

**GUANELLIAN COOPERATORS'  
ASSOCIATION**

**GENERAL STATUTES**

**ROME 2015**



# GUANELLIAN COOPERATORS' ASSOCIATION

## PRESENTATION of the STATUTES

On 24 October 24 1999 the Superior General of the Daughters of St Mary of Providence and the Superior General of the Servants of Charity promulgated the Statutes of the Guanellian Cooperators' Association, the product of the work done in the preceding years to clarify the identity and organization of the Association.

The Statutes were subsequently presented to the Holy See for recognition of the Association as a third branch of the Guanellian Family. The following reply was received from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life:

(The following is our translation)

### DECREE

The *Association of Guanellian Cooperators*, belonging to the Institutes of Religious Life called the "Servants of Charity" and the "Daughters of St Mary of Providence" whose Generalates are located in the Diocese of Rome, is an Association of the faithful who desire to share the charism passed on to the Guanellian Religious Family by Blessed Luigi Guanella, the Founder, adapting it to the members' state of life.

Sensitive to the appeal of the Church, while nevertheless remaining in a secular state the members of the Association share the ideal, spirit and apostolic mission of the above-mentioned Institutes.

This Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, after carefully examining the Statutes presented, declares that the above-mentioned Association is *a Work that belongs to the Guanellian Religious Family* and must be recognized by all as such.

It is recommended that the Statutes presented to this Dicastery be faithfully complied with by the members of the *Guanellian Cooperators' Association*.

Furthermore, by this Decree the same Dicastery entrusts to the competent authorities of the two Guanellian Religious Institutes the approval of any modifications to the Statutes which may prove necessary in the future.

Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary.

The Vatican, 22 May 2003

Eduardo Card. Martinez Somalo

Prefect

+ Piergiorgio Silvano Nesti, CP

Secretary

On the basis of this ecclesial recognition and the faculties granted “to the competent authorities of the two Guanellian Religious Institutes” to approve subsequent modifications to the Statutes, the respective General Councils of the DSMP and the SdC, at a joint session on . . . , approve this text with the modifications made to the text that was promulgated on 24 October 1999.

Basically, today’s text confirms the lines and values expressed in the previous Statutes which thus assure “the Guanellian identity to those lay people who, because they are called and qualified by the Spirit, wish to live the characteristic evangelical experience of Father Guanella”; while the modifications are a response to the need to adapt the statutory norms to the current situation of the Cooperators, now scattered in various parts of the world, and to the most recent documents of the Church and of the Guanellian Congregations.

The modifications were proposed by means of an extensive consultation of all the Cooperators, both with special study meetings and in-depth examination and requesting personal and group contributions and, finally, with the presentation of the document reviewed at the World Assembly of Cooperators, held in Rome during the celebrations for the Centenary of the birth in heaven of the Founder, St Luigi Guanella.

Dear Cooperators, we therefore have great joy in presenting to you once again the Statutes that contain your “identity card” in the Church, in the Guanellian Family and in society. It is Father Guanella himself who presents them to you, because you too were born in his fatherly heart. With these Statutes you can live your Christian life according to the Founder’s charismatic inspiration and feel part of his Spiritual Family, with which you are called to make charity the heart of the world.

May Mary, Mother of Divine Providence, accompany and guide us.

Signatures.....

Rome, 12 November 2015, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of Divine Providence.

## **ST LUIGI GUANELLA**

Luigi Guanella was born to Lorenzo and Maria Bianchi on 19 December 1842 in Fraciscio, a small outlying district of Campodolcino, in the mountains of the Valle Spluga. He was the ninth of thirteen children who grew up in a serene atmosphere

where attention to the human and Christian values prevailed. A lively and cheerful child, in playing with his sister Caterina he would make a muddy mixture of earth and water saying: “*When we are grown up we will make soup like this for the poor*”.<sup>1</sup> When he was not quite six years old, on 24 June 1848, on the feast day of St John the Baptist, the Patron Saint, an event occurred, as it were a prediction of his mission, which made a deep mark on little Luigi.

Before the beginning of Mass while he was hiding some sweets that his brother-in-law Guglielmo had given him, he heard *a dry clap, he looked up and saw a lovely little old man holding out his hands to him, almost as if to say: “Give me some of those sweets.”* Luigi felt panicky; he stopped hiding the sweets and when on looking about him he was no longer able to see the good little old man, he felt disappointment and regret”.<sup>2</sup>

In the spring of 1852 in the heights of Gualdera, little Luigi, in a solitary moment on the day of his First Communion, felt “*that a moment of gentle sweetness, almost of paradise, was unfolding in his heart, which persuaded him to make strong resolutions of good*”.<sup>3</sup>

When he was twelve years old he went to Como to train for the priesthood, first with the Somaschan Fathers at the Collegio Gallio, and then at the Diocesan Seminaries. After his ordination on 26 May 1866, he began his pastoral activity, first at Prosto then at Savogno in the Italian part of the Val Bregaglia, ceaselessly devoting himself to alleviating the material and spiritual suffering of the poorest and most neglected people.

In 1875 he went to Don Bosco in Turin. Don Bosco welcomed him with high esteem and consideration, and dreamed of having him with him among the Salesians. However, Father Luigi took a different path. Recalled by his bishop, he returned to his diocese in 1878 out of obedience, but also to try to do for his people what he had cherished in his heart for years

After his disappointing attempt to open a school for poor children at Traona in the Valtellina, which failed because of the opposition of the prefect and the civil authorities, following a brief interlude in Gravedona, in August 1881 he was sent for a few months to the solitude of Olmo, an isolated little village in the mountains of the Valle Spluga “*so that he would be unable to exercise dangerous influences*”,<sup>4</sup> as the civil authorities declared.

His determination and his desire not to stoop so low as to make compromises, together with his concern to protect “Christian people” from the liberal mentality that prevailed – these were the years following the Breach of Porta Pia in Rome which

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<sup>1</sup> L. Guanella, *Le vie della Provvidenza. Autobiografia di un santo* (hereafter indicated as *VdP*), 1913-1914, Edizioni San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2011, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> L. Guanella, *VdP, op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> L. Guanella, *VdP, op. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>4</sup> L. Guanella, *VdP, op. cit.*, pp. 70-71.

decreed the end of the temporal power of the popes – did nothing to make him likeable to the civil authorities and even made him troublesome to the religious ones. Yet it was in his “exile” at Olmo that Father Guanella had the experience of a God who is a loving Father. In November that same year he was appointed parish administrator of Pianello del Lario on Lake Como. Here it was not long before he took on the direction of a small home for orphan girls and elderly women which was run by several women religious of the town, including the two sisters, Sister Marcellina (future Co-Foundress of their sisters) and Sister Chiara Bosatta, (beatified by John Paul II in 1991).

This small hospice in the outlying neighbourhood of Camlago became the embryo of the first Guanellian Work.

“*The hour of mercy*”<sup>5</sup> struck for him at last. Indeed in 1886 a small boat left Pianello del Lario with his blessing, laden with two sisters, a group of little orphan girls and a few pieces of furniture. It was bound for Como. Here, in what was then the Via Santa Croce (today, Via Tomaso Grossi) on the outskirts of the city, he opened what was to be the “Casa Divina Provvidenza” [House of Divine Providence], where he took in orphans, the elderly, the sick, blind people, deaf-mutes and “*buoni figli*” – his affectionate nickname for the mentally disabled.

The small institution, despite truly difficult beginnings, soon began to grow and put down roots, becoming a reference point for the city and the region. A few years later, Father Guanella signed the contract for the purchase for 45,000 lire of a former spinning mill called La Binda, to which he transferred the female sector, dedicating it to St Mary of Providence.

From the administrative centre of Lario his unflagging faith took him everywhere that neediness required him to go to the rescue: he set up nursery schools, schools, homes for the elderly and disabled, farming colonies (first and foremost the colony in Nuova Olonio in the Province of Sondrio), and made himself available to the people hit by the Abruzzo earthquake in 1915.

He combined his dedication in the social field with a vast educational and cultural activity, keeping up an extensive network of relations with the eminent figures of the time.

With contagious energy and enthusiasm he gathered round him a group of sisters, the Daughters of St Mary of Providence, of priests, the Servants of Charity, and of lay friends, calling them to share his tireless charitable dynamism in many parts of Italy, in Switzerland and even in North America.

The foundation stone of his mission as priest and founder was his awareness that God, a loving Father, always provides for his children and never leaves them on their own. Thus it is necessary to strive “to show the world with deeds that God is the One

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<sup>5</sup> L. Guanella, *VdP, op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>6</sup> L. Guanella, *Regulations of the Servants of Charity*, 1905, Opera Omnia IV, p. 1148.

who provides for his children with the loving care of a father”,<sup>6</sup> taking “*bread and the Lord*” to the poorest<sup>7</sup> and working for the person’s integral advancement.

Father Guanella died in Como on 24 October 1915, at the age of 73; Paul VI beatified him a little less than 50 years later, on 25 October 1964.

He was canonized by Benedict XVI on 23 October 2011.

His remains repose in the Shrine of the Sacred Heart in Como, which he founded.

Because of his zeal and love for the sick, Father Luigi Guanella was declared Co-Patron of the Italian National Union for the Transport of the Sick to Lourdes and to International Shrines (UNITALSI) in 2005, together with St Pius X.

Today his family continues to spread his message in more than twenty nations scattered across the world.

## **STATUTES**

### **INTRODUCTON**

We Guanellian Cooperators joyfully thank the Lord who has brought us into being in the Church and has associated us with St Luigi Guanella’s mission of charity.

Indeed, the Holy Spirit gave our Founder a charitable heart; he made our Founder capable of becoming a father and brother to the poor.

From the very beginning the Spirit surrounded him with choice collaborators: priests, women religious and lay people. Still today the same Spirit calls others, men and women, to join the Guanellian Family as Servants of Charity, as Daughters of St Mary of Providence or as Cooperators.

Faithful to this call from the Spirit, as lay people or as members of the diocesan clergy, we propose to model our lives on the example of Father Guanella and to spread the kingdom of charity in communion with the Guanellian Congregations.

### **I – IDENTITY**

*“The Cooperators are as it were members of the Little House and are loved as friends and venerated as benefactors”<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> L. Guanella, *Lettere circolari ai Servi della Carità*, XXII, Como, 20 October 1913, Opera Omnia IV, p. 1411.

<sup>8</sup> L. Guanella, Cooperatori della Piccola Casa, *La Provvidenza*, July 1893, p. 63.

## 1. Catholic Christians

Listening to the Magisterium of the Church,<sup>9</sup> we Guanellian Cooperators are Catholic Christians committed to sanctifying ourselves in the world through family and work experiences in our social, political and ecclesial situation, at every moment of our lives.

In our secular state we adhere with joy and conviction to the charism of St Luigi Guanella. We seek to follow his example of life and his commitment to proclaiming to the poor the glad message of salvation, in imitation of Jesus the Good Shepherd and the compassionate Samaritan.

Through Baptism we belong to the Catholic Church, we live in communion with the pastors of the Church and, guided by the Holy Spirit, we feel co-responsible for his evangelizing mission.

## 2. With the Guanellian charism

Together with the Daughters of St Mary of Providence and the Servants of Charity, we too are heralds of St Luigi Guanella's charism.

United by the bond of charity, we constitute the third branch of the Guanellian Family.

As lay people, we contribute our witness of faith and charity in spiritual synergy, both in our projects and in our daily activity with the men and women religious of the Opera Don Guanella.

## 3. Gathered in an Association

We live our specific vocation in the form of an association, thereby showing our wish to live as brothers and sisters the grace that the Lord has granted to us, helping one another to be faithful to him by example, prayer and mutual support.

Together we constitute the **Guanellian Cooperators' Association**.

It has its own Statutes which give us practical instructions on how to respond to the Lord's call.

## 4. With a public promise

We become effective members of the Association through our personal and public promise.

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 1964, in particular nos. 30-38. Cf. also *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People, 1965; John Paul II, *Christifideles laici*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World, 1988.

This promise is our answer to the Lord and expresses our decision to live with joy and enthusiasm our life at the service of God and of our needy brothers and sisters.

### **5. A gift of the Lord**

Guanellian Cooperators accept this call of God to live a project of charity as a special grace and a particular gift.

In God's faithfulness they find the strongest reason for perseverance: *"I know who it is that I have put my trust in, and I have no doubt at all that he is able to take care of all that I have entrusted to him"* (2 Tm 1:12).

## **II – THE GUANELLIAN STYLE**

*"A Christian heart that believes and feels cannot pass by the destitution of the poor without going to their help. In this we recognize that someone is a true follower of Jesus Christ, if he has charity for the poor and the suffering, in whom the Saviour's image is brighter"*<sup>10</sup>  
(Father Guanella)

### **6. The Spirit of the Founder**

Guided by the Holy Spirit, Father Guanella lived and passed on to the members of his Family an original lifestyle and style of action which originated in a typical evangelical experience. This experience characterizes and gives a concrete tone to our relationship with God, to our relationship with our brothers and sisters and to our presence and action in the world.

### **7. God, a provident Father**

An inspiring principle is the certainty that God is a Father to us and knows our heart, follows the steps we take and provides with attentive care for the needs of all his children.

Before the Lord Father Guanella felt like a son anxious to indulge his Father in all things and who trustingly awaits all things from his Providence.

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<sup>10</sup>L. Guanella, *Regulations of the Servants of Charity*, 1905, Opera Omnia IV, p. 1150.

*“The Lord observes you with sighs of love more closely than a father who counts the heartbeats of his sleeping child”.*<sup>11</sup>

## **8. The Heart of Christ, a Father’s heart**

In the Heart of Christ Father Guanella contemplated the supreme revelation of the love of God the Father who makes us understand the point to which we are beloved and saved children.

In Christ, the Good Shepherd and compassionate Samaritan who heals our wounds, we find inspiration for living our Guanellian vocation.

*“Jesus, your elder brother, for as the Only-Begotten Son of the Eternal Father he was sent by the Eternal Father himself to find you who, worse than the Prodigal Son, had fled very far from the Father’s house [...] and in finding you again he said in the excess of his joy: Let us go to the Father! Let us go to the Father! I will go with you”.*<sup>12</sup>

## **9. Filial prayer**

In his spiritual testament Father Guanella bequeathed to us the invitation to *“pray and to suffer”*.<sup>13</sup>

He teaches us by his example to turn to God the Father with a child’s love, to live serenely, trusting in his Providence and to offer him the difficulties we encounter in life.

He points out to us in the Eucharist the sun that warms every heart and fills it with love for God and for the poor.<sup>14</sup>

In Mary, Mother of Divine Providence, we recognize the Father’s tenderness.

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<sup>11</sup> L. Guanella, *Andiamo al Paradiso. Brevi esortazioni in massime ed in esempi che accompagnano ciascuna risposta del catechismo*, 1883, Opera Omnia III, p. 447.

Cf. L. Guanella, *Andiamo al Padre. Inviti famigliari a ben recitare l'orazione del Pater noster*, 1880, Opera Omnia III, p. 126: *“God the Father looks at you lovingly, as if he only had you to think of. In this he resembles the sun which is in the middle of the sky and meanwhile radiates its light and warmth on both the mountains and the plains, on the rocks as on the sea; and looks at everyone and at the same time shines its rays upon you, as if it had to provide for you alone. Therefore just as the sun brightens every corner of the earth, so you must remember that in every part of the world the Lord sees you from on high to go to your help”*.

Cf. also L. Guanella, *Andiamo al Paradiso, op. cit.*, p. 453: *“The Lord looks at you as a father who delights in fixing his gaze on his only child. From the expression on the child’s face the parent can sometimes surmise what has happened to the child, in the past and recently, and can sometimes see in advance what he or she will do in the future. God the Father perceives all this in you perfectly, just as in a clear mirror you yourself see the features of your face”*.

Cf. in addition L. Guanella, *Il pane dell'anima. Primo corso di omelie domenicali espone in una massima scritturale*, 1883, Opera Omnia, I, p. 365: *“The Lord is the same for everyone [...] in his eyes all human creatures who live on this earth as his children are equal”*.

<sup>12</sup> L. Guanella, *Andiamo al Padre, op. cit.*, pp. 108-109.

<sup>13</sup> L. Guanella, *Le sue parole!*, La Divina Provvidenza, October 1915, p. 150

<sup>14</sup> Cf. L. Guanella, *Regulations of the Servants of Charity*, 1910, Opera Omnia IV, p. 1291-1292: *“The divine Eucharist is the sun that illuminates, warms and makes the earth fruitful. “I have come”, Jesus Christ says, “to bring the fire of charity and what else do I want but that this fire should be kindled in the hearts of men and women”? Cf. also L. Guanella, Regulations of the Daughters of St Mary of Providence, 1911, Opera Omnia IV, p. 604: “Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament is the sun of the earth which gives light [...] and wherever Jesus is adored, there is the warmth of spiritual life”*.

We cultivate a special devotion to St Joseph, custodian of the Holy Family of Nazareth and Patron of the dying.

## 10. Preferential love for the weakest

Father Guanella drew from the Heart of Christ an extraordinary sensitivity in seeing, understanding and helping men and women in need, and in discerning in them the face of Christ.<sup>15</sup>

He made his own the cause of the poor, giving preference to the most neglected and taking care of them.

## 11. The Guanellian Preventive System

Through the manner that he accepted, took responsibility for and accompanied people Father Guanella marked out for us a path rich in spirituality which leads us, in imitation of the Father's kindness,<sup>16</sup> to surround our brothers and sisters with affection and care, with an attentive but discreet presence, watching over their footsteps so that "no one may incur evil of any kind and [that] on their journey through life all may reach a happy end".<sup>17</sup>

The implementation of this system is extensively described in the *Basic Document for the Guanellian Missioni*<sup>18</sup> and in the text *Con Fede, Amore e Competenza*,<sup>19</sup> and is contextualized in the Local Educational Projects.

## 12. With a family spirit

Father Guanella wanted everyone in his houses, with respect for their different vocations, to form one large family under the gaze of the one Father, ever preserving bonds of brotherhood, bearing the weight of each other's burdens, glad to work

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<sup>15</sup> L. Guanella, *Apostolato di carità*, La Divina Provvidenza, June 1910, p. 92: "How can we love our suffering neighbour without loving God, hence offering him the devotion of our faith? How can we believe that the image of God is impressed upon the forehead of the poor and not hasten to benefit them and serve them?"

<sup>16</sup> Cf. L. Guanella, *Massime di spirito e metodo d'azione*, 1888-89, Opera Omnia, IV, p. 45: *Family kindness is an educational system [...]. Kindness is both a natural and a supernatural quality; a method for developing in hearts and in the mind [...]. Kindness is a true preventive system*".

<sup>17</sup> L. Guanella, *Internal Regulations of for the Sons of the sacred Heart in the House of Divine Providence*, 1899, Opera Omnia IV, p. 1029: "That method of charity, of treatment, of benefit, thanks to which Superiors surround their dependents with fatherly affection and brothers surround their own brothers with concern so that in the day's work no one may incur evil of any kind and on their journey through life all may reach a happy end, is called the preventive system of education and kindness. This is the system that most closely approaches the example of Christian life set by the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph [...]. In practical cases it is necessary to have the preventive system 1) in one's heart and mind, 2) it is necessary to exercise it with one's equals, 3) with one's inferiors, 4) with one's superiors, 5) in every circumstance and always".

<sup>18</sup> Daughters of St Mary of Providence, Servants of Charity, Guanellian Cooperators, *Basic Document for the Guanellian Mission*, Editrice Nuove Frontiere, Roma 1994.

<sup>19</sup> *Con fede, amore e competenza. Profilo dell'operatore guanelliano*, Editrice Nuove Frontiere, Roma 2000.

together, delighting in the good that others do and suffering from the evil that afflicts them.

*“In the houses of Divine Providence [...] Priests, Sisters and Residents all form a single family which [...] believes together, loves together and works together under the eye of the One who sees all, punishes evil and rewards goodness”.*<sup>20</sup>

### **13. A precious inheritance**

Guanellian Cooperators welcome this spirit as a gift of the Lord to the Church and as a precious inheritance which they must bring to fruition in accordance with their own secular state.

On this journey they are supported by the Mother of Divine Providence, St Joseph, the Holy Founder, Blessed Chiara Bosatta and all the saints of charity.

## **III - MISSION**

*“You do a work of mercy when you lay up in your heart human weaknesses in order to provide for them”, and when “we use the same compassion with which we treat our own families or spouses or those close to us for everyone else, regardless of whether their customs are foreign to us or they come from distant regions, even if they are wicked or poor enemies”.*<sup>21</sup> (Father Guanella)

### **14. The Christian mission**

Our mission as Guanellian Cooperators is the same as the mission of the People of God, according to what St Peter writes: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart to sing the praises of God who called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light” (1Pt 2:9).

Borrowing his words, St John Paul II said: “A new aspect to the grace and dignity coming from Baptism is here introduced: the lay faithful participate, for their part, in the threefold mission of Christ as Priest, Prophet and King”.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> L. Guanella, *The Feast of the Sacred Heart*, La Divina Provvidenza, July 1904, p. 87.

<sup>21</sup> L. Guanella, *Il fondamento. Catechismo per le anime che aspirano a perfezione*, 1885, 1914, Opera Omnia III, p. 975 and L. Guanella *Il pane dell'anima. Primo corso di omelie domenicali esposte in una massima scritturale*, Opera Omnia I, pp. 364-365. Cf. also *ibid.* p. 366: “A decent son uses mercy [...] and to charity he must add keen sympathy. And he has this sympathy for his brethren even if they are wicked. And for his brethren who are enemies [...] and again he treats the distant with compassion. He treats the most wretched people with compassion, even though he himself is rich”.

<sup>22</sup> *Christifideles laici*, no. 14

### a) *Priestly mission*

“The lay faithful are sharers in the *priestly mission*, for which Jesus offered himself on the cross and continues to be offered in the celebration of the Eucharist for the glory of God and the salvation of humanity.

Incorporated in Jesus Christ, the baptized are united to him and to his sacrifice in the offering they make of themselves and their daily activities (cf. *Rom* 12:1, 2)”.<sup>23</sup>

Therefore all “their work, prayers and apostolic endeavours, their ordinary married and family life, their daily labour, their mental and physical relaxation, if carried out in the Spirit, and even the hardships of life if patiently borne – all of these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Pt 2:5)”.<sup>24</sup>

### b) *Prophetic mission*

“Through their participation in the *prophetic mission* of Christ, ‘who proclaimed the kingdom of his Father by the testimony of his life and by the power of his word’, the lay faithful are given the ability and responsibility to accept the Gospel in faith and to proclaim it in word and deed, without hesitating to courageously identify and denounce evil.

[...] They are also called to allow the newness and power of the Gospel to shine out every day in their family and social life, as well as to express patiently and courageously in the contradictions of the present age their hope of future glory even ‘through the framework of their secular life’”.<sup>25</sup>

### c) *Royal Mission*

“Because the lay faithful belong to Christ, Lord and King of the Universe, they share in his *kingly mission* and are called by him to spread that Kingdom in history. They exercise their kingship as Christians, above all in the spiritual combat in which they seek to overcome in themselves the kingdom of sin (cf. *Rm* 6:12), and then to make a gift of themselves so as to serve, in justice and in charity, Jesus who is himself present in all his brothers and sisters, above all in the very least (cf. *Mt* 25:40).

The lay faithful are thus called to restore to creation all its original value. In ordering creation to the true good of humankind with an activity sustained by the life of grace, they participate in the exercise of the power with which the Risen Jesus attracts all things to himself and subjects them, with himself, to the Father so that God may be in all things and all people (cf. *Jn* 12:32; 1 *Co* 15:28)”.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

## **15. Apostles of mercy**

In this mission common to all the People of God, we Guanellian Cooperators wish to highlight a specific aspect: witnessing to the merciful love of the Father and bringing it to the poorest in body and in spirit.

The Founder teaches us: *“May you welcome the most abandoned one of all, and seat him at table with you making him one of your own, for he is Jesus Christ”*.<sup>27</sup>

Cooperators witness to this with their great and merciful hearts in all the contexts of their lives.

## **16. In our own family**

Our families are the first environment in which we must show our commitment.

In them we seek to put into practice the same virtues and the same sentiments that belonged to the family of Nazareth by:

- witnessing to the values of the family according to God’s project and to the teaching of the Magisterium;
- forming a domestic church with the members of our own families, contributing to the human and Christian growth of their members and fostering common prayer and dialogue;
- nurturing sincere affection which becomes tangible in acceptance, understanding, forgiveness and attentive sensitivity to the needs of the frailest;
- striving to involve family members in the mission of charity in order to extend the bond of charity as far as possible to neighbouring families.

## **17. In work**

A large part of our days is occupied by work. In it:

- we cultivate honesty, dedication and keeping appropriately up to date;
- we work hard to establish an atmosphere of serene familiarity, prepared to serve all those who live in difficult situations.
- we follow the guidelines of the Magisterium on social doctrine.

## **18. In the social sphere**

In social life, faithful to the Gospel and to the instructions of the Church, Cooperators:

- should develop an upright awareness of their own responsibilities, particularly in the areas of culture, the economy and politics;
- should be committed to proclaiming explicitly the values of life, of the person, of justice and of solidarity, and where necessary to reporting

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<sup>27</sup> L. Guanella, *Come with Me, for the Missionary Sisters in U.S.A., in use in the Congregation of the Daughters of St Mary of Providence in Como*, 1913, Opera Omnia, Vol. IV, p. 795.

situations of marginalization and the selfish behaviour of individuals and groups, as well as their cultural, political and social causes;

- should make an effort to inspire sensitivity with preferential attention and concern for people in situations of both moral and material poverty so that, as in a family, they show love and special warmth to those who are suffering or who are weaker than they;<sup>28</sup>
- should integrate themselves in the cultural and socio-political context, in accordance with their skills and availability;
- should try to stimulate their district to be open to the knowledge and acceptance of the Gospel values and of the Guanellian charism.

As an ecclesial group, the Association is not bound to any political party.

### **19. In the Church**

Our activity has an ecclesial dimension. With our personal witness, our commitment to evangelization and our various apostolic activities, we are concerned to develop the life of our particular Church, diocese and parish, in the name of charity, a freely-given gift of love for all.

We feel responsible for its edification as a community of faith, prayer, brotherhood and missionary commitment, overcoming the divisions between Gospel and life.

In a special way Guanellian Cooperators keep alive attention to the poor and the weak, joining the Church bodies that exist for this purpose.

They encourage interreligious and ecumenical dialogue.

### **20. With the Guanellian Congregations**

The Association has a special mission together with the two Guanellian Congregations.

With them we collaborate to deepen our knowledge of the Guanellian charism and to make it known. We participate in implementing projects and initiatives in common and we promote common prayer meetings and meetings for the verification of fidelity to the charism.

### **21. Practical collaboration with the Guanellian institutions**

We find in the Works of the Daughters of St Mary of Providence and of the Servants of Charity, as well as in the structures of the Cooperators, privileged places in which to live out our Guanellian vocation. Our activity will be marked by practical

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. L. Guanella, *Augurando*, La Divina Provvidenza, January 1911, p. 17: “*The spirit of charity should be disseminated in all hearts so that there may be no one who does not cooperate with the salvation of the poor*”. Cf. also L. Guanella, *Apostolato di carità*, La Divina Provvidenza, June 1910, p. 93: “*The works of divine Providence must not be too isolated but must share their spirit, as their action, in their surroundings; for their nature is expansive and must not only be expressed within the walls of the Institute but likewise in the cities and towns where the Institutes are established, seeking to spread and inspire faith and charity everywhere*”.

collaboration and, should it be considered appropriate, also by the entrustment of activities and works by the Guanellian Congregations. Should this be the case our collaboration will be defined with special agreements.

## **22. Among Cooperators**

Within the Association we have the possibility of witnessing to our brotherhood and of carrying out our mission by:

- living a sincere family spirit in order to foster reciprocal knowledge and esteem, support, encouragement, dialogue, forgiveness, solidarity, spiritual help and assistance with formation;
- taking part actively in planning and checking on activities;
- promoting meetings and common projects with other groups;
- making ourselves available to the service of the Association and accepting assignments of responsibility

## **23. Sent to the poor**

As a specific mission we are sent to the poor without distinction of race, nationality or religion, giving priority to:

- those who are tried in body and in spirit and who lack human support, and in particular the young, the elderly and people with disabilities – the “buoni figli”;
- those who live in situations of psychological frailty and social marginalization.

We would like to offer to all a great heart that loves them and, in accordance with our possibilities, to render them an effective service.

The hearts of Guanellians do not stop at the visible forms of poverty, but after the example of the Founder who said to us: “*It is not enough to pray and to do good at home and in church: it is necessary to go out and seek the sheep that have strayed among the crags and rocks*”,<sup>29</sup> and “*It is impossible to stop as long as there are poor people to take in, we must provide for them*”,<sup>30</sup> they know how to seek and identify hidden forms of wretchedness, discovering the true beauty beyond every visible human being.<sup>31</sup>

## **24. Diversified contributions**

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<sup>29</sup> L. Guanella, *Pensando*, La Divina Provvidenza, April 1905, p. 60.

<sup>30</sup> L. Guanella, *Notiziario*, La Divina Provvidenza, September 1894, p. 183.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. L. Guanella, Internal Regulations of the House of St Mary of Providence in Como, 1899, Opera Omnia IV, p. 301: “*The needs of the unfortunates are to be intuited from the affection of the heart rather than from the speculative study of the mind*”.

Cf. also John Paul II, Visit to the Casa S. Giuseppe in Via Aurelia Antica in Rome, 28 March 1982: “*A special charity is needed, a heroic charity, in order to fall in love with these unfortunates, the retarded and spastics, many of whom we see in this house. It is easy to fall in love with visible beauty; it is hard to fall in love when beauty is lacking. To discover beauty beneath its absence, beneath its opposite, requires a particularly keen, penetrating and especially great and unique charity. This was the route taken by Father Guanella; this is your route*”.

In the multiplicity of their tasks, each one collaborates according to the talents they have received from the Lord, their personal possibilities, the concrete situations in which they live and likewise when physical cooperation is not feasible they collaborate with prayer and suffering.

## IV - FORMATION

*“How deeply we must dig the foundations of faith and humility in order to build a solid house! Therefore we must never say ‘enough’ in furthering our own perfection and that of others”.*<sup>32</sup>

(Father Guanella)

### 25. Requirements

The commitment to living as a Guanellian Cooperator demands a free and motivated personal decision which is gradually developed under the action of the Holy Spirit. It is a duty of the Local Group and of the Delegate to guide people in developing and maturing their vocation and to plan appropriate initiatives for this journey of discernment and formation.

In this dialogue between God who offers his gifts and the person called to respond to him it becomes necessary to accept an adequate programme of formation.

### 26. Course of initial formation

Before being officially admitted to the Association, the aspirant Cooperator must have a suitable period of preparation.

The local Coordinator and the Delegate evaluate each individual aspirant’s personal path of formation, modulating it according to his or her experiences, abilities, knowledge and aspirations, in accordance with the instructions of the Association’s Formation Plan.

This Formation Plan must include aspects regarding the human, spiritual and charismatic dimensions, in order to foster growth in the specific vocation.

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<sup>32</sup> L. Guanella, *Massime di spirito e metodo d’azione*, 1888-89, Opera Omnia IV, p. 30. Cf. also L. Guanella, *O Padre! O Madre! Secondo corso di fervorini nelle feste del Signore e della beata Vergine*, 1884, Opera Omnia I, p. 90: “In the alphabet there is an initial letter, which, repeated three times, gives the best that we can desire here on earth. This letter is the lingual S, which is the first letter of the words “santità” [holiness], “scienza” [knowledge], and “sanità” [health]. Holiness serves to perfect the Christian being of a religious person. Knowledge serves to perfect the person’s human faculties. Health perfects the development of the physical body. What more can parents desire for their children? A child is pleasing when he is healthy, satisfies when he is knowledgeable and consoles when he is holy. Fortunate are those parents who, having bestowed all their care on him, obtain that their child grows up rich in these gifts”.

## **27. Continuous formation**

Cooperators who have made their promise should not consider their formation concluded but know that they are in need of a continuous process of formation in faith and in charity, which is why they attach great importance to continuing formation.

Indeed, the harmonious development of the personality, the joy of being dedicated to the service of charity and the unity of the Association largely depend on this.

## **28. Continuing formation: content and objectives**

Continuing formation must help to develop:

### ***a) The human dimension***

Cooperators accept and make their own the invitation of the Second Vatican Council: “They should also hold in high esteem professional skill, family and civic spirit, and the virtues relating to social customs, namely, honesty, justice, sincerity, kindness, and courage, without which no true Christian life can exist”.<sup>33</sup>

The formation of the character must not be overlooked. Father Guanella was to write: “*Each and every member of the family must correct their character as best they can and adapt in all things to simple, natural and cheerful ways so that they give rise to admiration and pleasure in all and serve as a good example to them*”.<sup>34</sup>

Formation therefore encourages knowledge and acceptance of oneself, an education of freedom and the development of a sufficiently mature heart, mind and will.

### ***b) The spiritual dimension***

Spiritual life must have a special place in the life of the group and of each Cooperator, called to grow constantly in intimacy with Jesus Christ and in dedication to his brothers and sisters.

Cooperators will treasure all the means that the Church, as mother, offers to each one of her children.

They will add to their necessary biblical and catechetical formation the study of the social doctrine of the Church.

They will pay special attention to the sacramental life, to meditation on the word of God, to devotion to the Eucharist and to the life of the Institute, a sun that illuminates, warms and makes fruitful.

### ***c) The charismatic dimension***

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<sup>33</sup> Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem* on the Apostolate of Lay People, 1965; n. 4.

<sup>34</sup> L. Guanella, *Massime di spirito e metodo d'azione*, 1888-89, Opera Omnia IV, p. 29.

Cooperators will keep alive their love for the Guanellian Family through deepening their knowledge of the life and works of the Founder, through knowledge of the most important Guanellian figures and through reading the most significant publications of the Guanellian Family.

The exchange of experiences between the various groups will be a very important means of growth in the Founder's spirit.

### **29. Special moments and means**

The special moments of grace for this continuing formation are:

- the local meetings, at least once a month;
- prayer meetings;
- retreats and spiritual exercises;
- the meetings and courses of formation in the charism;
- spiritual direction;
- the Guanellian Weeks;
- pilgrimages;
- the celebration of the Feasts of the Sacred Heart, of Our Lady of Divine Providence, of Father Luigi Guanella, of Sister Chiara Bosatta and of the commemoration of Bishop Aurelio Bacciarini;
- participation in the important events of the Guanellian Family and in their own local situation.

### **30. Responsible for formation**

Cooperators are the first to be responsible for their own formation and, docile to the Holy Spirit, are careful to make the most of every opportunity for formation, for themselves and to help their brothers and sisters.

The Councils of the Cooperators, at every level, feel duty bound to guarantee a sound formation to all the Cooperators.

The Delegate, a Servant of Charity or a Daughter of St Mary of Providence or a qualified Cooperator, is the spiritual animator of the group and is committed to the formation of individuals.

The Local Coordination may avail itself of other collaborators in the field of formation.

## **V - ORGANIZATION**

*“In unity of direction there is a realm of peace and charity”<sup>35</sup>*

### **31.Importance**

The Guanellian Cooperators’ Association has its own organization. It fosters clarity and familiarity in interpersonal relations and is an effective means for maintaining a climate of serenity and mutual respect. In addition it confers unity on intentions and greater efficacy and continuity on the activities undertaken.

The Association is organized at various levels, from the local to the global. It is sufficiently flexible to respond to a variety of local situations and, at the same time, ensures the basic unity of the Association and an effective relationship with the Guanellian religious Congregations.

## **A) THE COOPERATOR**

### **32.Members**

The following may belong to the Association:

- a. Lay Catholics who have reached the age of majority, of any social and cultural condition; who, with their own free decision, ask to join the Association and accept the formation process established in the Formation Plan.
- b. Secular priests and permanent deacons who wish to live their ministry drawing inspiration from Father Guanella and who give priority to the poor in their pastoral decisions.

People who are sick or are prevented by force majeure from physically taking part in the initiatives of their group also still have a place and a special mission in the Association, if they are connected with a group.

### **33.Admission and Acceptance**

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<sup>35</sup> L. Guanella, *Regulations of the Servants of Charity*, 1905, Opera Omnia IV, p. 1158. Cf. also L. Guanella, *Apostolato di carità*, La Divina Provvidenza, June 1910, pp. 92,93: “To help this twofold work of charity and faith and to go to the aid of the poor gathered by the Works of Divine Providence, the formation of committees and pious consortiums in every abode is appropriate, and the Servants of Charity and the Daughters of St Mary must care for them with all their zeal and with holy hard work [...] One or two people should be gathered first, and the process should then be continued, adding others as Providence gradually presents them [...] Many people lie in great inertia but sometimes a simple invitation to cooperate in goodness suffices to stir them to be active workers in the good field”; see also L. Guanella, *La settimana con Dio*, 1889, in L. Mazzucchi, *La vita lo spirito e le opere di don Luigi Guanella*, 1920; p. 481. “Lay people can benefit rather more than priests, because they can enter everywhere and worm their way in [...]. A heart full of charity is essential [...]. They will succeed with results when they see what is done for love of God and of one’s neighbor. Little by little without noticing, you will convert many people. Little by little you will move public opinion. This is what the Apostles did. Such preaching is proper to each and every one; it is proper to the members and to Catholic associations”.

(Father Guanella)

- a. Aspirant Cooperators may present their requests to make their promise as Cooperators when, with the recognition of their own Local Council and of the Delegate, they have acquired:
  - the awareness that being a Cooperator is a vocation to live their own lay state in the Guanellian Family and in the Church;
  - a sufficient assimilation of the Guanellian charism;
  - the completion of their personal initial formation process;
  - a sense of belonging to their own group and to the Association.
- b. The request, accompanied by the opinion of the Local Council and of the Delegate, must be presented for acceptance to the Provincial Council of Cooperators on which their group depends.
- c. Possible questions of individual aspirant Cooperators or of a group of aspirants that does not yet refer to any constituted body are presented to the Provincial Council of Cooperators in which the aspirant or the new group asks to enrol.

### **34. The Promise**

Candidate Cooperators, having obtained acceptance from the Provincial Council of Cooperators, will make their personal and public promise, on a prearranged day, with which they express the desire to live their Baptism through these Statutes.

With the promise they become effective members of the Association and part of the Guanellian Family.

The names of new Cooperators will be recorded in a register for this purpose at the local and provincial headquarters.

New Cooperators will be given a certificate of membership in the Association.

They will renew their promise annually on the occasion of the Feast of the Founder or of one of the feasts of the Guanellian Family.

### **35. The text of the promise**

I.....

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, give thanks for the goodness of the heavenly Father who in Jesus Christ has made me his son/daughter and a member of the Church and has called me to follow St Luigi Guanella's example of kindness to the poor.

Now, desiring to reciprocate such a great gift, after deepening my knowledge and experience of the Guanellian spirit, I promise:

- to commit myself, with an authentic Christian life, to my family and to my work;
- to show special concern to people in difficulty;
- to deepen increasingly the spirit of St Luigi Guanella;
- to collaborate, according to my availability, with the Guanellian Family.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Divine Providence, the Holy Founder and

Blessed Chiara obtain for me from the heavenly Father that I may be faithful to these promises.

Amen.

### **36. Rights and duties**

With the promise, Cooperators share in the spiritual goods and graces that the Lord pours out upon the Guanellian Family. Membership in the Pious Union is proposed to them, and on their death, prayers of suffrage for their souls.

The promise commits Cooperators:

- a. to living a Christian life and to being faithful to these Statutes, sharing in the Founder's mission according to their possibilities and their state of life;
- b. to participating in activities organized by the Association and in continuing formation;
- c. to paying the annual membership fee established by the Provincial Council.

The promise grants Cooperators the following rights:

- a. to enjoy active and passive voice in elections;
- b. to receive all the information pertaining to the Association;
- c. to participate in activities organized by the Association and in continuing formation, also outside their own group.

### **37. A more demanding call**

Guanellian Cooperators may be urged by the Holy Spirit to do God's will by living the Gospel more radically and with a particular and more profound adherence to the spirit and mission of the two religious Congregations. They may take various paths: lay consecration, membership as an Associate, *Ordo viduarum*, *Ordo Virginum*, etc. The Association pledges to guide Cooperators, through the Delegate, in this further vocational discernment. At the end of the formation process the candidate may present to the Superiors General or to the diocesan Bishop a formal request to bring this new project of life to fulfilment.

### **38. Resignation and dismissal**

Every Cooperator is entitled to leave the Association, giving written notice to the Local Council which informs the Provincial Council of it.

On being warned by the Local Council a Cooperator may be dismissed by the Provincial Council, if, after careful analysis, the members of the latter Council have noted that his or her conduct is no longer consistent with the commitments assumed with these Statutes.

Should a Cooperator wish to be readmitted to the Association, in agreement with the Local Council he or she must present the request to the Provincial Council on which is incumbent the decision on his or readmission.

## **B) THE LOCAL GROUP**

### **39. The Local Group**

The Local Group is an expression of the Association's vitality and is composed of at least five Cooperators who have made their promise.

It is set up by the Provincial Council usually in a house/community/parish of one of the two Guanellian Religious Congregations.

When the house/community/parish is no longer managed or directed by one of the two Congregations, the existing Group of Cooperators will continue to function on the basis of the recommendations that the Provincial Council deems it opportune to adopt.

Each group decides on the regularity and procedures of its meetings to share moments of brotherhood and prayer, of formation and of planning activities.

### **40. The Local Council**

The direction of a group is entrusted to a Local Council.

This constitutes the heart of the group by its example and with its encouragement.

The Local Council consists of a number of three or five Cooperators, in proportion to the number of members enrolled.

Among these is a Coordinator of the Local Group.

For the elections of the Coordinator and members of the Council, only those Cooperators who have made their promise will have both active and passive voice.

The Coordinator has a three-year term in office and may be elected for no more than a second mandate, whereas Councillors may be elected for a third mandate.

Men and women of good will, also of other religious confessions and cultures, may share in the initiatives proposed by the Local Group of the Association, as sympathizers of the Guanellian charism.

### **41. Tasks of the Local Council**

The tasks of the Local Council are:

- a. to draft an annual plan of charitable initiatives and of periods of formation;
- b. to undertake an annual verification of the planning;
- c. to transmit to the group information relevant to the Association;
- d. to maintain relations with other groups;
- e. to promote the Guanellian Lay Movement and the Guanellian Youth Movement;
- f. to develop priority attention for and to collaborate with the Guanellian

- missions, international volunteer associations and the pastoral care of youth;
- g. to maintain relations with the Superiors of the religious Communities of reference and with the local Church;
- h. to encourage collaboration with the men or women religious of the house, according to the various needs;
- i. to welcome new aspirant Cooperators, informing the local religious Delegate and the Provincial Council;
- j. to be committed to meeting regularly;
- k. to provide with appropriate initiatives for its own financial support;
- l. to give voice and to listen to the proposals of members of their own group and to deliberate on them;
- m. to further to the Provincial Council the resignation of a Cooperator.

#### **42. Delegate**

Each group has its own Delegate: a Daughter of St Mary of Providence, a Servant of Charity or a qualified Cooperator.

The Delegate takes part in the Council meetings and gives the *nihil obstat*, together with the Local Council, for the admission of a new candidate to the promise.

The Delegate must be an active presence among the Cooperators and must seek to involve the religious community in the life of the Association.

#### **43. Designation of the Delegate**

The Delegate is designated by the respective religious Provincial Superiors, in dialogue with the Provincial Council and after hearing the opinion of the Local Coordinator. In the absence of a woman religious, a Daughter of St Mary of Providence or of a man religious, a Servant of Charity, the Delegate may be a qualified Cooperator or a diocesan priest; in this case, after careful evaluation, the Delegate is proposed by the Local Coordinator to the Provincial Council on which the official appointment is incumbent.

#### **44. Headquarters**

The group usually has its headquarters at a Guanellian house, in agreement with the Superior of the house.

Alternatively it may be based in premises belonging to the Association.

### **C) THE PROVINCE OF THE COOPERATORS**

#### **45. Composition**

The Province of the Guanellian Cooperators consists of at least six Local Groups coordinated by a Provincial Council.

The decision to set up a new Province of Cooperators, at the request of at least three Local Coordinations, or to modify those in existence is incumbent on the World Council with the consensus of the General Councils of the two religious Congregations.

#### **46. The Provincial Council**

The Provincial Council is the body that guarantees the unity of the various Local Groups and their connection with the bodies of the Association and with the Provincial Religious Councils. It consists of a number of Cooperators, in proportion to the number of Local Groups, including a president, a secretary and a treasurer.

Council members are elected from among the Cooperators who have made the promise and who belong to the Province.

Participating in the election with the right to vote are:

- a. the members of the outgoing Provincial Council;
- b. the Coordinators of the Local Groups;
- c. the representatives of the Local Groups, elected in the proportion of one per every five Cooperators who have made the promise.

The President remains in office for three years and may be re-elected only for a second mandate, while the Provincial Councillors may be re-elected for a third mandate.

#### **47. Tasks of the Provincial Council**

To carry out its mission of service well, the Provincial Council must:

- a. promote the animation of Local Groups;
- b. propose and coordinate common initiatives for the Groups of the Province;
- c. promote the Guanellian Lay Movement and the Guanellian Youth Movement;
- d. develop priority attention to and collaborate with the Guanellian missions, international volunteer associations and the pastoral care of youth;
- e. meet at least once every three months.

In addition, it is incumbent on the Provincial Council of Cooperators:

- f. to set up new Local Groups, according to what is established in art. 39.
- g. to establish its own headquarters, even though a different place for meetings may be indicated every now and then;
- h. to establish the membership fee of every Group for the needs of the Provincial Council.
- i. To dismiss and possibly to readmit a Cooperator, in accordance with what is established in art. 38;
- j. to take part, with one of its Delegates (the President or another Councillor), in

- the Provincial Chapters of the two Congregations to whose jurisdiction they belong, if it is invited by them to do so;
- k. to appoint, in accordance with the Local Coordinator, a diocesan priest or a qualified Guanellian Cooperator as Local Delegate, as established in art. 43;
  - l. to elaborate the Formation Plan in accordance with what is established by art. 26, art. 27 and art. 28 of these Statutes.

#### **48. Provincial Delegates**

The Provincial Council has one Delegate who is a Daughter of St Mary of Providence and one Delegate who is a Servant of Charity.

Their main mission consists first and foremost in:

- a. guaranteeing fidelity to the charism and to the Founder's mission;
- b. seeing to the spiritual formation of the Provincial Council of Cooperators and animating it in its mission;
- c. supporting the Delegates of the Local Groups;
- d. together with the other Council members, suggesting formation projects for the Local Groups.

The confrère and the sister are designated by their respective religious Provincial Superiors, in dialogue with the Provincial Council of Cooperators.

#### **48 (bis). Provincial Assembly**

To foster communion, participation and co-responsibility the convocation in assembly of all the Cooperators of the Province, or at least of representatives of the various Local Groups, is most useful.

The Provincial Assembly is convoked by the President, with the consent of the Provincial Council, at least every three years in order to hold the elections of the Council and to address the most important topics concerning the life and development of the Association.

#### **49. Headquarters**

The headquarters of the Provincial Council are normally at a house of one of the Guanellian religious Congregations, in agreement with the Superior of the house. Alternatively it may be based in premises that belong to the Association.

#### **49 (bis). National Coordination**

When the Groups of Cooperators in one country are insufficient to form a Province, (cf. no. 45), the Cooperators of this Group elect a National Coordination, composed of three members.

Each National Coordination will refer to the Provincial Council of Cooperators, if one such has already been set up (v. n. 45), or directly to the religious Provincial Superiors responsible in that country.

In countries in which the Association is taking its first steps, and particularly where only one Local Group exists, the Provincial Council of reference should keep in close touch with the Local Council of this Group.

**49 (ter).** The National Coordination has these specific tasks:

- to animate the Local Groups in its own country;
- to ensure their connection with the Province to which they belong;
- to implement in loco the proposals for formation and initiatives proposed by the Provincial Council of Cooperators on which it depends, or by the religious Provincial Superiors.
- To activate animation among the other lay Guanellian groups (MLG) present in the country.

## **50. Inter-Provincial Council**

In countries in which two or more Provinces of Cooperators exist and it is deemed appropriate or necessary, for reasons of civil recognition or for the national coordination of the activities proper to the Association, it is possible to set up a body that represents the Cooperators of the above-mentioned Provinces.

This Body, in addition to complying with all the legal norms proper to a civil Association, must respect the principles of these Statutes of the Guanellian Cooperators as its only members.

The Council of this Body, elected on the basis of its Statutes, in addition to the tasks and faculties conceded by its civil Statutes, discharges all those tasks and faculties that will be agreed on together with the Provincial Councils which intervened in the constitution of this Body, and which will be further specified in the applicable Regulations of these Statutes.

A Delegate of the Daughters of St Mary of Providence and a Delegate of the Servants of Charity, designated by the respective Superiors of the religious Provinces present in the country in dialogue with the Inter-Provincial Council itself, also participate in the Inter-Provincial Council established in a country.

## **51. Tasks and faculties of the Inter-Provincial Council**

The tasks of the Inter-Provincial Council are mainly those that motivated the decision to establish it, namely the civil recognition of the Association or the coordination of national activities and projects. To these may be added other tasks, decided in common agreement with the Provincial Councils, such as:

- representing the Association among ecclesiastical institutions;
- proposing to the Provincial Councils common initiatives at a national level;
- promoting meetings with the Provincial Councils of the Association or with other Guanellian entities;
- elaborating, together with its own Provincial Councils, the Formation Plan and formation manuals for continuing formation;
- taking part with its own Delegate in the Chapters of the two Congregations, if

invited by them to do so.

## **52. Civil recognition of the Association**

Civil recognition of the Association is also possible in countries in which only one Province of Cooperators is present in order to exercise all those actions which refer to a country's legal system.

In this case what is stated in art. 50 should be borne in mind in order to guarantee the Association's Guanellian charismatic identity.

## **D) WORLD COUNCIL**

### **53. Composition**

The World Council is a body set up for the purpose of consolidating the unity of the entire Association and of encouraging its development through the exchange of ideas and experiences.

It is a direct representative to the General Councils of the two religious Congregations and to the President of the World Council of the Guanellian Lay Movement.

The World Council consists of at least five members, including a President, a Secretary and three Councillors.

A woman religious Delegate and a man religious Delegate are also members of it; they are appointed by the Superiors General of the two Guanellian Congregations.

The former are elected:

- a. by the Presidents (or their delegates) of the Inter-Provincial Councils;
- b. by the Presidents (or their delegates) of the Provincial Councils;
- c. by two members of the Guanellian religious Congregations, chosen by the respective General Councils.

II The President remains in office for a term of six years and may be re-elected only for a second mandate, while the other members may be re-elected for a third mandate.

### **54. Tasks**

The tasks of the World Council are:

- a. to represent the Association;
- b. to guarantee animation at a world level through special means of communication in the principal languages of the countries in which the Association is present;
- c. to provide general guidelines for vocational, formative, apostolic, organizational and administrative initiatives;
- d. to elaborate and coordinate projects of solidarity at a world level;
- e. to determine the topic, the venue and the participants in World Assemblies of

Cooperators;

- f. to meet regularly with the General Councils of the Daughters of St Mary of Providence and of the Servants of Charity;
- g. to prepare common programmes in agreement with the General Councils of the two religious Congregations and with the World Council of the Guanellian Lay Movement;
- h. to participate with its own Delegate (the President or another Councillor) in the General Chapters of the two Congregations if it is invited to do so.

## **55. Headquarters**

The headquarters of the World Council are usually at a house of the Guanellian religious Congregations, in agreement with the Superior of the house. Alternatively it may be based in premises that belong to the Association.

## **VI – THE ADMINISTRATION OF GOODS**

*“Even in food for the body, as in food for the spirit, it is necessary to help each other with small things; God will then assist us. God blesses the little given with all one’s heart”.*<sup>36</sup>

(Father Guanella)

## **56. Canonical juridical capacity**

The Guanellian Cooperators’ Association is recognized by the Holy See as a *Work belonging to the Guanellian religious Family* (see the Decree). By virtue of this recognition it is bound to observe the norms of Canon Law for public associations of the faithful in nos. 298-329.

It is capable of acquiring, retaining, administering, and alienating temporal goods according to the norms of Canon Law (c. 1255).

The goods possessed by the Association as such are ecclesiastical good and must be administrated with the diligence of a good householder (c. 1284, 1).

## **57. Patrimony of the Association**

The patrimony of the Association is constituted by:

- . its membership fees;
- . acquisitions and donations or legacies received;
- . possible contributions of bodies or of private individuals for services rendered by the Association;

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<sup>36</sup>L. Guanella, *Massime di spirito e metodo d’azione*, 1888-89; Opera Omnia IV, p. 53. Cf. also *ibid.*, p. 50: “We must all be unanimous in mind, heart and body, in order to procure the good of the House”.

. by all that may come to the Association in forms permitted by ecclesiastical law and by civil legislation.

All services rendered to the Association by its members are offered free of charge, other than expenses incurred which are reimbursed, or in the case of legally established work contracts for employees.

### **58. Administrators and administration**

The administration of the goods of the Association at the various levels of organization is entrusted to the treasurers under the direction of the respective Councils.

To enjoy a civil juridical capacity and for all administrative acts, the laws in force in the various countries are to be observed.

The treasurers of the separate bodies should keep their accounts, prepare the administrative report of the economic year and the budget of ordinary and extraordinary annual expenses, which they present to their Council for approval.

### **59. Communion of goods and self-funding**

In a family spirit the Association practises solidarity at the various levels of its organization, sustaining and assisting in the neediest situations and in those most dedicated to the apostolate with the poor.

Each Local Group provides autonomously for the funding of its own apostolic and charitable activities, as well as for the expenses of the secretariat, and is committed to funding the Provincial and World Councils on the basis of the decisions taken by the Provincial Council.

All should collaborate with Providence to request and provide financial resources in order to expand the Guanellian mission for the benefit of the poor.

## **VII – FIDELITY AND INTERPRETATION**

*“A lofty respect for the Rule and diligence in interpreting its spirit is expected of each and every one”*

(Father Guanella)

### **60. Fidelity to the Rule**

May all the Cooperators joyfully welcome these Statutes as practical instructions for living the Gospel in accordance with the spirit which the Holy Founder has marked out for us and commit themselves to observing it with fidelity and love.

## 61. Interpretation

The official interpretation of the Statutes is incumbent on the Superior General of the Servants of Charity and on the Mother General of the Daughters of St Mary of Providenc, together with the members of the World Council of the Association.

## CONCLUSION

It is certainly a good omen to have defined and approved these new Statutes of the Guanellian Cooperators in the Centenary Year of the birth in heaven of our Founder Saint, Father Luigi Guanella. From the last few days of his earthly life we derive the certainty of his protection from heaven. In the account given by Father Leonardo Mazzucchi we read the conversation between Father Guanella on his deathbed and Father Aurelio Bacciarini: “So don’t you want the good of the House, of its poor and of the Sisters? Don’t you still want to make a small effort and suffer a little for us”? And he answered: “Indeed I love you, indeed I pray and how I pray! For you, indeed I don’t refuse to suffer, indeed I am making the sacrifice of my life for you! You will get on well without me and I shall not abandon you, I shall pray for you from heaven, I shall help you and comfort you from heaven” (L. Mazzucchi, *La vita, lo spirito e le opere di don Luigi Guanella*, Como 1920, p.544).

I think that in these past hundred years since the death of the Founder we have all had a practical experience of this blessing of his, of his prayers and his intercession, which he promised on his deathbed. During this past century, the development of the Cooperators’ Association has also known phases of grace, of ecclesial and civil recognition and of examples of heroic and faithful witness borne to the Gospel of charity by so many lay people. On their journey, after encountering Father Guanella’s style of living out the Gospel, they not only let themselves be fascinated by him but were also able to embody his mission with coherence and endurance and to enrich the spirit of the Guanellian Family with their participation. In the furrows of our history we have numerous holy lay Guanellians of charity to whom to refer in order to inspire in our hearts the ardour of spending ourselves for the good of the least, for they are the “Benjamins of Divine Providence”.

I hope that all Guanellian Cooperators may accept and share the responsibility that is born from this Association, conceived of from the outset by Father Guanella, as interpreter, as a response to the plans of God the Father for the needs of the whole world. May we all be a pinch of good yeast, which, kneaded into the dough of the

Church and of the world, encourages them to rise and become living presences of the Father's merciful love for the poorest people.

Have a good journey!

*Father Umberto Brugnoli*

Rome, 10 November 2015