

**CONGREGATION OF CHRISTIAN BROTHERS**  
**GUIDELINES TO PROCEDURES AT CHAPTERS**

[Amended in January 2008]

**PREAMBLE**

The spirit of Chapters today is that they be fundamentally religious experiences (Const. 95) which deepen our sharing of the paschal mystery. In an attempt to share this lived experience with our brothers, and because "every member of the Congregation shares the responsibility for the constant renewal of its life" (Const. 94), it is important that Chapters provide the opportunity for as many brothers as possible to be touched by the discerning process at every stage. In this way we will be united in our convictions and our love, with a common purpose and a common mind (cf. Phil. 2:2). Our brotherhood demands nothing less, and it is in this spirit that the following guidelines are to be read.

**PROCEDURES FOR CHAPTERS**

1. The President of the Chapter may invite facilitators and guest speakers. The President may appoint clerical assistants, liturgists and others to aid in the efficient running of the Chapter. The convened Chapter elects a brother as secretary for the Chapter. It elects two tellers.
2. Immediately before the opening of the Chapter, those participating may assemble to spend some time in special spiritual preparation.
3. The President's Report and Bursar's Report are presented to the Chapter.
4. The Chapter determines a process for dealing with proposals from capitulants and others.
5. For Chapter voting:
  - An absolute majority refers to a majority of 50% + 1
  - A simple majority is to be understood as the largest number of votes, regardless of the percent of the total vote that the number of votes represents
6. Chapter elections are carried out in a prayerful and discerning mode. The following procedures are used for voting in Chapter elections:
  - Each capitulant votes and places his voting paper in the ballot-box.
  - If there is a capitulant confined to his room through illness, the tellers collect his ballot.
  - The President and the two tellers are responsible for the counting of the votes. The ballot papers are first counted to ensure that there are not more ballot papers than the number of capitulants present, which would make the ballot invalid.

- The ballot papers are then opened and the results announced and recorded. If any brother has received the required number of votes, the President declares him elected. Otherwise the balloting continues according to the norms laid down in the Constitutions and Statutes. Before beginning to announce the votes, the President should see if there is a unanimous vote save one. If there is, he should not announce the name of the brother receiving the single vote.
  - The ballot papers are destroyed by the tellers immediately after each sitting.
7. The Chapter decides what matters are to be communicated to the brothers. However, the names of those who proposed, supported, or opposed any motion must not be disclosed.
8. It is the responsibility of the President of the Chapter alone to communicate to the brothers those matters which the Chapter decides shall be sent to them. He does this as soon as feasible.

#### **SPECIAL PROCEDURES FOR THE CONGREGATION CHAPTER**

1. The Congregation Leader arranges with the Province Leaders and Region Leaders the dates of the openings of the Congregation, Province, and Region Chapters.
2. At least twelve months before the opening of the Congregation Chapter, the Congregation Leader announces the Chapter by circular to all the communities, asking the prayers and the co-operation of all for its success. This circular is to give the date of the opening of the Chapter and, if possible, the place where it will be held.
3. The forum for election of delegates to the Congregation Chapter can be chosen by individual provinces and regions, an assembling of the brothers always to be preferred to a postal ballot where possible. In the instance of postal voting, general norms to be followed in a model of voting are:
  - The brothers should be informed at least a month in advance of what procedures will be followed
  - there should be at least two ballots, one of nomination and one of election
  - when the election will not be separate for each delegate, the votes should be listed in order of preference and weighted in the counting
  - the number short listed from the nominations should exceed the eventual number needed for delegates and substitutes e.g. if two delegates and two substitutes are needed, a short list of four is too small. Six or eight would be more appropriate
  - it should be made clear to the brothers that they remain free to vote for any eligible member, and are not limited to those short-listed
4. After receiving from the provinces and regions the names of their delegates and the substitute delegates to the Congregation Chapter, the Congregation Leader convokes the Congregation Chapter, sending to each capitulant a document directing him to attend it and providing him with a list of the names of the capitulants and their substitutes.
5. Following consultation with his team and any Province or Region Leader concerned, the Congregation Leader may, at his discretion, invite to the Congregation Chapter non-voting participants in accordance with the Constitution 100 and Statute 100.1.

6. The Congregation Leader shall also send to each capitulant all documents in translation from the Holy See which are directed to the Congregation and which have been received since the previous Congregation Chapter.

#### **SPECIAL PROCEDURES FOR THE PROVINCE OR REGION CHAPTER**

1. At least six months before the convening of the Province or Region Chapter, the Province or Region Leader, by circular to the communities of the province, shall announce the Chapter, name the date of its opening and, if feasible, the place where it will be held.
2. In this circular he shall initiate the election of delegates for the Province or Region Chapter if there are to be elected delegates. He should state the earliest and the latest dates by which the votes for delegates are to be recorded and transmitted to him. In deciding these dates, he shall ensure that there is sufficient time for votes to be received from all members of the province or region. He shall forward for each voter a ballot paper and a list of the brothers eligible to serve as delegates.
3. In the case of an open Chapter, he shall invite all eligible brothers to indicate to him in writing by a certain date if they will be attending the Chapter.
4. Unless other procedures are decreed by a province, the procedures for the election of delegates to the Province or Region Chapter are as follows.
  - At an appointed time, the members of each community who are eligible to vote assemble and spend some moments in prayer asking God's guidance on their choice.
  - Each votes for the brothers of his choice, taking care not to vote for more than the number of delegates to be elected. Each places his ballot paper in an envelope and seals it. These ballots are then enclosed in a common envelope together with a covering letter signed by all present. This envelope is sealed in the presence of all and then forwarded to the Province Leader. If voters from more than one province are present the ballots for each province are processed separately and forwarded to the respective Province Leader.
  - The Province Leader shall acknowledge without delay receipt of these ballots.
  - The Province Leader with four brothers of perpetual profession and at least one councillor counts and records the votes. All are bound to secrecy. After the votes are counted, a record is made of all the brothers who received votes, according to the number of votes they received and, where there is a tie, according to seniority.
  - If there is to be a secondary ballot, a list of the brothers who obtained the highest number of votes is prepared. This list should contain, if possible, twice as many names as the number of delegates required, and shall be arranged in order of seniority or by number of votes received, depending on the norms given in province or region decisions of Chapter. It is to be signed by all who participated in the counting.

- The Province Leader then sends for each voter a copy of this secondary list together with another copy of the primary list, with the reminder that all the brothers on the primary list are still eligible for election.
  - When the voting is completed and the votes recorded, the Province Leader declares elected the required number of delegates. He declares elected as substitutes the three brothers receiving the next highest number of votes. A list is then prepared of the delegates in order of seniority and of the substitutes in order of election. This list is to be signed by all who participated in the counting. It is to be forwarded to each community where there are brothers of the province.
  - In the case of an open Chapter, the Province or Region Leader ascertains that the number of brothers choosing to attend is sufficient to make the quorum required by Constitution 107 and Statute 107.3.
5. After the election of the delegates or the reception of the written notification of those brothers choosing to attend an open Chapter, the Province Leader convokes the Province Chapter, sending to each capitulant an official document directing him to attend the Chapter and stating the time and place at which it will be held. In the case of a Chapter with delegates, he also sends each delegate a list of the ex-officio members, the delegates in order of seniority, and the substitutes in order of election. In the case of an open Chapter, he sends a list of all the brothers who have registered as capitulants.
6. Following consultation with his team, the Province or Region Leader may invite to the Province or Region Chapter non-voting participants in accordance with the Constitution 108 and Statute 107.4.