and spiritual growth.

§4. The Order shall maintain a visible and welcoming presence through campus chaplaincies, service projects, and interfaith collaboration.

§5. Discernment groups and service-learning opportunities shall be established to introduce young adults to the Augustinian charism.

ARTICLE VIII – MINISTRIES

§1. The Order shall minister to the poor, the sick, the outcast, and those who suffer injustice.

§2. The central ministry of the Order is expressed through The Black Madonna of Perpetual Help Mission, dedicated to compassionate service.

§3. Ministries may include pastoral counseling, community meals, education, advocacy, and social healing.

ARTICLE IX – PRAYER AND COMMUNITY LIFE

§1. Members shall maintain a rhythm of prayer inspired by the Rule of St. Augustine.

§2. The community shall celebrate the Eucharist regularly and pray the Liturgy of the Hours.

§3. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, under her title of the Black Madonna of Perpetual Help, shall be fostered through daily intercession, novenas, annual feast observances, and other approved devotions.

PRAYER TO THE BLACK MADONNA OF PERPETUAL HELP

O Blessed Lady, Black Madonna of Perpetual Help, Mother of compassion and protector of the poor, guide our hearts in love and service. Help us to see Christ in the faces of those we serve, to act justly, and to love tenderly. May your mantle of mercy cover us and your Son strengthen us in our vocation. Amen.

