

MANUAL FOR MEMBERS OF THE SECOND DEGREE OF REGNUM CHRISTI

CHAPTER I

THE VARIOUS VOCATIONS IN THE MOVEMENT

1. “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with them for the usual daily wage, he sent them in his vineyard.”¹
2. The vineyard is the whole world which should be transformed in accordance with God’s plan and in view of Christ’s definitive coming. The workers are the multitude of men and women that are personally called by the Lord and sent to work in the vineyard.
3. This call is not only directed to priests and religious, but also to lay members of the people of God, who are called to work in Christ’s vineyard and to take an active, conscious, and responsible part in the Church’s mission.
4. There is no place for idleness in the life of a Christian layman. Through his baptism a Christian has been formed into Christ, incorporated as a living member into the Church, and is an active follower in his saving mission.
5. A layman accomplishes his work within the Church by his sharing—in accordance with his particular state of life—in the Church’s threefold office: priest, prophet, and king.²
6. In his role as *priest*, a Catholic layman—united to Jesus Christ and his redemptive sacrifice in offering himself and all his activities—converts all his prayers, works and apostolic initiatives, married and family life, daily work, spiritual and physical rest, and even his very trials (if he bears them patiently out of love of God) into sacrifices acceptable to God when they are done in the Holy Spirit.
7. As *prophet*, a Catholic layman has the capacity and is committed to welcome the Gospel with faith and proclaim it by his words and actions, being in his life a true witness to the truth he announces. United to Christ the great Prophet, and fortified by the Spirit, witness of the risen Christ, a layman shares in the Church’s supernatural sense of faith and the grace of God’s Word; he is called to make the Gospel’s freshness and power stand out in his daily, family, and social life and to express courageously and patiently, in the midst of life’s contradictions, his hope in glory—also through the

¹ *Matt.* 20: 1-2.

² Cf... *I Pet.* 2: 4-5, 9.

structures of civil life.

8. As *king*, a Catholic layman has been called to serve the Kingdom of God by spreading it through the course of history. He lives this Christian royalty through his spiritual struggle to conquer the kingdom of sin within himself, and afterward in his own dedication to serve in just and charitable service to Christ himself present in all his brothers and sisters—especially the most needy in body or spirit. As part of this task, a faithful layman is called in a particular way to restore creation to its original worth. By ordering all that is created through actions sustained by grace for the good of mankind, the faithful layman shares in that power by which the risen Christ draws all things to himself and presents them—together with himself—to the Father in such a way that God can be all in all.

9. Accordingly, it is necessary for each Catholic layman always to have a living awareness of being “an active member of the Church,” which has entrusted to him a specific, irreplaceable, and non-transferable mission that he must accomplish for the good of all men. Through him the Gospel’s bright light should reach many homes and environments connected with his life. This bright light must be constant, for it is inseparable from continuous consistency of one’s personal life with one’s faith; it must also be effective because in sharing his brothers and sisters’ conditions of life and work, difficulties and hopes a Catholic layman can bring to the hearts of his relatives, friends, and colleagues—by completely opening their horizons—the full meaning of human existence: communion with God and among all men.

10. So all of this plan for Christian life, which is included in the mission of a Catholic layman, may be lived in various ways in accordance with God’s call and the personal aptitudes of each individual. The Gospel of *Matthew*³ speaks of a person who, before setting out on a journey, called together his servants and entrusted to them his property, giving one five talents, another two, and another one: to each according to his ability.

11. This vocation entails a personal call from God to work and strive in various ways to accomplish Divine Providence’s specific mission for each individual. God’s glory and holiness demand all that a person is in joyful acceptance and faithful living of the mission. In fact, our Lord has wished to associate some men and women more intimately with Christ’s redemptive mission, and for this reason he has called them to live out more radically the Gospel demands for all Christians.

12. Christian tradition has always put before our eyes men and women who, within their state and condition of life (married people, professionals, students), accepted God’s love in their hearts and dedicated themselves to him with exquisite generosity and remarkable availability.

13. Christian spirituality also teaches us that in following Christ—in full and total acceptance of God’s will—there are various ways of living the spirit and truth of the Gospel. What really matters is for each person to find the way God has chosen for him. In fact, growth in Christ is unlimited for man. It is limited only insofar as our Lord has prepared a personal mission for each individual, in accordance

³ *Matt.* 25: 14-30.

with the personal mission he has wished to entrust him; the accomplishment of this mission depends both on grace and the aptitudes and talents each one has been granted. Here again we recognize and adore God's wisdom in the plan of redemption.

14. In the Regnum Christi Movement, all members are called to fully accomplish, in accordance with their own vocations, the Christian idea the Gospel presents us. It asks all its members to live consistently the faith they believe in and to dedicate themselves truly to the Christ they follow. Regnum Christi is a call to live Christian life in a particular way, and this is its deepest truth.

15. Nevertheless, within the Movement's ranks there are also various ways to fully live this Christian ideal in accordance with God's call. This brings us to what we call "degrees of dedication," according to which each member, following God's voice, may live his participation in Regnum Christi in different ways. In the apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, the Pope says in this regard: "The Church's rich variety is manifested still further within each state of life. Thus *within the lay state diverse 'vocations' are given*, that is, there are different paths in the spiritual life and the apostolate which are taken by individual members of the lay faithful. In the field of a 'commonly shared' lay vocation, 'special' lay vocations flourish. . . . These offer the lay faithful . . . the possibility of professing the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience through vows or promises, while fully maintaining one's lay . . . state."⁴

16. Concretely, in the Movement, the "first degree" consists of men and women, married or single, who, in order to help themselves live better the fundamental demands of Christian life, religious practice, and apostolate that are characteristic of their state as Christians faithful in the world, become identified with the Regnum Christi Movement and commit themselves to live in friendship with God through the life of grace, to participate in the Movement's activities and works, and to participate in its life according to their opportunities.

17. The "third degree" consists of single men or women who want to consecrate themselves to God by freely and completely following Christ through the practice of the Gospel ideals of chastity, poverty, and obedience; by dedicating all their time and energy to the Movement's works; and by leading community life as a team.

18. Between these two degrees is the "second degree." This handbook will deal exclusively with the second degree, describing its nature, purposes, commitments, spirituality, apostolate, formation, etc.

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF THE DEGREE

19. Second degree members are Movement members who, in order to respond to God's invitation to live a more intense Christian life and to do more active apostolate, live a spiritual life of greater

⁴ Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, n.56.

dedication to prayer and the practice of the Christian virtues, and become available to serve the Movement in apostolic works or works pertaining to its internal life, thus committing themselves, their time, and their financial means.

20. The Movement's second degree finds its deepest purpose in God's invitation to embrace generously and promptly a specific style of following Christ and living out Christian life. It responds, then, to a divine plan to live the truth and radicalness of the Gospel more fully and devoutly. This invitation has its origin in God, in accordance with the providential plans he has for each man in the history of salvation. Therefore, the Movement's degrees are not an indiscriminate path which each individual ought to follow successfully; rather, it is a question of responding to an invitation from God, who calls souls to live the Christian vocation in different ways (although he frequently prepares a person for one degree of dedication by allowing him first to mature in another). Regnum Christi needs first, second, and third degree members to accomplish its mission, but each person should be in the degree to which our Lord has called him. It is God who raises up this vocation within the Movement and he is the one who nourishes with his grace those who respond to his invitation.

21. This divine call seeks to promote in lay people the choice of a more intense Christian life and a more active apostolate.

22. Frequently, Christian lay people, because of the commitments they incur in civil life, form a Christian lifestyle that is highly conditioned by their circumstances and environment. This often leads to an observance of the faith based on what is strictly necessary.

23. Christ, however, calls lay men and women to take on the faith's challenges with enthusiasm and a sense of priority, aware that it does not profit a man to gain the whole world if he loses his soul. This challenge focuses on recognizing God's primacy over life and the person himself, and brings an individual to live in greater accord with this primacy and to consecrate himself more zealously to apostolic action. The Church needs men and women who are more aware of their mission in the world and more open to transcendence; men and women who are more focused on the authentic values of life; men and women who are more dedicated to establishing Christ's Kingdom in their daily activities and in their professions.

24. There are two dimensions of this more intense Christian life in the Movement: one spiritual and the other apostolic.

25. A Christian who seriously seeks the Truth and the Good will see himself as a creature and God as creator; as an adopted child and God as the Father who loved him from the beginning of time and wanted to adopt him as a child in Christ. All of this, then, proves a truth to which we have alluded before: the primacy of God over our own lives. The truth calls for a certain lifestyle, in which one vitally recognizes this primacy of God. Prayer, personal conversation with God, submission to his will, gradual transformation of God as the center of our life and the inspiration of our actions, are works which come from recognizing this fundamental truth. A Regnum Christi member who deepens his faith and wants to live consistently with it, must tend to his interior life such that God has the first place in it

and everything is done in reference to him, out of love for him, and obeying his will in everything.

26. On the one hand, the Christian is called to bear witness to transcendent values in the world. The world always, but particularly in the present day, needs this witness. The sickness of the modern world has a name and this name is lack of God, lack of transcendent values, and lack of spirituality. Man has grown enormously in the material, technical, economic, and scientific fields, but he has not been able to make this growth go hand-in-hand with growth in the spiritual field. He has ignored the values of the spirit to such an extent that even the smallest discoveries rebel against him, threatening to destroy him. That is how we explain the fact that in a world which openly and constantly proclaims the rights of the human person, the rights of the unborn are violently trampled; that in a world where production has grown to unsuspected proportions, there are still homeless people; that in a world where science has brought man to the moon, the same science devotes itself to creating terrible means of suffering and destruction. The lack of God has brought about the continuous breakdown of the family, violence as the social atmosphere, the search for substitutes to fill the vacuum of ideals and hopes, personal or collective egotism which strikes at the weakest in society, and even loss of the meaning of life itself. In this situation, it is urgent and vital for each layman to spiritualize the world in the state and condition of life to which he has been called.

27. Second degree members, then, commit themselves to give priority in their daily lives to God and spiritual values, thereby filling their daily duties with transcendence and meaning and giving witness with their lives.

28. On the other hand, the Christian vocation indissolubly contains, as part of its essence, an apostolic dimension. A soul, if he is conscious of the mystery of the Incarnation and the Christ's Redemption, cannot close himself within the limited circle of his personal life. A Christian is called to give witness to his faith and to make others share in the certainty of the love of God who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. Unfortunately, among many Christians there is a great ignorance of the apostolic commitment inherent in baptism. Being Catholic, for many, is just a title. There is no pride in being Catholic that leads each one to enthusiastically live his state as a Catholic and to fight tirelessly to make others share in these gifts. Many satisfy themselves with simply being good, with avoiding scandal, with occasionally performing some pious act. This is good, but it is not enough. The Kingdom of Christ calls for something very different: to be "militant" in our faith; to be a conqueror of souls for Christ. The Kingdom commits us to live the commandment of love in all its radicalness, and to strive permanently to bring the world and mankind closer to God. Each Christian should feel from within the urgency of the Gospel which led St. Paul to exclaim: "*Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel.*"⁵

29. The Movement's second degree members commit themselves, then, to draw out all the consequences deriving from their baptism, and to live in self-giving to their neighbor through an organized apostolate, in accordance with Regnum Christi's specific methods.

30. For second degree members, commitment to the Regnum Christi Movement's spirituality has

⁵ I Cor. 9:16

two very specific demands:

§ 1. An intense effort to foster interior life through conversation with God, fidelity, and docility to the Holy Spirit's inspirations, loving fulfillment of God's will for their lives, and a greater dedication to prayer: sacramental life, personal prayer, examination of conscience, eucharistic life, etc. It is a matter of forming second degree members into authentic men and women of God who will leave a mark of the true, transcendent values, and God himself wherever they carry out their activities. Union with God through grace and prayer should become the environment in which the lives of these men and women are lived. To bring Christ's redemptive message to the whole world, the Movement relies precisely on holy men and women working in key parts of society: where the fate of peoples is decided, where public opinion is formed, where economic and financial power reside, etc.

Error!

Error! § 2. A more conscientious dedication to practicing the Christian virtues, which are nourished in prayer but should transform your whole life. Following Christ entails practicing many virtues, each of them sustained and guided by charity. It is not simply a matter of avoiding sin. It is also necessary to cooperate actively with God's grace in order to grow gradually in your imitation of Christ. You must make your own the profound attitudes which guided the life of Christ, and find their expression in the prayer he taught us; you must train yourselves in this group of theological and moral virtues that define the character of a follower of Christ. A Christian is called to give witness with his life to God's transforming action in his soul.

31. As Christ's disciples, second degree members should be living witnesses to the Gospel in their family, professional, and social milieus through their richness of virtue, attitudes, and behavior.

32. In the field of apostolate, the commitment arises for second degree members to practice a greater availability and spirit of service in order to carry out Christ's redemptive work. Since love of neighbor is a guarantee of authentic love for God, second degree members should become professionals of the apostolate, voluntarily offer—through their readiness—their own richness to enrich others, and follow Christ's example. The second degree, then, is a life in which apostolic eagerness and dedication are made more real through concrete self-giving in apostolic tasks the Movement needs them to undertake. Accordingly, a second degree members commits *themselves*, that is to say, all that they are, in a generous, unselfish oblation to the interests of Christ and his Kingdom. They commits their *time*, making their availability real and concrete. And they commit their *resources*, that is to say, they put their best qualities and talents, their human relationships and financial means at the service of Christ's Kingdom.

33. If we had to summarize the essence of the second degree in two words, they would be "availability and dedication." The second degree is a way of serving God with greater availability in one's own state and condition of life, always keeping in mind the Church's mission in the world: to establish Christ's Kingdom. This availability arises as a response to a personal call from God to live the baptismal commitments in a specific way, and to nourish them through prayer and the practice of the Christian virtues. This availability translates into real, demanding dedication to build Christ's Kingdom through one's own life. Availability and dedication are the basic attitudes of a person called by the Lord to live out the second degree commitments in the Regnum Christi Movement.

34. The second degree in the Movement, without being a consecration in the world, represents a specific way of living the radicalness of the Gospel in the state and condition of life to which God has called each one. It is also a magnificent way to live one's faith consistently, not as a hired laborer, but as a son or daughter. Thus the second degree is a viable, concrete, and possible contribution for the life of the Church from God, who has wished to inspire this way of life in the Regnum Christi Movement.

CHAPTER III

THE LEVELS IN THE SECOND DEGREE

35. As we have said in the previous chapter, availability is the essential trait of the Movement's second degree. By availability we mean an attitude —active, not passive— of generously accepting an invitation from God to work in his Kingdom, dedicating our person, time, and resources for this purpose. In spiritual terms, we could say that availability is acceptance of Christ's Kingdom in one's heart and a decision to take part in spreading it to the extent that Christ himself desires, in accordance with the general duties of one's state in life and the mission entrusted by the Lord in his vineyard.

36. So then, the second degree in the Regnum Christi Movement may be lived in three ways, which we refer to as "levels." This diversity is not purely formal, but has its reason and origin in the call of God, who, acting within the heart of each person and through various circumstances, brings each person to know what he is asking of him. In this way, the Lord calls people to live in different way the availability that is characteristic of this degree. Certainly the spiritual commitment (prayer life and the practice of virtue) is identical for all second degree members, regardless of the level, but the way of living out their availability may vary according to the Lord's call and taking into account the real capacity of the person concerned by reason of his state and condition of life, health or sickness, social commitments, etc. Each of these ways of life is characterized by an adjective defined in the Statutes of Regnum Christi.

37. In the first place, there is what we call *spiritual availability*, which gives rise to the first level. It is called "spiritual" because there are persons whose active dedication is rendered impossible for various reasons beyond the control of the person concerned, even though his heart burns with a desire for real, active dedication. Among the factors which could render an active dedication impossible, we may mention health, a public office, the demands of a profession, etc. There are thus two distinct aspects of this level: one's own desire for an unlimited dedication and a level of dedication that is truly subject to causes outside the person's will. If we refer concretely to the three aspects of complete availability (person, time, and resources), we can say that in the first level one gives a generous dedication of himself, his very limited time, and availability of his resources in accordance with his personal desire and always in agreement with his spiritual director or guide.

§ 2. The Movement asks these members, in accordance with their possibilities, to give a great witness in their Christian lives, in their state as Movement members and in their participation in Regnum Christi's specific activities. Moreover, it entrusts to them apostolates compatible with their state in life,

trusting completely in their sense of responsibility.

38. In the second place is what we call *real availability*, which comprises the second level. We use the term “real” in reference to availability so as to show its dedication expressed in concrete giving of one’s person, time, and resources in the service of God and the Movement. This availability becomes “real” by expressing itself in concrete acts, in accordance with God’s demands confirmed by the judgment of the spiritual director or guide. At this level a clear commitment of dedication to the Movement is born.

§ 1. Those members who feel they are called by God to dedicate part of themselves, their time, and their resources to serve Regnum Christi’s mission more closely—as a commitment of obedience and poverty— may belong to this level. The expression “a part” is not meant to indicate a partial or ungenerous dedication, as if one meant to offer the Lord only a part of what he asked. In each level, one should give complete dedication to all that the Lord wishes. Having said this, in the case of the second level, the Lord objectively asks a person to dedicate a greater or lesser part of his own time and resources. Personal prayer and the advice of a spiritual director are necessary to discern what the Lord is asking in the various circumstances of life.

§ 2. By virtue of their commitment, the Movement can ask these members for a more generous, responsible and mature dedication to the Movement’s most significant apostolates, either because of their transcendence or because of the time it takes to get them under way. For this purpose, second level members are obliged to prioritize their lives such that they are actually able to support and consolidate these apostolates, sacrificing, if necessary, their times for rest or social commitments.

39. In the third place is *total availability*, which comprises the Movement’s third level. The use of the term “total” is meant to express radical availability. Members who are called by God to this level and wish to live it out generously, must place everything regarding their obedience and poverty, the totality of themselves, their time, and their resources at the service of Christ’s Kingdom. Naturally the Movement will prepare each person in accordance with the norms of prudence, taking into account his or her condition and state of life (married or single, man or woman). This is a very demanding vocation within the world; consequently it requires a demanding commitment.

§ 1. Those members of the Movement who are called by God, within either the married or single state, to live a more Complete model of perfection in the following of Christ, following the intentions of the Holy Spirit, may pertain to this level of the Movement. It entails a lifestyle determined strongly by the values of the Gospel and decisively centered on commitment to personal surrender and dedication to the extension of the Kingdom of Christ in the world.

§ 2. The Movement asks of these members great fidelity in their spiritual lives such that they will be its special spiritual reserve and a testimony of spirituality to the outside world through their witness of an exemplary Christian life. Among the virtues which should enrich their lives, they should give a deep Christian witness of love for God and neighbor, poverty, and obedience. In addition, according to each member’s circumstances and the Movement’s needs, legitimate directors may make use of any of these

members to work full-time in a country, place, office, or task where they are most needed for the good of Christ's Kingdom (if other circumstances or needs do not intervene).

40. These three levels make up the three different ways of living out the second degree of dedication. As we already stated with regard to the degrees in general, these levels are not obligatory steps for advancing spiritually, but are *three distinct vocations* to which our Lord invites each one. Because it is the Lord who invites, one cannot exclude the possibility that dedication in one level may serve as preparation for another. Regnum Christi, with this diversity of vocations, relies on a rich variety of human and spiritual possibilities to pursue its goal of establishing Christ's Kingdom in the world.

CHAPTER IV

THE AIMS OF THE SECOND DEGREE WITHIN THE MOVEMENT

41. The tasks particular to second degree members lead us in two directions: within the Movement itself, and outside the Movement, through its apostolic works. In this chapter we will only touch upon the mission of second degree members with respect to the Movement itself, leaving for another chapter the topic of their apostolate.

42. It is expressly desired that second degree members do not form a separate section or place themselves in specific teams within each section, even though—as we will discuss further on—each section should have activities of perseverance and formation exclusively for members of this degree. The aim in proceeding this way is to make the second degree members become the heart of each section through their example, dedication, and availability to the Movement.

43. In the context of the Gospel, the second degree is like the salt of the section. It endures to the extent that it mixes with other section members (first degree members) and preserves its own flavor, in order to instill in other members a yearning and a spirit which will motivate them to live their vocation in the Movement with integrity, in accordance with the commitments of their degree. In this light, the spirit of discretion with which second degree members live their commitment while mixing in the teams, apostolates, and activities of the rest of the Movement can be understood.

44. The first fundamental aspect of the second degree members' mission within each section is that of being the heart of the section. The body needs the heart to live; and the section needs the second degree to consolidate itself, grow and develop. The second degree should bring to each section the vigor, the enthusiasm, strength, and responsibility Regnum Christi sections need to accomplish God's plan: hence the second degree's importance in each section. Regnum Christi will not be able to grow strong and vigorous in a city or a particular group (men, women, young men, or young women) without the strength and vigor of the second degree in its ranks.

45. In considering the second degree's aims within the Movement, we do not referring to aspects

exclusive to the second degree. It is obvious that the same characteristics are to be found in first degree members. But in referring specifically to the second degree, we wish to emphasize the importance and necessity of possessing and fostering certain characteristics in members who, by virtue of their commitments to God and the Movement, are called to be the heart of the sections and, accordingly, to impress upon these sections greater stability, dynamism, and effectiveness. Among these characteristics we can highlight the following:

§1. *Spiritual depth and vitality.* Through their greater spiritual commitment, second degree members should make Christ and the Church present in the section as the vitalizing force behind each member's spiritual growth and apostolic commitment. The contribution of second degree members in this regard is of vital importance in preventing the loss of the sense of belonging to the Movement or of the meaning behind the activities the Movement carries out for the good of the Church. Without a deep spirituality, a Regnum Christi section is a dead and ineffective body. For all these reasons, each second degree member—in his personal contact with other Movement members or in his participation in team activities—should pass on God's presence, the living of the theological virtues, his appearance and behavior in accord with Gospel values, his witness of a generous Christian life, and convincing dedication to apostolate. A second degree member should be a source of strength for others in their weakness, courage in the midst of discouragement, enthusiasm in disappointment, stability in confusion, and unity in diversity. A section needs living witnesses of the Movement's sanctifying force, and these witnesses should be the second degree members.

§2. *Dynamism.* Through their own conviction of Christ and the Movement, second degree members should be the section's apostolic stronghold. Their apostolic commitment and spirit of initiative should draw section members to a deeper, more constant dedication to Christ's interests. The great, effective apostolic projects which truly serve to extend Christ's Kingdom in the world should spring from the second degree. Being a section's stronghold means to be able to impress upon the section itself—and each one of its members personally—high, noble and generous ideals of dedication to Christ's cause. The other section members will acquire this height of vision in serving Christ principally through the life and action of second degree members. Leaders—men and women with broad horizons—are required for any action is to be effective and far-reaching. In Regnum Christi, second degree members should be these leaders. Accordingly, we can say that a section will always be especially what second degree members want to make of it.

A Movement which does not grow or grows very little or grows poorly, is doomed to become extinct. The force and effectiveness of a work lies in its people; and one of the aspects they should look after most is good recruitment. This work is entrusted to all Movement members, but especially to the contagious enthusiasm, full of apostolic zeal, of second degree members. This is one of the most important tasks; it is also one of the most difficult, but is essential for building and maintaining Regnum Christi. This is new, regenerated—one could also say conquered—blood for the heart, which will keep the body of the Movement alive. This enthusiasm should also nourish the steps following recruitment in order to preserve and help new members in their process of identification with, and dedication to, the Movement.

46. A second aspect of the second degree mission within a section of the Movement is dedication and availability, which is put into practice by accepting tasks, missions, and services requested by the legitimate directors. The Movement considers second degree members its right hand men and women. They are the ones to whom it can turn at any given moment to ask for help in the face of some difficulty, a change of position out of necessity, a time span dedicated to some apostolic need, or substitution for some absent member. Because of the Movement's dynamic nature and the development of its apostolates, it has to be able to rely on people who are open and available at any moment to take on an unforeseen responsibility, a difficult task, or a mission demanding sacrifice. The fullness of this availability is lived in the third level of the second degree, in which the members are completely at the Movement's disposal for whatever needs it has. With this attitude of availability, Regnum Christi can effectively rely on a human reserve of great Christian nobility and quality in its men and women. Through commitment, second degree members accept being available for whatever need the Movement might have, even though the Movement will always strive to act with due prudence, taking into account the members' particular circumstances and the level to which they belong.

47. A third aspect of a second degree member's mission within a section is rooted in a constant, creative and prudent proposal of initiatives regarding the various areas of a section's life (recruitment, integration, formation, apostolate, and the economy) which serve to enrich the very life of a section and to give strength to the Christian influence it has on the surrounding environment. Second degree members, motivated by their love for Regnum Christi, should strive, under the guidance of their section director, to be the great makers of work programs in the short, middle and long term so each section will have a plan and accomplish it effectively. With the Movement's purpose more clearly in mind and loving it more intensely, second degree members must permanently open new outlets for its growth and influence in their surrounding environment. Thus the largest apostolic projects should come especially from second degree members.

48. With all of this, the second degree gives each section an extraordinary stability. Wherever there is a member of second degree, there should be responsibility, initiative, dynamism, dedication, apostolic zeal, spirituality, and love for Christ. Thus the second degree is the vital, driving force of a section, and of the Movement itself through the section. Accordingly, it is very important for each section to have an abundant number of second degree members, for these members to fulfill the commitments they have undertaken and for these members to persevere in their vocation of dedication. After they have been formed, it is preferable that team and group leaders, leaders of apostolic activities, section coordinators, formators and spiritual guides be chosen from this group.

CHAPTER V

ADMISSION AND INCORPORATION INTO THE SECOND DEGREE

49. Regnum Christi methodology establishes a process of admission and incorporation into the second degree. This methodology comprises various aspects such as required qualities, procedures, authority to accept someone into the second degree, etc. Some of these elements are demands deriving from the nature of the second degree, and are thus aptitudes required to form part of this degree. It is important that admission and incorporation into the second degree proceed prudently, with an eye simultaneously to the Movement's progress and the concrete possibilities of the person concerned.

50. The second degree vocation for Movement members is normally fostered through the action of the Holy Spirit in spiritual direction or through the group or team leader's advice or through the witness of the second degree members themselves. This means that discovering and fostering a vocation to the second degree takes place through a personal relationship with the person concerned rather than group activities. A second degree vocation should be handled within the discreet framework of spiritual direction so its acceptance will result from a personal maturing of God's invitation and a serious, mature decision made by the person concerned in response to that invitation.

51. In general, we can say that the second degree is open to all first degree members who feel interiorly moved by grace to a life of greater spiritual commitment and greater apostolic dedication in the Movement, and who can objectively be at the Movement's disposal at various levels. As an exception, if the circumstances and the individual's spiritual maturity warrant it, a person may enter directly into the second degree. Nevertheless, before inviting a member to form part of the second degree, section directors should be absolutely certain that the persons concerned possess the aptitudes or qualities that are necessary for this degree and have none of the impediments which the Statutes of the Movement describe for admission to the Movement in general. The Movement must always insist that prudence and certainty are required for admitting members to its second degree.

52. More specifically, to serve the nature of this degree, seven requirements have been established for a person's admission to the second degree:

§ 1. The candidate must be at least seventeen years old. If one must be sixteen years old to enter the Movement's first degree, and a period of time in the first degree is normally required, it follows that the normal minimum age for the second degree is seventeen years of age.

§ 2. The candidate must have been in the Movement long enough for the section director to have the opportunity to verify the authenticity of God's invitation and to test the person's maturity for this step. Still, as has been stated above, in special cases a person who has not been in the first degree may be admitted directly into the second degree.

§ 3. The candidate must proceed with real purity of intention, that is to say, seeking the glory of God through generous acceptance of his most holy will.

§ 4. The candidate must have given sufficient witness of a Christian life. It is not right to admit into the second degree someone who has not lived his commitment to the first degree with sufficient consistency, spirit of self-improvement, and fidelity.

§ 5. Candidates must have great affective and effective integration in the Movement—shown throughout their period of membership in its ranks—in standards, behavior, and speech. This is a matter of prime importance and particular attention should be paid to it.

§ 6. The persons concerned must have the talents required to work actively and efficiently in one the Movement's apostolates.

§ 7. The persons concerned must be responsible, mature, hard-working and faithful—persons whose seriousness and effectiveness can be vouched for in all the tasks that may be entrusted to them.

53. Because of the type of commitment that is undertaken by incorporation into the second degree, third level, in addition to what has been stated above, admission of candidates to this level also requires:

§ 1. That the candidates possess a balanced psychology guaranteeing that this dedication will be lived in an atmosphere of peace, serenity, and absence of anxiety. Only a person with balanced psychology will have sufficient human and Christian maturity to make a decision of this kind with the greatest freedom and with the clearest understanding of the commitment he is assuming.

§ 2. That they have the qualities they need to take mature, effective responsibility for the apostolates the Movement entrusts to them. For many people they will be, in a certain way, the visible face of the Movement. If they are not gifted with the qualities for moving one of the Movement's apostolates satisfactorily forward, there will always be the conflict of not knowing where to place these members who, in principle, are going to depend on Regnum Christi for their entire life.

§ 3. That they possess affective and effective integration in the Movement that is able to withstand any trial. In fact, the third level is only comprehensible when it's based on understanding Regnum Christi's charism and its mission in the world. It is impossible to grasp the power and richness of this level if one has not first understood the undeniable urgency of selling everything to obtain the precious pearl or treasure of Christ's Kingdom. One can only understand this level from the perspective of an apostolic zeal that is fruit of a passionate love for Christ and the mission he undertook out of love for all men.

§ 4. If the person concerned is married, the express consent of the other spouse is required.

54. Before formally inviting first degree members to incorporate themselves into the second degree (at whatever level), it is necessary for the respective section director, together with the local Coordinator of apostolate, to submit a complete proposal on each of the candidates. This report should

contain general information on each of the candidates: their date of incorporation into the Movement; their specific qualities; the reasons why their incorporation into the second degree seems advisable; the level into which the person may be incorporated; the type of leadership he has; the absence of impediments, etc. This report should be sent to the respective Territorial Director sufficiently in advance for the Territorial Director to study the files and authorize admission, given that he is the one who can validly admit members into the second degree. If the Territorial Director should have some doubt about a particular person, he may designate someone to interview the person in question and ascertain the suitability of the decision. In general, one must always be certain that the person concerned perfectly understands the demands of his incorporation.

55. Once the acceptance for admission into the various levels of the second degree is received from the Territorial Director, the director of each section should ask each of the candidates to request admission, specifying the level to which they wish to commit themselves through a letter addressed to the Section Director. A copy of this letter should be sent as well to the local Coordinator of Apostolate. This request for admission has the fundamental character of showing the candidate's understanding and freedom of action in taking this step of dedication to God in the Movement. It does not require, then, a reply authorizing admission, as this permission has already been granted.

56. In order to achieve a deeper and more heartfelt commitment to the second degree, the formal incorporation, which takes place in the Eucharistic Celebration according to the Ritual of the Movement, should be preceded by three days of spiritual exercises. In an atmosphere of silence, reflection, and prayer each candidate should—with great inner freedom—deepen his understanding of the commitment he is about to take on, with the aim of living it generously and decisively within the framework of a real love for Christ and his Kingdom. Because of the spiritual maturity of those that will be incorporated into the second degree, one must insist that the triduum be lived in an atmosphere of real personal effort in prayer and reflection. Interior and exterior silence and separation from your daily surroundings should help to mature your decision before God. This step prior to incorporation should not be omitted for any reason.

57. The certificates should be prepared for the end of the incorporation ceremony. For the second degree, a separate certificate is made for each member, specifying the level into which he has been incorporated. The certificate is signed by the incorporated member and the priest who presided over the incorporation. Copies of these records should be sent to the Territorial Director and the local Coordinator. The original is kept in the respective section records.

58. The model for this certificate is the following:

**CERTIFICATE OF INCORPORATION INTO THE
SECOND DEGREE OF REGNUM CHRISTI**

On _____ of _____ 20_____,
during the Eucharistic Celebration presided over by
Fr _____,
(Name) _____
a member of the _____ section of
_____ (locality) was incorporated
into the second degree, _____ level of the
Regnum Christi Movement.

Signed by:

Signature of incorporated member

Signature of person presiding

CHAPTER VI

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE SECOND DEGREE

60. We have previously stated that second degree members should live a spiritual life characterized by a more fervent, active practice of the Christian virtues. Two factors follow as a consequence of this fact. First, second degree members should live all the virtues common to all members of the Movement, regardless of degree, with greater consistency and authenticity. Second, in the second degree, certain specific virtues should stand out.

§ 1. By virtue of membership in the Movement and as a consequence of incorporation into the second degree, they should live the virtues that shape the authentic personality of a man or woman of the Kingdom, such as real, personal, passionate, and faithful love for Christ; devotion to the Holy Spirit and fidelity to his inspirations; a filial love for Mary and an effort to imitate her virtues; unconditional loyalty to the Church and the Pope; an ardent zeal for spreading Christ's Kingdom; a constant effort to foster the theological virtues; the protection and growth of the life of grace; prayerfulness understood as filial conversation with God; the faithful practice of charity in thoughts, words, and deeds; a conquering spirit; deep, authentic humility; purity of intention; the practice of mortification to purify your faculties and prepare you for an encounter with God; the cultivation of a steadfast sincerity with God and others; and deep respect for man redeemed by Christ; all of this is dealt with in the *Regnum Christi Handbook*. These loves and virtues form the spiritual profile of a man or woman of the Kingdom, whatever his or her culture, upbringing, social status, or degree of dedication; they are the distinctive elements of all *Regnum Christi* members.

§ 2. Incorporation into the second degree presupposes a level of depth in these distinctive elements which are, definitively, the base supporting the commitment undertaken with God and with the Church through the Movement. In fact, the lifestyle characteristic of the second degree can only be accepted and lived with fidelity and perseverance if it is the result of a personal, passionate love for Christ, which brings one to an effective, deep and renewed desire to imitate him and follow him as perfectly as possible within one's own state in life. We could say the same thing of all the elements mentioned above.

61. Taking for granted these constitutive elements (just as they are presented in the *Regnum Christi Handbook*) and the need to deepen and personalize them in the new degree of dedication, we shall deal here with the lifestyle that specifies the way second degree members follow Christ.

62. The whole process of growth in holiness consists in the growth of divine life which God has grafted into our being through baptism: the life of grace and the theological virtues. All the spiritual life and exercise of the virtues which the Movement proposes is directed fundamentally towards the cultivation of this seed which the Lord deposited in our hearts from the first day of our Christian lives. It is a question, before anything else, of living in faith and by faith.

As Sacred Scripture says: “the just live by faith,⁶” and “without faith it is impossible to please Him.⁷” Faith establishes the first contact between God and ourselves; it is the foundation for all the virtues because all of them presuppose it; and it is the root of all virtues because from faith, informed by charity, all the others spring up and take life. It is a question of living in and by Christian hope, confiding with absolute security—sustained by divine omnipotence—in the full realization of Christian life and the attainment of eternal life. The living of faith and hope leads to charity, the most excellent of the virtues because it unites us to God and because without it no other virtue can be perfect.

Therefore the first commandment of the law tells us: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength, and your neighbor as yourself.⁸” It is necessary not to lose sight of this reality so as not to mistake the path and in order to maintain a proper hierarchy of values.

Poverty, obedience, humility, chastity, piety, etc. have meaning so long as they are ordered and sustained by charity—and rooted in the growth and progress of charity: a charity which necessarily springs from faith in the word of Jesus, who takes what we do to our neighbors as if it were done to him. St. Paul tells us in the first epistle to the Corinthians: “If I speak in the tongues of men and angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.⁹” This is the touchstone of authenticity in the following and imitation of Christ, and it is this virtue which must be cultivated and developed in all its dimensions if we are to be faithful to the love which God has for us.

63. Framed within this cultivation of charity as personal love of the Lord our God is following and imitating the example of Christ: poor, chaste and obedient, which the Gospel presents to us. Because of what they presuppose with respect to faith, trust and especially love; and because of what they imply about selflessness and personal donation, these virtues contain the ideal of life for an authentic Christian following the genuine tradition of the Church. Naturally each Christian must practice them according to his own gifts, duties and state in life. They form a special part of the life of second degree members of the Movement.

64. To live this Christian ideal of poverty, chastity and obedience deeply, one must constantly and seriously deepen his understanding of Christ’s example. Analyzing his life, we discover that it is entirely focused on one objective: the glorification of the Father and the salvation of mankind created and loved by the Father. This leads Christ to a lifestyle of total loyalty—mind, will and heart—to his Father. Above all else, he keeps a positive attitude of love, admiration, veneration, gratitude, openness, and dedication. Christ is in love with his Father. This lifestyle demands certain sacrifices from Christ, as a logical consequence of his choice of life. But the essential matter is not what he renounces, but the love

⁶ *Rom.* 1:17

⁷ *Heb.* 11:6

⁸ *Luke* 10:27

⁹ *I Cor.* 13:1-3

with which he tries in everything to please and do his Father's will.

65. A disciple of Christ cannot forget his state as a creature and an adopted child of the Father; therefore, the first step is recognition of God as Lord, Creator, and Father and the consequences which flowing from that recognition: love, dependence, submission, gratitude and the desire to please this God, Lord and Father in everything and through everything. This presupposes that the person has established a correct hierarchy of values, keeping the relation between the Creator and his creatures in his mind, will, and heart. God has primacy of place; no creature may be divinized. The will rejoices in freedom and freely adheres to its ultimate end. Poverty, chastity, and obedience are nothing more than means to achieve this primacy of God and his things in our own lives.

66. At the same time, considering our fallen nature, and the ease with which we make ourselves slaves of created things, the example of Christ poor, chaste and obedient comprises, in a certain way, Christ's answer to the three concupiscences of man: that is, to the deepest and most personal roots of evil within ourselves. Thus they have proven to be means by which to accomplish our work to grow in holiness— to which God calls each Christian:

a) in the face of the concupiscence of the flesh which exacts its portion of comfort, pleasure and well-being and makes the body its slave, Christ teaches us that there is another road —of freedom — in living chastity in accordance with each person's state and condition in life;

b) in the face of the concupiscence of the eyes, which proclaims its liking for material goods as the source of security, power and greatness, Christ offers us voluntary poverty, which consists in a profound detachment of the heart from material goods, as a way of life;

c) face to the concupiscence of the pride of life, which brings its entourage of pride, self-sufficiency, vanity, egotism, ambition and presumption and tends to erect itself as the guiding principle of life, Christ teaches us that nothing exalts man as truly as submission to God and he therefore freely elects a life of total submission to the will of the Father.

67. Keeping in mind that we are discussing means for achieving charity and adhesion to God as Father and Lord with greater facility, the specific spirituality of second degree members requires, in the first place, following Christ's poverty.

68. Poverty is not and never has been something naturally pleasing to man. Man aspires to have, to possess, to place his confidence in the material goods he is able to attain. He fights for them and he toils for them. Generally speaking, he is not content with what he has, and always wishes to obtain more because of the sense of security they offer and the prestige and power they grant. When circumstances or other men's actions impede his ability to attain these goods, he lives embittered, nurturing rancor or impotent hate in his heart, or else abandons himself to laziness and the easy way out. In fact, frequently, the material goods become for man his primary objective, to which he will sacrifice even the noblest goods such as the family, the rearing of children, etc. Faced with this tendency in the heart of man, Jesus Christ our Lord preaches and practices the virtue of poverty. Thus the Movement, wishing to be faithful to the message of Christ, has elaborated some criteria —emanating from the Gospel— which should be the axis of living poverty as a virtue for the members of second degree.

69. Poverty is a spiritual attitude more than a social situation. It is necessary to make it clear that poverty is not opposed to the possession of goods which are necessary for personal and family life. True poverty brings one — in the midst of everything— to a real and affective detachment from material goods and a deep desire for God as the only definitive security in life. Thus poverty brings one to avoid vain ostentation and to live in this life as pilgrims on the way to possessing God eternally. Poverty demands, among other things, that we feel ourselves to be merely stewards of what we possess; that we give thanks to God for what we receive from Him through our labor; and that we use what we have with moderation and responsibility, and according to the demands of charity and justice. The demands are identical for one who has more as for one who has less. A heart is just as much enslaved whether it is attached to a lot or to a little.

70. Christian poverty —as a consequence of detachment from material goods— is generosity. True poverty of spirit invariably conducts one to share what one has with the needy in order to alleviate their miseries and needs.

71. There is another form of poverty which cannot be called simply generosity, but rather a Christian moral duty. This form of poverty is the dedication of material resources to the works of the Church and the Movement, the legitimate and intelligent augmentation of capital which makes the creation of jobs, service of the common good, and the perfection of justice with charity possible. The second degree member should give evident testimony of this Christian attitude to those around him.

72. Christian poverty is also put into effect in the personal style and level of life which each second degree member lives. Their form of living should be distinguished by its simplicity and sobriety, by decorum and dignity in the home, by the sense of economy and austerity in personal belongings, by the renunciation of immoderate luxury and vain and superfluous ostentation. There can not be authentic poverty if this virtue is not acted out in an effective manner. In all of this, however, one must keep in mind the diverse circumstances in which each person must live his promise of poverty. For example, a lawyer can make use of an office suitable to the social scale of his clientele and nonetheless maintain sobriety and simplicity in his bedroom. Each one, according to the lights of the Holy Spirit, should make concrete in his own life the way to put following the poor Christ into effect.

73. Christian poverty, in the Movement, also means making good use of time, because for a man or woman of the Kingdom, “time is Kingdom;” one should underline this point, because often we forget to consider it. Time is a talent which God gives us, desiring fruit; making good use of time is a form of obedience. Besides: the time given to each life is unique, and one must make it yield according to the vocation to which the Lord has called each person. Making good use of time is not simply filling up a particular period of time concretely; it is also discharging one’s work and professional duties efficiently and responsibly. It is to work with a program and a calendar as a guide. It is knowing how best to profit from relaxation time in order to be able to work better. It is a deeply lived consciousness of making the most of life, which is lived only once, and of one’s talents, which the Lord has given in order to bear fruit that will last.

74. Christian poverty always flows out of a profound attitude of full childlike trust in the

Providence of God, such that one feels one's own security is placed more in God than in the goods of fortune, which tend to cause avarice, ambition and hardness of heart. The security of the poor in spirit is in God. He is their treasure and their fortune. Thus, whoever lives Christian poverty is a free man; a being who always keeps his soul open to God and men; someone who has the joy of an interior climate prepared for prayer, collaboration, dialogue; someone who is nourished by hope; who cultivates justice and mercy; who walks in love, serenity and peace. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."¹⁰

75. The commitment to poverty of the second degree members constitutes through all of this a beautiful and peaceful path to spiritual perfection. Christ Poor is today, after 2000 years, a living sign of the true values of the spirit and a foreshadowing of the future Kingdom, where the only wealth will be the definitive and eternal possession of the Lord our God. Living Christian poverty in the materialized world becomes a prophetic sign of the presence of God. The world needs many men and women to give testimony of the valor and greatness of this virtue. All the same, it must be lived with integrity, with rectitude, with happiness: not with sadness and resignation, holding some things aside. "The Lord loves a cheerful giver."¹¹

76. The specific spirituality of the second degree is comprised also of following Christ's obedience. Obedience likewise does not come naturally to man. God has made man in His image and likeness. And this likeness brings liberty, and with it, the possibility of opting for God or against Him. Through sin, man has vitiated the power of this liberty; thus, man often —wishing to realize the full measure of his powers— instead makes himself into a slave of vices, fashions and instincts. Propped up by his liberty, he does not want to accept God. It is the perennial temptation of history: to refuse to serve God. In opposition to this tendency of man to radically affirm himself, Jesus Christ adopts the attitude of a creature: one who, in a sovereign act of liberty, consciously accepts His dependence on God and recognizes and chooses the rights of God over himself. The second degree member chooses to follow Christ on this path of obedience, seeking to realize the will of God in his life as it is manifested by diverse means.

77. Christian obedience for a second degree member essentially means loving acceptance —from the heart— of the most holy will of God. Acceptance which comes from faith and a deep spirit of authentic humility, and which translates into a deeply lived consciousness of being creatures, dependent on God in everything, and created to give Him glory through fulfillment of His will. This form of humility —obedience— is one of the ways of living which most pleases God, as it presupposes loving and generous submission of one's liberty to the only thing which enriches it, preserves it, and permits it to be expressed completely.

78. There are multiple ways in which the will of God makes itself present in the life of each person. The Movement's accent on following the obedient Christ reinforces, on one hand, ways of living which are common to all Christians, and on the other hand, presents aspects which are specific to second degree members of *Regnum Christi*.

¹⁰ *Matt.* 5:3.

¹¹ *2 Cor.* 9:7.

79. Christian obedience is made concrete, above all, in loving fulfillment of God's commandments, the eternal markers which indicate the way to human fulfillment in accordance with God's plan. In them God has poured out his most detailed, exquisite love for man in order to protect him from destroying himself and his neighbor. Second degree members give witness to obedience, joyfully living the demands of God's law—which are written on man's conscience and made explicit in revelation... They should live the Church's laws and deliberations with the same spirit of obedience and submission.

80. The submission of the will to God is again made concrete in respect for and observance of the legitimate laws and determinations (that is, those which do not violate the law of God or the rights of the Church) of the civil authority, which has the responsibility for regulating society and providing for the common good. Second degree members thus should be exemplary citizens because of their deep sense of obedience to God.

81. Additionally, there is an ample field of obedience to God to be had in discovering His will in both the prosperous and adverse moments in life, when these moments are embraced with humility, generosity and loving submission. This acceptance of the will of God in the various circumstances of life is not in opposition to the natural human effort to confront and, if possible, to overcome difficulties. This too forms part of the will of God, who has given men the capacity to confront challenges. This very confrontation, through good and licit means, is in itself a form of obedience to God. He speaks to each individual in the simple language of everyday occurrences. When everything is going fine and there are no difficulties, the danger always arises of forgetting about God and attributing every success to oneself; at the same time, it is very difficult to hear and to understand the language of God when His message is of battle, suffering, work, wearing oneself out, renunciation, pain. Nevertheless, in both the former and the latter case, God speaks and demands through the circumstances of life itself. "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."¹² To accept life with humility, gratitude and love is already a marvelous gesture of obedience.

82. The spirit of obedience is made more specific for a Movement member in the submission—full of reverence and filial love—to the Roman Pontiff, supreme pastor of the Church and, for that reason, supreme guide of the Movement. Each member of the Movement should make his obedience to God concrete through his acceptance of the person and determinations of Christ's vicar on earth. One of the signs of authenticity in a Regnum Christi member should always be obedience to God brought to life through a radical and absolute adhesion to the successor of Peter. This obedience to God should extend to the bishops of each diocese who are in communion with the Supreme Pontiff; Movement members owe them submission and respect.

83. In second degree members, this spirit of obedience demands in a special way:

- a) Delicate and precise observance of the spirit, discipline and apostolic method of the Movement, because they are the means which the Lord our God has used to speak in a specific way to those who form the family which is the Movement;
- b) submission to the orders and indications of legitimate directors of the Movement, with

¹² *Job* 1:21

respect to everything that deals with Regnum Christi —keeping it clearly in mind that, when they work for institutions or works of the Movement, everyday questions of work and programs must be resolved by corresponding directors of these works, and not with one’s own spiritual director, the Territorial Director, etc.;

By means of submission full of faith and love for the spirit of Regnum Christi and legitimate directors, the Movement member actually and concretely accepts the will of God and gives it priority over his life.

84. These attitudes of obedience cause second degree members to permanently maintain an attitude of being absolutely at the service of everything that the will of God entails: total availability which is prompt, motivated, and joyful— and the source of spiritual progress and divine blessings. Openness to God and His designs makes man into an effective instrument of grace for bringing salvation to men in need of God. It is these attitudes of obedience which most please God and which most make man like Jesus Christ, permitting him to collaborate with Christ in the salvation of men. “In burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Lo, I have come to do your will, O God!’”¹³

85. In conclusion, instead of the tendency to prideful autonomy which springs from the human heart as the most subtle temptation of liberty, the Movement proposes to members of second degree the attitude of obedience, lived with liberty and happiness, and with the consciousness that man is most fully man to the extent that he recognizes his dependence on his Creator, adores his creator from the depths of his heart, and submits to his most holy will. The word and example of Christ are sufficiently eloquent for us to recognize in this free and loving obedience the genuine stamp of the Gospel.

86. Finally, the spirituality of the second degree may be defined as “following the chaste Christ.” The term “chaste” applies to one who freely and responsibly regulates his sexuality in an upright manner, in accordance with his state and condition in life.

87. There exists in man an insatiable thirst to enjoy himself, a tendency which profoundly affects his whole being, of which the horror of suffering is only a negative aspect. We reject pain because we love pleasure.

88. Pleasure—including sensible and bodily pleasure—is not bad in itself. God himself, the author of creation, has made certain natural acts pleasurable—especially those which have to do with the preservation of the individual and the species—in order to facilitate and stimulate these acts. Nevertheless, original sin destroyed the balance of faculties by which man subjected his natural tendencies to his reason; consequently, these sensible tendencies often assert themselves against our reason and obscure it, leading it to disorder and sin. At the same time, these inordinate tendencies to pleasure, inherent in all people, find allies and powerful stimuli in our surrounding environment. Through the virtue of chastity we try to submit our tendencies to governing and control of our reason enlightened by faith.

¹³ Heb.10:6, 7.

89. Given this inordinate natural tendency to pleasure, man requires education precisely in this virtue of chastity, as a moderator and builder of lost equilibrium. This training consists of renunciation, self-denial, and sacrifice, as elements of personal mastery which are deeply enriching, and as regulators of this deep-seated tendency in man towards pleasure, comfort-seeking, and a life revolving around the senses—all of which greatly impoverish himself spiritually.

90. It is not easy to practice this virtue which so contradicts tendencies that are so prominent in man; but Jesus Christ has the “words of life” in this matter as in others—and he makes it possible with his example and his grace. Thus the Movement insists with its second degree members that, leaving aside the philosophies of pleasure and hedonism which attempt to justify the renunciation of all personal discipline in this respect, they instead should take up the cross as an instrument of personal growth in holiness and apostolic fruitfulness.

91. A spirit of self-denial and sacrifice is not in itself a virtue. Making sacrifices for sacrifice’s sake has no value; one embraces sacrifice for the sake of higher values, for a reason which transcends the limited horizon of personal comfort. It has meaning and value insofar as it relates to something superior. Thus the athlete in training accepts renunciations, exhaustion, sacrifices because he has his sight set on his triumph. Likewise the mother suffers when the moment of childbirth arrives, but afterwards she is filled with joy after she has brought a new life into the world.

“Through the Cross to the light,” is the Christian imperative on our journey through this life. Sacrifice and renunciation assumed voluntarily and lovingly, find their meaning inasmuch as they open us to the new life which Christ has conquered for us through his death on the cross.

92. The first thing necessary in order to live these virtues is to have a conscience which understands, appreciates, and respects them. A Movement member should accept from the outset this Christian understanding of life, according to which life is also a struggle, pain, and sacrifice in pursuit of this “new man” born of faith in and love of Jesus Christ. Through this conscience, a Movement member should oppose whatever tries to sway him from this style of life, offering easier and more comfortable models.

93. In order to live these virtues, second degree members must acquire a balanced and upright Christian understanding of the reality of the human body and sexuality in general. The human body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and a privileged instrument in the fulfillment of the plan of God for man as a whole. Thus the body has value which derives from the Creator himself. Before Him, there is no room for deprecation of the body, which is a deprecation of man himself and of the great mystery of the Incarnation of God—in which Jesus Christ took on a human body and was made like us in all things but sin. There is likewise no room for the idolatrous attitude in which everything is subordinate to pleasure and bodily enjoyments. The body should collaborate with the soul in the attainment of man’s ultimate end through legitimate joys—but also through toil, effort, improvement, health, and through the rejection of everything which smacks of dis-ordinate concession to comfort, sinful pleasure or laziness.

94. This spirit and these values should forge in second degree members an upright conscience — one in accord with the law of God as proclaimed and interpreted by the authorized Magisterium of the Church— regarding matters related to the sexual instinct and the reservation of the procreative faculty to matrimony.

95. God in his infinite wisdom has called men and women to collaborate with Him in the procreation of humanity. Matrimony is a wise institution of the Creator aimed at fulfilling His loving plans among men. Spouses —through their reciprocal personal donation of themselves exclusively to each other— achieve a more complete communion of their beings, for the sake of their mutual effort to achieve perfection and in order to collaborate with God in the generation and upbringing of new lives. Between baptized persons, matrimony takes on the additional dignity of a sacramental sign of grace, in that it represents the union of Christ and the Church. This community of life should unfold in an atmosphere of love which brings a series of legitimate satisfactions, desired by God, and a series of personal demands which commit the entire being of the spouses. The former and the latter are equally part of the Christian exercise of conjugal chastity.

96. By the light of this divine plan of human love, several specific ideas appear which seriously should be considered and incorporated into one's own mentality and life:

97. Marital love is fully human, which is to say that it is both sensible and spiritual at the same time. It is no mere effusion of instinct and sentiment, but also —principally— an act of the will destined to maintain itself and grow through the joys and sorrows of daily life, in such a way that the spouses gradually become one heart and one soul and together achieve human and Christian perfection.

98. It is a total love, that is, a singular form of human friendship, in which the spouses generously share everything, without undue reserve or selfish calculations; whoever truly loves his partner will not love her for what he receives, but for herself; he will be happy to be able to give her the gift of himself.

99. It is a love which is faithful and exclusive until death. This is how the spouses conceive it on the day they freely and conscientiously assume the bond of their marital union. This fidelity and exclusivity may at times be difficult; but they are always possible, noble and meritorious.

100. It is fecund love, which is not used up in the communion of the two spouses, but is destined to continue through the creation of new lives.

101. The nature of love demands preparation from each spouse, and an attitude of prayer and vigilance in order to always safeguard the full plan of the Lord our God for the family and the demands it entails. Personal dominion and the rule of the will over disordered manifestations of the instincts contribute to this discipline.

102. At the same time, as convinced Christians, it is important to testify with one's own conjugal life sustained by divine grace, to the possibility of joyously living the demands of Christian morality which

form part of the new life which Jesus Christ came into the world to establish. In this manner, too, the second degree members visibly should express their unshakeable interior adhesion to Church doctrine in these matters. They will thus bear witness to the primacy of God over man and make their conjugal lives the road to mutual growth in holiness.

103. These values, in the lives of young second degree members, should be the stimulus for the generous and valiant living of premarital chastity. Education in authentic human love implies dominion over the instincts, rule over urgent interior and exterior feelings, the rejection of hedonism, a Christian and human vision of the other sex and, above all, a constant and strenuous battle against one's own egotism. In the effort to be faithful to the Christian ideal implied in following the chaste Christ, Movement members also should make use of prayer and the sacraments, so that the Lord will help and strengthen them and make it possible to achieve this evangelical virtue in their lives.

104. These are specific facets of the spirituality of second degree members of Regnum Christi. They aim to affirm a concrete style of life, taught by the Son of God, which will aid in the effective recognition of God as Creator and Father, in the acceptance of his will, in humility, mortification and poverty, but above all the passionate love of God and his Kingdom, which are the values which forge the new man. The conquest of the world for Christ and the transformation of human society—the Movement's work and mission—must be founded upon the example of Christ, whose life of total dedication to the love of the Father and the mission entrusted to him through a path of poverty, chastity and obedience is the highest and most excellent ideal of human life.

CHAPTER VII

SOME QUALITIES OF A SECOND DEGREE MEMBER

105. The second degree entails a very special way of adhering and belonging to the Movement. Whoever incorporates in this manner binds himself to Regnum Christi in such a way that, in a certain sense, he becomes the image of the Movement for others. His behavior, attitudes and words in some way project to others what the Movement has taught him. It is therefore very important for second degree members to forge in themselves a mature and coherent Christian personality, fruit of the graces received during his time in the Movement through spiritual direction, retreats, spiritual exercises, conferences, encounters with Christ and their own commitments to Christian life. The knowledge and loving following of Christ should continue to leave a profound imprint in their hearts, which finds expression in new attitudes: criteria, behavior and words which reflect the divine and human dimensions of the gospel. From without, that is, to those who contemplate a man or woman of the second degree, there should shine all the richness of a personality consumed with Christ, the Perfect Man, and a series of attitudes which the spirituality of Regnum Christi offers and will continue to develop.

106. First of all there arises in a Christian and evangelical personality the attitude of **contemplation**, by which a person pulls himself together, is nourished by his interior richness and easily orients himself towards the values of the spirit.

107. The Gospel presents and teaches this attitude. It is the attitude of Christ towards life: prayer and work marvelously harmonize on his daily journey. We could say that all of his behavior is a projection of his intimate life. The spiritual world is infinitely marvelous and rich. Man needs this encounter with God and himself in the intimacy of his heart so much! This is where interior liberty, an upright hierarchy of values, a transcendent vision of daily occurrences in life, peace, tranquility, optimism, serenity, and true joy in living are engendered and nourished.

The Movement invites second degree members to be “interior” people —spiritual and profound— wherever they are (at work, at home, watching children, at study, in social life); to enjoy this marvelous interior world, where God makes himself more real and the person himself is most present; to know how to lift their eyes above the appearances of things, deeds and persons in order to see their authentic transcendent dimension; to better savor the beauty of nature and the surrounding world, in which God has left his mark of kindness and power; to live life, which is so short, more fully; and to be conscious of the gift God has given us and the richness which has accompanied it.

108. Man easily loses the sense of transcendence, interior life, spirituality, and with them, the sense of his own human life. Exterior life lends itself to the search for ever more sophisticated substitutes with which to fill man’s loneliness and emptiness. The want of peace and serenity make him aggressive and violent. His very psychology can become damaged by the refusal to face himself in the intimacy of his heart. Man is afraid of himself. But at the same time, the life man has created is dizzying. The

commerce of his daily life consumes him with multiple worries and problems; they prevent him from setting aside moments of peace for himself. This gravely affects his relations with others; and, what is more serious, it makes it impossible for him to discover the silent presence of God in the depths of his heart and aspirations.

109. It is necessary to recover those values which make the encounter of man with God and himself possible. Thus restored, depth returns to his life and relations with others, especially those to whom he is closest. There is a great need to create an attitude of recollection, which gathers the dispersed faculties of the mind, the heart and the sentiments, in order to construct an interior unity. It is necessary to create spaces of interior and exterior silence which create a climate conducive to prayer, reflection, and the rejection of the banal, the frivolous, the superficial, and the absence of interior life. Movement members should be aware that true human richness is to be found within and they should voluntarily cultivate and program this return to themselves and God, in order properly to value and structure all of life's realities.

110. In the second place, a second degree member should live the attitude of **love and charity towards all men with generosity and a spirit of constant improvement.**

111. God is love. That is how St. John defines Him.¹⁴ And this God who is love made man out of love. There is no other possible explanation for His creative act. At the same time, God has made man in order to love. In a certain sense He has conditioned man's happiness and joy on love. One may possess many or few material goods; one may be healthy or sick; one may be intelligent or not, well educated or uncultured: happiness does not depend on these things. But without the experience of loving and being loved, man cannot find personal fulfillment, nor the happiness it brings.

112. Love is always in fashion. In poetry, in songs, in conversations, in writings, the word is used all the time. Nevertheless, one must ask if man understands and lives the greatness and the demands of this reality. It has been written that the world is sick from lack of love, and this is no lie. The world denounces sacrifice, renunciation and pain, and in so doing, it denounces love as well, because love is self-donation, and all donation entails a certain renunciation. There is no love without sacrifice.

One can see the lack of love in the many wars among nations and absurd conflicts in societies — so much senseless violence, so many divided families, so many abortions procured, such misunderstandings between parents and children, so many friendships broken over money, so much indifference to the moral and physical problems of others. Even among Christians, who seek to follow Christ's model coherently, how often one can observe the lack of true love in thoughts, words and attitudes.

The word love, which ordinarily refers to sentiments, is a serious word, one which applies to man in his totality (reason, will, freedom, sentiments). It is a reality which attacks the biggest malady of man at its root: egotism. To love, therefore, is difficult. And nevertheless, it is the attitude through which we most liken ourselves to the God who is Love, and it is the way we most closely follow the path of Christ —

¹⁴ Cf... *I John 4:8.*

who wanted to leave us the commandment of love as the distinctive sign of his true followers.

113. The Movement asks all its members, but in a particular way the members of second degree, that in spite of all difficulties and obstacles, they believe profoundly in love, preach love and fight for love. Love should be present in married life, in the authentic education of children, in behavior with friends, in the respect shown to those who serve or depend upon us, in care for the poor, in working for greater justice, in the care for those needy in body or soul, in the pardoning of injuries done us, in solidarity with our fellow men, in the forgetting of ourselves, in the spirit of collaboration and service, in silencing the deficiencies of others.

The Movement considers that one cannot call himself a true Christian, cannot speak of real understanding of the Gospel, if he is not making conscientious, mature, constantly renewed and persevering effort to live this virtue. This is the heart of the spirituality of the Movement because it is the sign of the authentic Disciples of Christ. Therefore *Regnum Christi* exhorts its members: to embrace the path of true charity, which entails universal and delicate donation of ourselves to our neighbor, for love of the Lord; to learn to discover and love the good and pardon the bad; to reject envy; to pardon and forget wrongs; to understand and pay attention to others. It bluntly asks its members to eradicate speaking ill of others, understanding negative criticism to be the negation of Christianity itself. And the Movement encourages them to help and collaborate with their neighbors in everything possible; to foment the spirit of service and generosity of both heart and action; to treat others with appreciation, respect, kindness and simplicity.

114. Finally, charity contains all the force of apostolic witness. “See . . . how they love one another . . . ,”¹⁵ they said of the first Christians. And Jesus Christ presented the proof of the authenticity of his followers in this manner: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”¹⁶ Members of the second degree should distinguish themselves by their real exercise of this virtue in all their relations with others. This will be at once both the sign of their true love for Christ and the sign of the seriousness of their commitment to Him in the Movement.

115. In the third place, the **attitude of respect** should stand out in the evangelical personality, because it is an immediate consequence of true charity.

116. In fact, one of the most beautiful manifestations of the Christian charity preached by Christ is respect. “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get.”¹⁷ The harmony of mutual coexistence must be constructed on the foundation of mutual respect.

The *Regnum Christi* Movement wants its second degree members at all moments to be people with respect for all: respectful of other movements and religious groups within the Church; respectful of the opinions and actions of others; respectful especially of people closest to them (parents or children,

¹⁵ Tertullian, *Apology*, Chap. 39.

¹⁶ *John* 13:35.

¹⁷ *Matthew* 7:1-2.

husband or wife, team mates); respectful even of those whose ideas are completely distinct from our own. The tendency to judge others must be eradicated from our lives because it is easy to be mistaken—and above all, because it wounds charity, even when kept in the silence of our hearts; criticism of others must be cut out at the root because it is a sin and an injustice.

The attitude of Christ towards the adulteress woman or towards Mary Magdalene or towards even the Pharisees, demonstrates how we may help without wounding, love without humiliating, and lend a hand without making ourselves into lord and judge.

117. We live in a society characterized by the defense of individuality and personal liberty; nevertheless, wherever we turn, we note that the absence of mutual respect is the sad reality: lack of respect for life; lack of respect for the opinions of others; lack of respect for others' actions. Man thinks he is judge and master of the truth. Lack of mutual respect gives way sometimes to criticism; sometimes to violence; sometimes to deep division. One of the foundations of peace is respect; its absence is one of the causes of disharmony in social interaction.

118. Respect does not mean relativism, nor sharing in opinions or behavior not in accord with the Christian principles of faith and morals taught by the Magisterium authorized by the Church. Instead, it is a matter of an inner attitude by which no one sets himself up as judge of the rest; no one considers himself the sole teacher; no one pretends that his mode of following the Gospel and serving the Church is the only path possible; and faced with patent error or reprehensible conduct, one excuses at least the interior intention. Reject the error, but not the person who errs. Condemn the sin, but not the sinner.

119. The respect the Movement proposes should manifest itself as well in the decisiveness, maturity and valor with which one maintains his own convictions and accomplishes his own work face to God, not conforming to others.

120. In the fourth place, the second degree member should have an attitude of **security and conviction**.

121. The Movement wants its members to be men and women of principles, sure of themselves and in love with the truth. Truth is something towards which men strive, rather than something they construct. And to live the truth is not always popular.

122. It is surprising that man, who seeks to affirm himself and his liberty, often makes himself into the child of his surroundings, accepting as part of his personal security, the lifestyle and way of thinking of the majority around him. Often while mature and successful in his professional life, he is as insecure as an adolescent, the plaything of the fads and opinions of others, for lack of principles to govern his life, and for fear of living according to his convictions. He easily conforms himself to behavior and attitudes with which, deep down, he does not agree, so as not to be out of step or considered “old-fashioned”. Instead of conforming his surroundings to himself, he conforms to them. We can speak of the terrible dispossession and depersonalization of a human being for the sad sake of being accepted by others. This is where incoherence is born and even, in some cases, the renunciation of one's own

destiny and vocation within society. It is in this sense that we speak of the world as the enemy of man. We don't mean the world created by God, but this other world, the social milieu, which laughs at the most sacred values, ridicules the faith and religion, proposes behavior unworthy of a mature and responsible person, and reduces man's liberty to conformity with prevailing criteria.

123. It is important, therefore, to walk always before God and one's own conscience rather than before men. I know in whom I have believed (also in what I have believed), and I am sure,¹⁸ said St. Paul. This should be the norm for living. Truly definitive in the life of man is the judgment of God and one's own correctly formed conscience. It is a matter of believing in Jesus Christ, believing in the Church, believing in the Movement and conforming our lives to this faith. It should not matter what others think or say. It should not matter even if the majority think something different. The judgments and criticisms of others should not matter. It is a question of serving the truth.

124. One must be careful in daily life not to fall into sophism. Sometimes we think that to be faithful to our own convictions will harm charity. The value of charity must always be affirmed, but charity does not imply playing traitor to your own convictions. It is more; true dialogue requires clarity of ideas and attitudes. It would serve concord and harmony ill to put the distinctions which spring from fidelity to God and your own properly formed conscience in parentheses —or to ignore them.

125. Second degree members should cultivate this spirit of conviction and security especially in three dimensions of life. Confidence of thought: not being the puppet of fashion in matters doctrinal, but instead faithful to conscience and the doctrine of the Church. Confidence in speech: defending one's own convictions with valor and respect, even when others think differently. Confidence in action: fighting to maintain worthy and Christian behavior in every place and situation. From all of this spring authenticity, coherence and the interior unity which contribute so much to happiness.

126. Fifth: the second degree member should be marked by **an attitude of joyfulness.**

127. An authentic Christian is always joyful, even in the midst of sorrow and disaster. This happiness, this interior joy, is born of a soul at peace with God, with others and with himself. It is a happiness that helps him see people and things with a positive spirit; which brings him spontaneously to discover the provident and loving hand of God in every circumstance in life; and helps him leave aside every kind of lamentation, grumbling or pessimism. It is a contagious happiness which communicates itself to others, and it is an effective testimony of living the theological virtue of hope interiorly.

128. It is difficult to understand how, in the consumer society which offers man so many means of comfort and distraction, boredom, depression and weariness exist. Nevertheless, it is a fact. The young people and adults who find life boring are numerous. They spin their wheels without going anywhere: stifling their fears by evading them in the furious search for intense experiences, with an insatiable thirst for new paths to security and peace. And in every case there lurks the possibility of escape from reality through suicide.

¹⁸ Cf... *II Tim.* 1:12.

Man looks for happiness in the things that surround him, but they are all outside him. And happiness is the most profound, most intimate, most personal reality. It cannot be possessed, as something material. One must *be* happy. And to be happy, one must be at peace with himself, his conscience and his God. And this peace is expressed externally at all times, even faced with the natural difficulties of life.

129. The virtue of hope, founded on the fact of the Lord's resurrection, should communicate this interior happiness to the second degree members, as a fruit of the presence of God in their lives. The certainty that He is risen should shine in the face that the Christian presents to the world. He should rejoice in a taste of heaven here on the beautiful earth the Lord prepared for us.

He should know how to take healthy delight in the little pleasures of daily life (family, friendship, the beauty of nature, work, and rest). The world needs the testimony of happy, optimistic, hopeful men and women who put a little more color in human relationships and in every day. The world needs men and women who give testimony, with their entire lives, of their faith in the risen Christ. Regnum Christi asks the second degree members for this constant testimony.

130. In the sixth place, a second degree member should also have the quality of **fortitude in the face of suffering**.

131. Conscious that the life of man on earth is a constant battle, that existence is unique and life comes but once, and that great successes are fruit of work and effort, Regnum Christi inculcates in its members the attitude of fortitude in the face of pain. The word pain here takes on broad meaning, a synonym of all that implies work, effort, improvement, battle, exhaustion. All of these form part of the life of a Christian trying to be faithful to the path Christ walked. A life of the cross and of battle. "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword,"¹⁹ we are told in the Gospel —and this battle requires strong hearts: determined and generous.

132. Man would like to have a life without work, without suffering, without a fight. That is not possible. The reality of human life is that it is a constant fight, from the day a man is born until the day he dies. He may be daring and valiant for material and external values, but he is also tremendously inhibited and cowardly with respect to the spiritual and transcendent goods. For ephemeral and transitory things he will fight and die, if necessary. For eternal and consistent values he turns tail and runs. This is the terrible contradiction of human life itself: men who give their entire lives for money and power do not understand that the business of salvation requires much more effort and expectation; men who make enormous sacrifices through exercise or special diets to keep their bodies in shape, are not as resolute about keeping their souls in shape; men who fight for passing ideals are not willing to accept the battle as a companion when it comes to God.

133. The Christian, the man or woman of the Kingdom who tries to live Christianity to the fullest, is strong because God fortifies him with strength, exalts him with faith and sustains him with patience. Men need the testimony of Christian fortitude, manifested in active and persevering work for the interests of Christ and the Church, in the spirit of battle for the greatest ideals, in tenacity in effort, in

¹⁹ *Matt.* 10:34.

patience before suffering, in constancy in adversity, in perseverance in weariness, in optimism before disappointments, in confidence faced with fears. Second degree members are called to give this testimony of Christian fortitude.

134. Finally, we must reaffirm that the second degree member should be **gentle**.

135. In the Gospel, Jesus Christ makes himself the model of this great virtue: “Learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly of heart.”²⁰ And he makes gentleness one of the eight paths to happiness: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”²¹ The meekness of which Christ speaks, however, is a virtue, a habit, an attitude. It is not the natural goodness of particular personalities who can easily get along with temperamental people. Nor is it by any means the virtue of being cowardly or nonchalant, with no sense of personal dignity. Meekness is a difficult virtue because it opposes the deepest forces in the heart of man that cause him to be haughty and proud. It is, above all, the conquest of one’s own passions.

136. Meekness is often taken as a synonym for weakness of character, poverty of temperament, timidity and inhibition. The strong, hard, violent man is more appreciated. The man who imposes himself by force at least gets credit for doing so. And yet the absence of gentleness in daily life is the most common cause of altercation in human relations. Absence of meekness engenders difficult matrimonial problems; without gentleness there is distance between parents and children; hatred and violence stem from the lack of meekness, as do grudges which fester in the heart for long periods of time; without meekness, close friendships break up. A great percentage of man’s problems today exist because of the absence of this great Christian virtue, which is the door to harmony and peace among men.

137. Regnum Christi earnestly recommends the practice of this beautiful virtue to the members of second degree. This virtue requires authentic dominion of one’s own inordinate tendencies to anger. It should spring up naturally when the time comes to forgive and forget, when a moment of humiliation or scorn arises, at times when we feel forgotten and rejected by others, or when we experience the impetuous drives of our own temperaments. In each member, meekness should continue achieving the victory of kindness over hatred, pardon over rancor, patience over anger. The meek will have dominion over the earth because they have dominion over themselves, and they can conquer others with kindness.

138. We could add aspects to this profile of a second degree member. Some we have contemplated above; we could specify others such as: fidelity in little things as a consequence of delicate love for Christ; fidelity in relations with God and man; loyalty; gratitude to God and those who serve us or do us favors; sincerity in our relations with God, the Movement, others and ourselves. These latter virtues are to be found either throughout the Manual as a whole, or in the next chapters.

139. What is truly important is for second degree members to keep the invitation the Movement

²⁰ *Matt.* 11:29

²¹ *Matt.* 5:5

makes to them—to incorporate these characteristics which bring them closer to the Gospel ideal into their lives— always before their eyes and in their hearts. It is a matter of becoming a new man, a new woman in the fullness of Christ, Son of God and perfect man.

An apostle achieves everything he proposes. It is not a matter of effectiveness with respect to results, But in the specific action an apostle takes—and this in two senses. First, an apostle considers himself committed until death to the mission to which Christ has called him to collaborate, such that he dedicates effort, tenacity, and constancy in order to accomplish his goals—in order to be at peace before God and himself for achieving everything that was possible to achieve. Second, an apostle uses the most effective means to achieve God’s interests, without slowing down due to demands, costs, sacrifices, means, etc, so the sons of this world are never cleverer than the sons of light.²² The Movement has always insisted on professionalism in the apostolate. Each person should give his best for the service of God, the Church, and mankind.

§ 6. An apostle is organized. The apostle always works in an orderly way, always following a previously drawn program... Disorder is the death of effectiveness. Organization is part of self-discipline. Apostolic work is also an art: it is the art of efficiency, of complete accomplishment, of gaining time from time, of doing more in less time. An apostle is never to resign himself to let his talents waste away fruitlessly, day after day, out of improvisation. All of this implies the following: before acting, stop, think, reflect, draw up strategies, analyze difficulties, propose solutions; after acting, and evaluate the results. Much time and energy are often wasted due to disorganization.

Every human contact can bring someone closer to salvation. In a certain way, attentiveness is a holy, honest desire to do good because Christ’s Kingdom urges us to do so. When man deeply lives the urgency of salvation, his life is filled with so many opportunities to do good! An apostle should be able to see man from within and discover beyond the appearances and personal dramas, the anxious need for God that exists in so many people we work and live with. For an apostle, there are no office hours or vacation days. An apostle is an apostle always and everywhere, because he may find a soul searching for living water at any place.

§ 8. An apostle is supernatural in his aspirations. The apostolate is a mysterious, spiritual, transcendent reality. Accordingly, an apostle must sense the mysterious presence of God continually impelling him to move forward—at times beyond what seems humanly advisable. This supernatural vision of apostolate enables him to unite audacity for Christ’s Kingdom with prudence, because it is necessary to be able to embark fearlessly on great conquests to accomplish large-scale works for Christ’s Kingdom.

This supernatural attitude on the apostolate saves us from many fears and uncertainties that arise in the face of difficulties, and brings strength for the great goals to be achieved. An apostle must keep alive his awareness that apostolate is a divine undertaking, in which man is a simple, but necessary, co-worker. The protagonist of the work of salvation is that omnipotent God who with one word created the world.

²² Cf... *Luke* 16:8.

174. An apostle of Christ has a fighting spirit, is magnanimous, tenacious, strong and persevering, realistic, organized, effective, attentive to opportunities and supernatural in his aspirations. All of this should be consolidated in a conscience which has meditated on and assimilated God's call to him in his weakness, to collaborate with him in the redemption of all men.

The Creator of the universe has wanted to have need for man to save man. Only faith makes this mystery comprehensible, which otherwise could be called nothing but "tremendous foolhardiness." All of the biblical leaders (Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc), have had this awareness of being called to a task which transcended them and for which they were not worthy. But the Word of God purified them and converted them into God's great co-workers in the history of salvation.

175. Strengthened in this spirit, the Movement's second degree members have before them the possibility of developing some specific apostolates in Regnum Christi—the dimensions of which we shall explain.

176. We have stated many times in this handbook that "availability and dedication," lived out spiritually, actively and totally are the second degree's characteristic elements. From this consideration, we can deduce that the second degree's specific apostolate is having the generosity to accept whatever responsibility the Movement's directors assign. If the second degree is well integrated in the Movement, it is natural that directors will frequently rely on members of this degree, entrusting to them permanent or temporary tasks which have certain transcendence in the Movement's life and action: responsibilities within the Movement or the task of directing apostolates. In a certain sense, second degree members are Regnum Christ's confidants, and therefore the directors' closest and most important co-workers.

177. It has also been stated that second degree members are like the heart of the section, and that they should therefore be characterized by a great spirit of initiative. This spirit of initiative should become concrete and real in the area of apostolate. Second degree members should meet with a certain regularity under the direction of a section director to analyze the Movement's progress and, in accordance with its spirit and ideals, propose solutions which meet the section's internal needs and the concrete problems of the surrounding society.

As previously stated, ideas and projects providing apostolic dynamism and a significant social presence for the section normally originate among second degree members. The Movement needs this plan of action so as not to become an association whose only goal is personal piety, and second degree members are the ones who should strive to get such plans under way.

178. Although the Movement's expansion is the responsibility of all those who form part of its ranks, nevertheless, Regnum Christi entrusts this work particularly to second degree members. Through recruitment which is done well, second degree members should be the great driving forces behind the Movement's growth. Growth is a matter of vital importance for Regnum Christi. No one will be able to do this transcendent work better than it's most integrated, ready and generous members.

Second degree members should put together personal and group plans to ensure the Movement's harmonious and continual growth.

179. Finally, as a natural expression of their state in life, it is the responsibility of second degree members to form themselves into positive examples of the section, such that through their witness and words they will be a source of motivation, encouragement, security, union, happiness, and generosity for the other members. Within a body, there must always be those who serve others around them with their lives and words. This is the greatness and mystery of servants in the Gospel.

180. As we finish this theme, it is appropriate to call to mind the words attributed to Christ: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."²³ According to the Gospel, real love for God is confirmed in a full, unselfish love for each of our brothers and sisters, a mystery hidden in God.

CHAPTER X

FORMATION OF SECOND DEGREE MEMBERS

181. The formation the Movement seeks to give its members is an integral formation: a formation which includes all dimensions of the human person.

182. It is a spiritual formation which brings all its members to live their personal and social lives in accordance with the demands of Christian life, and to make their own unique experience of knowledge and love for Christ to the degree and extent that our Lord asks of each one.

183. It is a human formation based on the certainty that grace does not destroy human nature, but adds to it and completes it, and that our own humanity is a talent God has granted us to make it bear fruit. Self-knowledge and acceptance, formation of one's character and will, efforts to reach human maturity, serene dominion over our passions, prudence, sincerity, responsibility, love for the truth, fidelity to the word given, loyalty, gratitude, fostering social virtues constitute a series of goals the Movement proposes to its members in the field of human formation. These attitudes and virtues greatly help in both the spiritual life and the apostolate.

184. It is an apostolic formation, based on a passionate love for Christ and his Kingdom, on deep appreciation for the souls redeemed by Christ's blood, and on a real awareness of the commitment undertaken in baptism and fostered in the apostolic virtues previously mentioned.

185. It is an intellectual formation which, presupposing professional formation and continuous improvement in this regard, is aimed in a special way towards the cultural, doctrinal formation that a Movement apostle needs.

186. The Movement employs a variety of means to promote this integral formation. Without doubt

²³ Acts 20:35.

the privileged means for fostering and handing on spiritual and human formation in the Movement is spiritual direction, in which personal conversation and God's light gradually reveal or confirm what our Lord is asking of each soul. But one's whole life in the Movement should continuously form in its members this ideal of integral formation.

187. Presupposing all the other aspects of integral formation, in this chapter we will deal exclusively with the intellectual formation of second degree members.

188. For a variety of reasons it is necessary, in fact essential, to acquire a solid and comprehensive intellectual formation. In the first place, human and Christian maturity demand continuous enlightening along the journey we travel, and they continually provoke new questions about the meaning of life, the truths of our faith, the meaning of existence, man's condition, etc. All of these questions demand timely responses. To obtain them, a second degree member must face them seriously and with careful consideration. It is immature to ignore them, to discount them as a waste of time, or to complicate them out of proportion.

Reading, reflection, or meditation with the aim of clarifying one's own or another's questions is worthwhile and is a duty consistent with the mission incumbent upon a Christian, especially one who assumes the role and activity of an apostle in the world.

Christians who want to be apostles with poor intellectual formation will always be poor apostles. It is wrong to deduce that what is important, what counts, is what one knows rather than one's "spiritual temperature," the courage and passion with which the mission is lived. The right position consists in not excluding either dimension, nor having them compete with one another. Integral formation requires the two in equal measure. It is true that a painstaking, rich intellectual formation is useless if it does not find its logical apostolic future in strong, resounding passion to do apostolate. But it must also be mentioned that apostolic action is stifled, and in the long run can become shallow and out of touch with reality because the apostle, so to speak, "missed the boat" on which people and society were sailing.

189. Forming the mind as a faculty and acquiring a satisfactory culture are aims which all second degree members should strive to achieve so as to be in the best condition to carry out an effective apostolate answering the needs of Christ's Kingdom and meeting the needs of mankind.

190. This effort to form the mind, developing one's mental capacities to analyze and summarize, is a means for recognizing and understanding human problems. The spirit of an apostle should be able to see the reality in front of him and look at it carefully, with finely tuned understanding, focusing on the most relevant and determining aspects. Intellectual formation facilitates the process of grasping and understanding the goals, problems, and ideas of the prevailing mentality, and enables an apostle to enter into dialogue with others and proclaim the Gospel message.

191. The mission to extend Christ's Kingdom demands calls for an apostle always to show the world a willingness to listen and perceive what is happening in it. In practice this means being informed about cultural, political, religious, scientific and economic happenings with the aim of grasping in these

events the cultural significance behind them, and thus to be able to present the Gospel message in the form of answers to the questions raised by current events. Progress and cultural changes require an apostle's constant intellectual renewal so he is up to date on questions affecting the fate of mankind and the Gospel.

192. Intellectual formation should not tend toward storing up doctrinal knowledge, keeping it inert, but should confer greater stability, maturity, and a finer sensibility; these in turn should help in preparing one's mind to grasp the most important and transcendent meaning of the reality in each case, leaving the transitory or superficial aspects aside.

193. Keeping all of this in mind, and seeking a solid intellectual formation in its members, the Regnum Christi Movement suggests for second degree members the following ways for bettering themselves:

§ 1. To make sure that they attend with special interest and responsibility, as part of their commitment, Study circles, conferences, seminars, retreats, etc. In the Movement's formative methodology, there are ordinary means which, over time, impart a complete, solid mental structure to those who are faithful to them. Through them, the Movement also makes an integral formation in the religious, apostolic, intellectual and human fields accessible. For this reason, second degree members should strongly reject intellectual laziness, which does so much harm to an apostle of Christ, called to be light to all men his brothers and sisters. They should not only take part in these activities, but value and make the most of these means the Movement offers them to become as competent as possible in their personal and apostolic formation.

§ 2. In each section, there should be formative activities for the formation of second degree members, intended specifically for the integral enrichment of members in this degree. The section directors should establish a program of activities in the short, medium and long term which will serve to enhance, update and complement the formation the members already receive through their life in the Movement.

§ 3. Each second degree member, with the help of his section director or spiritual director, should make sure that he has a personal program for reading which updates, complements, or enriches his knowledge of religious, church, apostolic and secular culture, etc. A habit of serious, thoughtful reading is one of the best means of forming one's mind and enriching one's personality. In this field, one must attend, among other things, to knowing the present-day world by reading select newspapers and magazines that are chosen for their excellence and balance.

CHAPTER XI

SOME ASPECTS OF THE SECTION DIRECTOR'S WORK WITH SECOND DEGREE MEMBERS

194. The section director should dedicate strong attention to the second degree members, reserve for himself most of the responsibility to form them, help them to live their commitments and to progress spiritually, and continually encourage them on to undertake organized and demanding apostolic work.

195. Because the mission of second degree members in each section and the Movement as a whole is of utmost importance, each member's life and action should be enhanced through personal attention, in accordance with the methodological principle "person to person." If the contrary occurred, the second degree would be deprived of its guidance and thus its capacity to fight and perfect itself; many talents would be wasted, lying dormant in the souls of those whom God has called to a high level of dedication and availability.

196. Among the section director's most important and urgent tasks for the second degree, we should emphasize the following:

§ 1. Spiritual attention to second-degree members. This attention should be frequent, deep and demanding, in accordance with the commitment the members have undertaken before God. Attentive to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, the section director should continuously prompt the generosity of these members so each one fully and happily lives his dedication to Christ in the second degree. In the same vein, if the second degree is, as stated previously, the stronghold of the Movement's sections, its members—who will be the heart and lifeblood of the sections—must be skillfully directed. Without regular, serious and motivating personal attention, members will easily degenerate towards tepid and mediocre attitudes and deprive Regnum Christi of the work and dedication of its best men and women. This attention should be channeled to attain continual Christian and apostolic maturation from each second degree member.

§ 2 Integral formation of members of second degree. The section director should take personal interest in establishing a program (goals, guide, and calendar) of formative activities for second degree members. Among the formative activities in the program should be an annual Renewal Triduum or spiritual exercises, a monthly retreat, some inspiring conferences for spiritual formation, and a few talks on present-day themes. All of this should be programmed so as not to interfere with the normal commitments these members have within their section and teams. Extraordinarily, specialized seminars for second degree members may be organized.

§ 3. The section director should be the ordinary means of union between the second degree members and the Territorial Directorate with respect to spiritual and apostolic life.

§ 4. Review of each second degree member's apostolic work. It is very important for the section director to ensure that each second degree member fulfills, in accordance with his commitment, his assigned apostolate, in such a way that these members never lack a concrete, demanding and continuous apostolate.

CHAPTER XII

ST PAUL, PATRON OF THE SECOND DEGREE

198. The Movement's second degree invokes St Paul—a deep “knower” of God's saving plan, a personal lover of Christ, and a tireless apostle of his Kingdom—as its protector.

199. St Paul has been chosen as patron of the second degree for three main reasons: because of his deep knowledge of God's saving plan for all men, of which he received special understanding; for being a personal lover of Jesus Christ, to which his letters bear witness; and for being, as he himself affirms, an untiring apostle, who worked and suffered for the Gospel more than any other apostle.

200. Who is S. Paul? What is his biography? To answer these questions we look to the precious and original testimony of his writings. In the first place, the *Acts of the Apostles* (though not written by Paul), which is the written chronicle OF the first years of the Church's life and growth after the Lord's ascension into heaven. The *Acts* tells us first of Peter's missionary activity, and later, more extensively, of St Paul's apostolic activity after his conversion to Christianity. In the second place, we can turn to the magnificent source of information contained in Paul's own letters to the various churches he founded or evangelized, as well as the letters addressed to his disciples and co-workers.

201. This could be a portrait of St Paul. Born and raised in the midst of a pagan world, he received a good formation in the Jewish law. He was concerned not only for his own fidelity, but for the fidelity of his people and the fate of all humanity. Educated in the strictest observance of the pharisaic school—at the feet of Gamaliel—he succumbed to a trap even for the best of men: fanaticism. His zeal for the law became idolatry. He persecuted people of his own race that he considered unfaithful to the covenant God made with his people. He has a passionate and obstinate character.

202. But suddenly Our Lord went out to meet him on the road to Damascus. From this moment on, Paul belonged to Our Lord. All of his certainties and securities crumbled. Now he was burning with—and embraced—another call; another light illuminated him. Now he was a believer. From that moment on he is an instrument in the Lord's hands to bring the Gospel to all peoples.

203. The Lord has overcome and conquered him. Of his former self, only his human nature, his impulsive instincts, his will to arrive at the end of the road, remain. He is the Lord's anointed ever after. It is pointless for him to resist the goad, avoiding the light-bearing responsibility that now possesses his

soul. The Lord—and no one else —is now his only destiny. The Lord makes Paul his intimate confidant and consecrates him as apostle to the Gentiles. The word of Paul becomes the word of Christ.

204. Paul, with the eyes of faith, penetrates his own existence and experiences the Lord's power in his frailty; his greatness in littleness; light in darkness; his glory in humility; his strength in weakness; and the glory of the Gospel in the weakness of his flesh so no one boasts. Taken by the Lord's hand, Paul, being free, became like a slave; a man of letters, he was considered less gifted; he is strong in his weakness; he was an apostle to the nations through his foolishness.

205. Paul has relativized the relative and has put the absolute in first place. He is a slave of nothing in the world: laws, traditions, men. Thus he has the freedom to serve everyone he encounters: he is free with freemen, a slave with slaves, Athenian with the Athenians, poor with the poor.

206. From the moment Paul encounters the Lord, he is conquered. Our Lord is his measure, the wind that blows him, the rudder that guides him. To know what to do, he looks to Our Lord first and then begins his journey. He compares himself to no one. He follows only the footprints the Lord has left. God fills the horizon of his entire life. The Lord is his sun and his compass. What does not come from the Lord never reaches him. It is always Paul and the Lord, face to face. Facing the Lord means losing himself because, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain,"²⁴ "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."²⁵

207. This is the heavenly patron who intercedes for the second degree and each one of its members. His personality should be present in the lives and prayers of each second degree member, in such a way that each day they seek his protection, are inspired by his love for Christ and zeal for souls, and through assiduous reading and meditation on his doctrine, come to the knowledge of the mystery of Christ and his Church which he handed on to us.

208. Inspired by the witness of St Paul, second degree members should, above all, aspire to gain a love for Christ which radiates in their entire personality: intelligence, will, character, sentiments and emotions, imprinting on them the stamp of complete self-fulfillment. Likewise, they should give themselves unreservedly to making an experience of Christ which makes them apostles to the point of saying with St. Paul, "For me to live is Christ." But this experience cannot be isolated from St Paul's other experience: his passion for the cause of the Gospel. It was a cause he lived not by his own choice, but because of a divine call. Consequently, he experienced it not as a personal initiative, but as a higher command: "For if I preach the Gospel that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel."²⁶ The ideal "Christ!" and the value "Kingdom!" should powerfully resound in the heart of every second degree member, the two being intimately connected and inseparably united, with the same dynamism as St Paul, the great follower of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XIII

²⁴ *Phil.* 1:21.

²⁵ *Gal.* 2:20.

²⁶ *I Cor.* 9:16.

INCORPORATION TRIDUUM FOR THE SECOND DEGREE

209. A Second Degree Triduum Retreat should always precede incorporation into second degree (at whatever level). This Triduum represents a very special moment for maturing the commitment about to be undertaken in an atmosphere of prayer and reflection. For no motive should this opportunity be omitted. When professional reasons or the individual's state in life prevent a Triduum of three consecutive days in a secluded place, a retreat of five consecutive mornings or evenings may be substituted, provided all the activities and established themes are covered.

210. It is very important (and it will be natural for those who seek to serve God with greater determination) that an atmosphere of total silence be observed during the Triduum to facilitate prayer and conversation with God, who is the axis and center of these Triduum days. The whole atmosphere should help each of the participants to have an encounter with God. Therefore, in addition to motivating the participants, the Triduum should take place in a place that lends itself to an atmosphere of silence, recollection, and prayer.

211. The number of attendees at a Triduum should be limited to a number enabling the section director and spiritual guides to speak personally with each one. This personal contact is very important in helping them to judge adequately the upright intention and good dispositions of each candidate for the second degree. This becomes especially relevant when it regards incorporations into the second degree, third level.

212. The themes for the Second Degree Triduum are those dealt with in spiritual exercises, in accordance with the mind of the Church and the Regnum Christi Movement. It is a matter especially of centering one's life on God, the fundamental truths of life, following Christ, and the truth of the Church. In addition, there should be some talks on the theme of following Christ poor, chaste and obedient, which clarify the meaning and demands of these commitments which all second degree members have in common.

213. During the Triduum, special importance should be given to the meditations, talks, and spiritual examens with the aim of really making them a personal encounter with God. Moreover, there should be time set aside each day for the Eucharistic Celebration, rosary, and the Stations of the Cross.

214. Because of the spiritual preparation the participants are undergoing, there should be no round table discussions, question and answer periods, or similar activities during the Triduum.

215. The commitment cards, according to each level, should be explained during the Triduum so each person will clearly understand the commitments he is about to take on.

216. During the meals, readings on appropriate themes should be read, following the themes dealt with in the talks and meditations.

218. All second degree members should attend a yearly Second Degree Renewal Triduum, unless they have done spiritual exercises. These Triduums should follow guidelines similar to those established for the Incorporation Triduum.

COMMITMENT CARDS

Second Degree, First Level

In answer to God's invitation to live a more intense Christian life and to make a more active apostolic commitment, I accept the commitments of the second degree, first level, which bear the stamp of *spiritual availability* to Regnum Christi and consist of:

1. An exemplary Christian life, in which I devote myself more intensely to prayer and the practice of the Christian virtues—especially charity and apostolic zeal—in my personal, family, and social life.
2. A real interest to support Regnum Christi through my prayer, sacrifices, and witness by praising and—whenever necessary—valiantly defending her.
3. An enthusiastic effort to impart vitality, dynamism, and a burning zeal to my section, which is most clearly expressed by inviting new members to the Movement. I will do so mainly through my own example in practicing person-to-person action.
4. A readiness to accept the assignments, tasks, missions, and services which the Regnum Christi directors entrust to me, and to set up the projects approved by the directors of the Movement's various fields of apostolate.
5. A special effort to acquire a select formation enabling me to practice my availability as a formator of other Regnum Christi members.
6. Living the Gospel spirit of poverty, after Christ's example and in accordance with my own state in life, by contributing generous financial assistance—depending on my capacity to do so—to support Regnum Christi's apostolates and form her priests and consecrated members.
7. In addition to the spiritual commitments I have undertaken through my incorporation into the first degree, I promise to:
 - a) Do fifteen minutes of meditation every afternoon;
 - b) Pray the rosary in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary;
 - c) Attend the Eucharistic Celebration and, if possible, receive Communion every day;
 - d) Do a weekly spiritual balance of half an hour on the main virtues and commitments of Christian life and life in the Movement.

Second Degree, Second Level

In answer to God's invitation to live a more intense Christian life and to make a more active apostolic commitment, I accept the commitments of the second degree, second level. These commitments stand for *real availability* in serving Regnum Christi, and consist of:

1. An exemplary Christian life in which I devote myself more intensely to prayer and the practice of the Christian virtues—especially charity and apostolic zeal—in my personal, family, and social life.
2. A real interest in support Regnum Christi through my prayer, sacrifice, and witness, through my words of praise, and—whenever necessary—through my courageous effort to defend it.
3. An enthusiastic effort to impart vitality, dynamism, and a burning zeal to my section, which is expressed especially in inviting new members to the Movement. I will do so mainly through my own example in recruiting person-to-person.
4. A real contribution of my time and work in Regnum Christi's apostolates by fulfilling the responsibilities, missions, and services which my directors entrust to me, and putting into effect the initiatives approved by the directors of the Movement's various fields of apostolate.
5. Living the Gospel spirit of poverty after Christ's example and in accordance with my own state in life. I will do by contributing generous financial assistance in proportion to my income for the support of Regnum Christi's apostolates and the formation of its priests and consecrated members, and I will frequently report to my spiritual director as regards my personal expenses, my use of time, and my recreational activities.
6. A special effort to acquire a select formation enabling me to practice my availability as a formator of other Regnum Christi members.
7. In addition to the spiritual commitments I have undertaken through my incorporation into the first degree, I promise to:
 - a) Do fifteen minutes of meditation every evening;
 - b) Pray the rosary in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary;
 - c) Attend the Eucharistic Celebration and, if possible, receive Communion every day;
 - d) Do a weekly spiritual balance of half an hour on the main Christian virtues and commitments, as well as those I have made in the Movement.