



CONGREGATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

# Rule of Life

JHS



# nniversary



NOVEMBER 2024





# The year of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rule of Life

1984, 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2024

## PRESENTATION

With this last bulletin we bring to a close a series of publications in which, over the course of a year, we have offered articles that can help us appreciate the richness of the *Rule of Life*, rediscover its relevance and thus celebrate with dignity the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the approval of this basic document for our Eucharistic spirituality. It was a well-stocked table, carefully prepared and delicately garnished, truly a Eucharistic meal.

After a starter with five testimonies on what the *Rule of Life* means to each of the authors, including three participants in the General Chapters that were at the origin of this document, we had as our first course a look back at the difficult composition of the Rule, followed by a second course offering theological contributions, especially focused on the Eucharist. What we are offering you now is like the dessert of the whole dinner, taking up and combining approaches from previous bulletins, but with a fine touch of conclusion, concreteness and applicability.

Father Anthony McSweeney opens the discussion by giving a summary of the whole process of the composition of the Rule, beginning with the period well before Vatican II, when the need for adaptation, perhaps even change, was felt more and more; through the period of preparation for the Special General Chapter; the celebration of this Chapter itself in two sessions resulting in a first version of a new Rule; the ten years 'ad experimentum' up to the Chapter of 1981 which realised the definitive version that would have to wait another three years before seeing its official approval. He helps us to live again the ups and downs of those fifteen years and makes us admire the commitment, and dare I say it, the tenacity of the confreres for bringing this whole process to a successful conclusion.

In a second article I tried to show the theological richness that is present in our *Rule of Life*. By staying very close to the text (in French) I have shown that all the major themes of post-conciliar theology are present in our Rule, often in a striking and challenging way: Man and God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, the Church and the world, mission and witness, dialogue and listening, and the time to come. The *Rule of Life* speaks to us of all this in its vision of the Eucharist, religious life and our commitment in the Church for a new world. Truly an inexhaustible source from which to draw our inspiration and strength.

Father Manuel Barbiero, a great specialist regarding Father Eymard, comments on number 2 of the *Rule of Life* with ample reference to our Founder's texts that are now available in the edition of the Complete Works. The four parts of this number 2 form the basic structure for his contribution, beginning with Father Eymard's sensitivity to the signs of his time, followed by the new form of life

he outlined for his religious, marked by the centrality of the Eucharist with all its consequences up to social commitment, ending with an overview of the Founder's pastoral and social activities, culminating in his gift of self. This is a very rich commentary containing so many stimuli to be concretely expressed in our mission, the theme of the following number of the Rule.

In the Jewish Passover meal, the youngest at table asks the 'paterfamilias': why do we celebrate this meal as we do? And the father, as president of this liturgical celebration, responds by outlining the origin of this meal, how God showed himself faithful to his promises by freeing his people from slavery and leading them through the desert to the promised land. And he underlines the present-day dimension of all this: *we* were slaves, *we* are freed, *we* experience God close to us, *we* give thanks to him and trust in his constant protection.

That is exactly what we hope this last bulletin and also the three previous ones would do for all of us: that by commemorating where we come from we actively situate ourselves in the dynamic of this whole history, so that we may continue in our present religious life the leitmotif that we discover there, contributing in this way to the growth of this great project of God: the new world where he will be all in all. This is what we celebrate in condensed and concentrated form in our Eucharists, what we deepen and make our own in our prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, and what we try to live in our communities, our parishes, our centres of formation, of accompaniment, of retreat and in all our forms of pastoral care.

We wish you an enjoyable reading, a profound reflection,  
a good sharing, and above all: a fruitful continuing of this  
journey!

For the International Theological Commission of our  
Congregation

FATHER HANS VAN SCHIJNDEL S.S.S.  
*Provincial consultor*

Brussels, Belgium  
Province of Saint Peter Julian Eymard