

# STATUTE OF THE PONTIFICAL ACADEMY FOR LIFE

## *TITLE I* NATURE AND PURPOSE

### ART. 1 – INTRODUCTION

§ 1 - The Pontifical Academy for Life, having its principal office in Vatican City State, was founded by the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II in the document he promulgated *motu proprio* entitled *Vitae Mysterium* and dated February 11, 1994.

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

§ 2 - The specific responsibility of the Academy is to:

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

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

*c) inform*, in clear and timely manner, Church leaders, the various biomedical science institutions and societal healthcare organizations, the media, and civil society in general, with respect to the most relevant results of its own study and research (See *Vitae Mysterium*, 4).

§ 3 - The Academy has a primarily scientific role, for the promotion and defense of human life (See *Vitae Mysterium*, 4). In particular, it studies various matters dealing with care for the dignity of the human person in the several stages of existence, mutual respect between the sexes and generations, the defense of the dignity of every single human being, the promotion of a quality of human life that integrates material and spiritual values, within the perspective of a genuine “human ecology,” that assists in the rediscovery of the original equilibrium in Creation between the human person and the whole universe (Chirograph, August 15, 2016).

§ 4 - In carrying out the activity envisioned by this Statute, the Pontifical Academy for Life cooperates with the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia, first of all with the Secretariat of State and the

Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life, according to their respective jurisdictions and in a collaborative spirit.

§ 5 - For the purpose of promoting and spreading the culture of life, the Academy maintains close contacts with universities, scientific societies and research centers that pursue the various questions connected with life.

## ***TITLE II*** **ORGANIZATION**

### **ART. 2 - STRUCTURE OF THE ACADEMY**

The Pontifical Academy for Life is made up of an Office of the President, a Central Office and Members, also known as Academicians.

### **ART. 3 - OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT**

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

#### *§ 1 - The President*

*a)* The President is appointed by the Supreme Pontiff. He remains in office for the term set forth in his Letter of Appointment and he can be reappointed to such office.

*b)* The President is the official representative of the Pontifical Academy; he directs it in all its activities and is responsible for it to the Holy Father; he convenes and chairs the meetings of the Governing Council; he sets the agenda for such meetings and sees to the carrying out of the resolutions passed by the Council. He also convenes and chairs the General Assemblies of the Academy. In special circumstances, the President can call on the assistance of individual Members.

§ 2 - *The Chancellor*

a) The Chancellor, appointed by the Supreme Pontiff for the term set out in his Letter of Appointment, can be reappointed to such office.

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

§ 3 - *The Governing Council*

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

b) The Governing Council holds at least two ordinary meetings each year to decide on the general direction of ordinary affairs and address individual questions that might arise with respect to the life of the Academy.

c) The Governing Council can meet in special session to consider seriously urgent questions that cannot be deferred.

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

d) The Governing Council, taking into account, if it chooses, suggestions from outside the Council, selects and appoints the *corresponding* Members of the Pontifical Academy for Life described in Art. 5, §3 of this Statute. It also approves the programs of study of the General Assemblies and the curricula of formational activities, providing input into the general direction of the annual programs of the Academy.

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

§ 4 - *The Ecclesiastical Counselor*

a) The Ecclesiastical Counselor is appointed by the Supreme Pontiff for a term of five years and can be reappointed. Such office remains vacant if the office of President or Chancellor is held by a Cleric.

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

**ART. 4 - THE CENTRAL OFFICE**

a) The Central Office of the Pontifical Academy for Life is located in Vatican City State. It is the executive office of the Presidency and is tasked with the structuring, implementation and coordination of the Academy's activities. The Office carries out its duties under the direction of the President and the Chancellor.

b) To carry out its own activities most efficiently, the Central Office is divided into two sections: the Scientific Section and the Technical-administrative Section, which is known as the Secretariat.

§ 1 - *The Scientific Section*

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

To this end, it is divided into three substantive areas: study, formation and information.

§ 2 - *The Technical-Administrative Section, or Secretariat*

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

## **ART. 5 - MEMBERS, OR ACADEMICIANS**

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

### *§ 1 - Ordinary Members*

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

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

### *§ 2 - Honorary Members*

Certain Academicians, devoted in a particular way to life and to the activity of the Academy, are appointed *Honorary* Members by the Holy Father.

### *§ 3 - Corresponding Members*

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

At the end of their five-year terms, *corresponding* Members can be reappointed for up to two additional terms.

### *§ 4 - Young Researcher Members*

Young Researcher Members come from fields that are related to the Academy's own areas of research, are not older than thirty-five, and are chosen and appointed by the Governing Council for a term of five years, which can be renewed once.

§ 5 - *Directions and Norms for Members*

a) Academicians are selected, without any religious discrimination, from among well-known ecclesiastical, religious and lay persons of various nationalities, who are expert in the disciplines pertaining to human life (medicine, biological sciences, theology, philosophy, anthropology, law, sociology and so forth).

b) New Academicians commit to promoting and defending the principles related to the value of life and the dignity of the human person, interpreted in a way that conforms with the Magisterium of the Church.

c) Academicians are required to participate in the General Assemblies, at which they present communications, notes and scientific memoranda, discuss, vote and have the right to propose to the Governing Council appointments and subjects for study and research.

d) If it is impossible for a Member to take part in the work of an Assembly, the Member must give an adequate explanation for such absence.

Unacceptable absence from more than two Assemblies within any five-year term results *ipso facto* in separation from the Academy.

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

f) Political offices, in one's own country or abroad, are incompatible with appointment to or the exercise of Membership in the Pontifical Academy for Life. Therefore, should a Member of the Academy accept such an office, the Member is suspended from activities in the Academy and may not publicly use the title of Member of the Academy until the term in such political office has come to an end.

**TITLE III**  
**SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITY AND OPERATIONS**

**ART. 6 - DESCRIPTION OF ORDINARY ACTIVITIES**

The scientific and interdisciplinary activity of the Pontifical Academy for Life must maintain close connection with the bodies and institutions through which the Church is present in the world of biomedical sciences, of healthcare and of healthcare-related organizations. It offers its cooperation to physicians and researchers, including those who are not Catholic or not Christian, who recognize the dignity of man and the inviolability of human life, from conception until natural death, as proposed by the Magisterium of the Church, as the essential moral foundation of science and the medical arts.

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

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

**TITLE IV**  
**FINANCIAL MATTERS**

**ART. 7 - FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

As an Institution supported by the Holy See, the Pontifical Academy for Life furnishes to the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See each year the financial information required by applicable norms.

§ 1 - The *Vitae Mysterium* Foundation

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

**TITLE V**  
**CONCLUDING PROVISIONS**

**ART. 8 - REGULATIONS**

For the proper implementation of this Statute, the President and the Chancellor, after hearing the opinions of the Governing Council, submit the Regulations of the Pontifical Academy for Life to the Cardinal Secretary of State for his approval.

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

This Statute is approved for a period of five years. I direct that it is to be promulgated by publication in the daily newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* and then published in the *Acta Apostolici Sedis*, entering into force on January 1, 2017.

From the Vatican, October 18, 2016

/s/ Franciscus