



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

STATUTES OF THE PONTIFICAL ACADEMY FOR LIFE

TITLE I

NATURE AND PURPOSE

Art. 1 – Introduction

§ 1 - The Pontifical Academy for Life, having its principal office in Vatican City State, was established by Pope Saint John Paul II with the Motu Proprio *Vitae Misterium* of 11 February 1994.

The objective of the Pontifical Academy for Life is the defence and promotion of the value of human life and of the dignity of the person.

§ 2 - The specific responsibility of the Academy is:

a) to study, from an interdisciplinary perspective, the problems connected with the promotion and defence of human life;

b) to form persons in a culture of life – in the areas of its proper competence – through appropriate initiatives, and always with full respect for the Magisterium of the Church;

c) to inform, in a clear and timely manner, Church leaders, the various biomedical science institutions and societal health care organizations, the media, and civil society in general, about the most significant results of its own study and research (Cf. *Vitae Misterium*, 4).

§ 3 - The Academy has a primarily scientific role, for the promotion and defence of human life (Cf. *Vitae Misterium*, 4). In particular, it studies various matters dealing with care for the dignity of the human person at different stages of life, mutual respect between the sexes and generations; the

defence of the dignity of each individual human being; and the promotion of a quality of human life that integrates material and spiritual values. It does so in the context of a genuine “human ecology” that seeks to recover the original balance in creation between the human person and the whole universe (cf. [Chirograph of 15 August 2016](#)).

§ 4 - In carrying out the activity envisioned by these Statutes, the Pontifical Academy for Life cooperates with the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia, above all with the Secretariat of State and the Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life, with due regard for their respective areas of competence and in a collaborative spirit.

§ 5 – In its efforts to promote and spread the culture of life, the Academy maintains close contacts with institutes of higher education, scientific societies and research centres that deal with various life-related issues.

TITLE II

ORGANIZATION

Art. 2 - Structure of the Academy

The Pontifical Academy for Life consists of the Office of the President, a Central Office and Members, also known as Academicians.

Art. 3 - Office of the President

The Office of the President consists of the President, the Chancellor and the Governing Council. The direction and governance of ordinary and extraordinary activities of the Academy are the responsibility of the President, together with the Chancellor and assisted by the Governing Council. The Ecclesiastical Counsellor also pertains to the Office of the President.

§ 1 - *The President*

a) The President is appointed by the Pope. He or she remains in office for the term laid down in the Letter of Appointment, and can be reappointed.

b) The President is the official representative of the Pontifical Academy. He or she directs it in all its activities and has responsibility for it before the Holy Father; convenes and chairs the meetings of the Governing Council; sets the agenda for such meetings and oversees the execution of resolutions passed by the Council. The President also convenes and chairs the General Assemblies of the Academy. In special circumstances, the President can call on the assistance of individual Members.

§ 2 - *The Chancellor*

a) The Chancellor is appointed by the Pope for the term laid down in the Letter of Appointment, and can be reappointed.

b) The Chancellor can represent the Pontifical Academy for Life on behalf of the President, and cooperates with the President in the direction and governance of the activities of the Academy.

§ 3 - *The Governing Council*

a) The Governing Council of the Pontifical Academy for Life is composed of the President, a Vice President if one is chosen, the Chancellor and six Counsellors appointed by the Pope. Of the latter, four are chosen from among the Ordinary Members of the Academy, a fifth is proposed by the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life, and the sixth is the President of the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family. Each Counsellor remains in office for five years and can be reappointed. If an Ecclesiastical Counsellor is named, he too is a member of the Governing Council (See § 4 of this Article II)

b) The Governing Council holds at least two ordinary meetings each year to decide on the general direction of ordinary affairs and to address any particular issues that might arise regarding the life of the Academy.

c) The Governing Council can meet in special session to consider urgent and serious issues that cannot be deferred.

At such meetings, all members of the Governing Council who are present have the right to vote.

d) The Governing Council, taking into account, if it chooses, suggestions from outside the Council, selects and appoints the *Corresponding* Members of the Pontifical Academy for Life referred to in Art. 5, §3 of these Statutes. It also approves the programmes of study of the General Assemblies and the curricula of formational activities, providing input into the general direction of the Academy's annual programmes.

e) The President selects and appoints the Coordinator of the Secretariat, as referred to in Art. 4, §2 of these Statutes.

§ 4 - *The Ecclesiastical Counsellor*

a) The Ecclesiastical Counsellor is appointed by the Pope for a term of five years and can be reappointed. This office remains vacant if the office of President or Chancellor is held by a cleric.

b) The Ecclesiastical Counsellor is responsible for ensuring that the statements of the Pontifical Academy for Life are in conformity with Catholic doctrine as proposed by the Church's Magisterium. In addition, he is charged with maintaining relations with Ecclesiastical Superiors.

Art. 4 - The Central Office

a) The Central Office of the Pontifical Academy for Life is located in Vatican City State. It is the executive agency of the Office of the President and is charged with structuring, implementing and coordinating the Academy's activities. The Office carries out its duties under the direction of the President and the Chancellor.

b) To carry out its activities more efficiently, the Central Office is divided into two sections: the scientific section and the technical-administrative section, or Secretariat.

§ 1 - The scientific section

The scientific section deals with the Academy's study and research activities in accordance with the statutory aims and specific responsibilities of the Pontifical Academy for Life (See Art. 1).

To this end, it contains three distinct departments: study, formation and information.

§ 2 - The technical-administrative section, or Secretariat

The technical-administrative Section attends to the secretarial and administrative activities of the Academy.

Art. 5 - Members, or Academicians

The Pontifical Academy for Life is composed of the *Ordinary* Members, *Corresponding* Members, *Honorary* Members and *Young Researcher* Members. Appointment to membership in the Academy requires proven willingness to work collaboratively with the Academy in a spirit of service and solely for the accomplishment of its specific responsibilities.

§ 1 - Ordinary Members

Ordinary Members may total seventy at any one time. They are appointed for a term of five years by the Holy Father, after hearing the opinion of the Governing Council and on the basis of their academic qualifications, proven professional integrity, professional expertise and faithful service in the defence and promotion of the right to life of every human person.

At the end of their five-year terms, *Ordinary* Members can be reappointed for successive terms until the completion of their eightieth year of age.

§ 2 - Honorary Members

Certain Academicians, linked in a particular way to the life and activity of the Academy, are

appointed *Honorary* Members by the Holy Father.

§ 3 - *Corresponding Members*

Corresponding Members are selected by the Governing Council and appointed by the same for a term of five years, on the basis of their competence and professional expertise, and their proven commitment to the promotion and protection of human life.

At the end of their five-year terms, *Corresponding* Members can be reappointed for a maximum of two additional terms.

§ 4 - *Young Researcher Members*

Young Researcher Members come from fields related to the Academy's own areas of research, are no older than thirty-five years of age, and are selected and appointed by the Governing Council for a term of five years, which can be renewed one time only.

§ 5 – *Guidelines and rules concerning membership*

a) Academicians are selected, without regard for their religion, from among distinguished ecclesiastical, religious and lay persons of various nationalities expert in fields pertaining to human life (medicine, the biological sciences, theology, philosophy, anthropology, law, sociology and so forth).

b) New Academicians commit themselves to promoting and defending the principles regarding the value of life and the dignity of the human person, interpreted in a way consonant with the Church's Magisterium.

c) Academicians are required to take part in the General Assemblies, at which they present scientific reports, notes and communications, engage in discussions, vote and enjoy the right to suggest to the Governing Council possible members and areas for study and research.

d) If it is impossible for a Member to take part in the work of an Assembly, he or she must give a sufficient explanation for that absence.

Unjustified absence from more than two Assemblies within any five-year term results *ipso facto* in loss of membership in the Academy.

e) Status as an Academician can be revoked pursuant to the Academy's own Regulations in the event of a public and deliberate action or statement by a Member clearly contrary to the principles stated in paragraph b) above, or seriously offensive to the dignity and prestige of the Catholic Church or of the Academy itself.

f) Political office, in one's own country or abroad, are incompatible with appointment to or the exercise of membership in the Pontifical Academy for Life. Consequently, should a member of the Academy accept such an office, he or she is suspended from activity in the Academy and may not publicly use the title of Member of the Academy until his or her term of office has come to an end.

TITLE III

SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITY AND OPERATIONS

Art. 6 - Description of ordinary activities

The scientific and interdisciplinary activity of the Pontifical Academy for Life must maintain a close relationship with the agencies and institutions through which the Church is present in the world of biomedical sciences, healthcare and healthcare-related organizations. It should readily cooperate with physicians and researchers, including those who are not Catholic or Christian, who acknowledge human dignity and the inviolability of human life from conception until natural death, as proposed by the Church's Magisterium, to be the essential moral foundation of science and the medical arts.

To accomplish its statutory aims (cf. Art. 1), the Pontifical Academy for Life:

- a)* organizes a General Assembly each year, in which all Members take part;
- b)* convenes and coordinates the activities of working groups, both national and international;
- c)* studies legislation in force in the various countries as well the various approaches in international healthcare policy, and the principal intellectual currents that bear upon the contemporary culture of life;
- d)* publishes the results of its studies and research and disseminates its cultural and operational proposals in publications and other media;
- e)* organizes national and international conferences dealing with bioethical questions of significant interest;
- f)* organizes educational initiatives in the area of bioethics, takes part in them and offers its own contributions;
- g)* participates through its representatives in the more important initiatives in the areas of science, biomedicine, law, politics, philosophy, anthropology, charitable assistance, morality, pastoral care and so forth, related to the Academy's purposes.

TITLE IV

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Art. 7 - Financial resources

As an Institution supported by the Holy See, the Pontifical Academy for Life yearly presents the budget for its own ordinary and extraordinary activities to the Secretariat for the Economy, in accordance with current norms.

§ 1 - The *Vitae Mysterium* Foundation

Eventual funding from the *Vitae Mysterium* Foundation is principally intended for the support of the ordinary and extraordinary activities of the Academy. If sufficient financial resources are available, a part of those resources can be used to fund study grants and other initiatives for the purpose of training in bioethics, and in particular for the training of persons in developing countries or in areas where the culture of life has greater need of support.

TITLE V

FINAL PROVISIONS

Art. 8 - Regulations

For the effective implementation of these Statutes, the President and the Chancellor, after hearing the opinions of the Governing Council, will submit the Regulations of the Pontifical Academy for Life to the Cardinal Secretary of State for his approval.

These Regulations contain, in addition to the organization chart and position descriptions of the personnel of the Central Office, supplementary provisions dealing with the organization and operation of the Academy.

These Statutes are approved for a period of five years. I direct that they be promulgated by publication in the daily edition of *L'Osservatore Romano* and then published in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, taking effect on 1 January 2017.

From the Vatican, 18 October 2016

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