

STATUTES

of the

Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard

1. Definition

1.1. The **Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard** (hereinafter shortly referred to as BBG) is a Private Association of Christ's faithful according to the provisions of the Code of Canon Law (CIC 1983, can. 298-311 and 321-326).

As such it identifies itself as an association of Catholics and other people of good will, dedicated to the service of God in the Roman Catholic Church.

1.2. The BBG is affiliated as an autonomous body to the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta (called the Order of Malta, hereinafter abbreviated as SMOM). As such the use of the coat of arms of the SMOM is subject to the permission of the SMOM, which can be revoked by them, if the BBG should contravene the ideals and principles of the SMOM. The BBG is accountable to its competent entity of the SMOM for all its activities.

1.3. According to civil law the BBG is a "Public Benefit Organisation operated not for profit" and a welfare society directed to the common good of all people.

2. Purpose and "Mission"

2.1. The purpose and mission of the BBG is to further the glory of God and strive with a common effort to foster a more perfect life of its members by devoting themselves to the apostolate of the Catholic Church in works of charity to serve "the poor of our Lord Jesus Christ" extending God's loving care to them under the motto "tuitio fidei et obsequium pauperum" (Protection of faith and service to the poor).

2.2. The BBG and its members are resolved to take on charitable tasks according to the needs of the people in its area of operation and in keeping with its own capability. This includes the training of its members and other interested people to exercise such tasks and the raising of funds to fulfil those tasks. All acquired funds are exclusively to be used for the above-mentioned purposes.

2.3. The BBG wants to serve needy people irrespective of their creed, colour of skin or political affiliation.

2.4. The BBG can delegate certain tasks in fulfilment of its purpose and mission to its subsidiary entities. Such entities, like Blessed Gérard's Care Centre (established in 2002), are separate independent juridical persons with their own constitutions and governance.

3. Centre

The centre of the BBG is Blessed Gérard's Catholic Church in Mandeni, Republic of South Africa.

4. Governance

The BBG is subject to the spiritual and pastoral direction of the respective bishops in the areas of its activities (CIC, can. 305 §2).

4.1. It is governed by the Council of the Dedicated Members.

4.1.1. The Council of the Dedicated Members consists of all Dedicated Members.

4.1.2. Dedicated Members who cannot regularly take part in the meetings of the Council of the Dedicated Members any more (e.g. because they moved to another province or country) are automatically excused from attending meetings and do not form part of the quorum, but they still have full voting rights when they succeed to attend.

4.1.3. The Council of the Dedicated Members has to hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) to receive and discuss the annual reports of the Supervisory Board, the Executive Council and the external financial auditors and to elect new office bearers for the Executive Council, when their term of office has expired (according to No. 4.2. and No. 4.4. below).

4.2. The Council of the dedicated members elects from amongst itself the Executive Council (Board of Directors), without prejudice to the provisions of No. 4.4.

Honorary Dedicated Members are not eligible for election as Executive Council members.

The Executive Council represents the BBG to the public, organises its activities and guides its members.

The Executive Council will meet at least every second month. They make their decisions with simple majority. All meetings are to be minuted and the approved minutes kept in the office of the organisation.

It consists of five office bearers, namely:

- a. the President
- b. the Vice-President
- c. the Medical Superintendent
- d. the Director of Charity Work
- e. the Administrator of Goods

and all Founder Members.

4.2.1. The **President** presides over the Executive Council. He bears the responsibility for and has the final authority over all activities of the BBG and is its legal representative.

4.2.2. The **Vice-President** assists the President in all his duties. As his deputy s/he takes the President's place whenever the President is unable to fulfil his duties (e.g. illness, leave or unforeseen circumstances).

4.2.3. The **Medical Superintendent** is the authority responsible for all medical aspects related to the activities of the BBG.

4.2.4. The **Director of Charity Work** organises, co-ordinates and supervises the BBG 's charitable actions and projects.

4.2.5. The **Administrator of Goods** is responsible for the financial administration including fund-raising and the collection of membership fees.
S/he presents the financial reports to the executive council and looks after all movable and immovable possessions of the BBG.

4.3. The Executive Council is assisted by the Spiritual Counsellor.

He is elected by the Council of the Dedicated Members from among the priests who lawfully exercise a ministry in the Roman Catholic Church according to the provisions of CIC, can. 324 § 2.

The election becomes effective only through the acceptance by the elected and the confirmation by the ecclesiastical authority of the elected.

The Spiritual Counsellor gives spiritual guidance to the Executive Council, the Council of the Dedicated Members and all other members.

He may, but needs not be a member of the BBG.

4.4. The first President and Spiritual Counsellor of the BBG is its founder by virtue of these statutes.

His successors and all other office bearers in the Executive Council are elected by the Council of the Dedicated Members for a period of two years.

Re-elections of office bearers in the Executive Council for infinite further terms of office are possible.

A newly elected President cannot take up office without the authorisation given by the competent entity of the SMOM.

4.5. The Supervisory Board

4.5.1. The Supervisory Board evaluates and supervises the Executive Council as such and its office bearers whether or not they fulfil their tasks – as laid out by these statutes – correctly in spirit and in action.

4.5.2. The Council of the Dedicated Members appoints at least three suitable personalities – who do not necessarily have to be members of the BBG – to form the Supervisory Board for the duration of the term of office of the respective Executive Council. Reappointments of supervisors for infinite further terms are possible.

4.5.3. The Supervisory Board is to issue a supervision report every second year to the Council of the Dedicated Members, which has to be submitted to the Diocesan Bishops in the area of the BBG's activities and to the competent entity of the SMOM, acknowledging the BBG's accountability to the Bishops in spiritual and pastoral matters and to the SMOM in practical matters of its activities according to the regulations of these statutes.

4.5.4. Members of the Executive Council cannot be part of the Supervisory Board.

4.5.5. The external "financial auditors", who by appointment through the Executive Council are to issue the audited annual financial statements for the BBG and all its subsidiary entities, are not part of this Supervisory Board, but the Supervisory Board may well use their findings as part of their own report.

4.6. The President's Council (Advisory Board)

The Executive Council may appoint appropriate personalities to form the President's Council. The President's Council is an advisory body of experts to facilitate and support the President and the Executive Council in their decision-making process.

5. Membership

Membership can only be attained through a written application to the Executive Council, who will decide whether or not to accept the applicant as a member or candidate for membership. Membership commences with the date of issue of the membership certificate through the Executive Council.

There are two kinds of membership: The Dedicated Membership and the Associate Membership.

5.1. Dedicated Membership

5.1.1. Conditions of the Dedicated Membership

The Dedicated Members of the BBG devote themselves with all their heart, with all their soul and with all their strength (cf. Dtn 6.5) to Jesus Christ and his body, the church (cf. 1 Cor 12.27), by striving to be the yeast (cf. Gal 5.9) of God's love in their entire life as members of their family, community, at their work and in their leisure time. Over and above this, their special task is to initiate, facilitate, guide, support and bear responsibility for the activities of the BBG. For the Dedicated Membership only baptised and confirmed members of the Roman Catholic Church qualify, who are known for their outstanding character, loyalty to the Church and good Christian life. Cessation of the membership in the Church automatically terminates the Dedicated Membership in the BBG.

5.1.2. Probation time for candidates for the Dedicated Membership

The Dedicated Membership is preceded by a probation period of one year during which the candidate is being introduced into the objectives and spiritual background of the BBG and during which he or she takes part in the activities of the BBG.

To be admitted to start the probation time the candidate must have been an Active

Member of the BBG for at least one year and must have proven through his or her participation in the activities of the BBG that he or she is really committed and able to serve the poor of Christ with great zeal. The Active Member has to submit a written application to the Executive Council accompanied by a curriculum vitae and a testimonial from his or her parish priest when asking to be accepted as a candidate for the Dedicated Membership in the BBG.

When the probation time is completed the candidate may apply to the Council of the Dedicated Members asking to be officially received as a Dedicated Member into the BBG. The council of the Dedicated Members has to openly discuss the candidate's application and then to take a secret vote on the application and if its majority accepts the candidate he or she is to publicly make a private promise to dedicate him- or herself to the best of his or her abilities to the service of God in the BBG.

5.1.3. Meetings

The Dedicated Members meet once a month. These meetings are called and presided over by the President. The centre of their meeting is a service. They worship the Lord, share their faith and seek guidance for their apostolate through listening to the Word of God. They discuss all matters of common concern in brotherly respect and love and make the necessary decisions democratically with simple majority. Every meeting has to be minuted and the approved minutes are to be kept in the office of the organisation.

5.1.4. Honorary Dedicated Membership

Associate Members, who have supported the BBG to an exceptional degree, may be granted Honorary Dedicated Membership through a majority vote of the Council of the Dedicated Members. Honorary Dedicated Members have all the privileges of Dedicated Members, except the right to vote in the Council of the Dedicated Members.

5.2. Associate Membership

Associate Members can be all people of good will, who are prepared to support the BBG in its objectives and activities. They assist the BBG 's activities spiritually by their prayers and sacrifices, financially by donations and membership fees, and/or they may actively participate in its charitable activities.

The Associated Members have meetings twice a year. These meetings serve the purpose of spiritual guidance and encouragement to become involved in the activities of the BBG, training for the charitable tasks of the BBG, cultural education and brotherly getting together. The Associate Members are to be informed about the progress of the BBG 's activities in general. Their suggestions are to be passed on to the Executive Council who has to discuss them.

5.2.1. Active Associate Members

Associate members who participate in the BBG's activities are called "Active Associate Members".

The Active Associate Members may be assigned to groups under the leadership of a group

leader, who is nominated by and responsible to the Executive Council. Such groups would not be independent of the main body and would participate fully in the association's activities.

5.2.2. Supporting Associate Members

Associate members who are not actively involved in the BBG's works, but assist the BBG financially or spiritually are called "Supporting Associate Members". As such those who support the BBG spiritually are called "Spiritual Supporters" and those who support the BBG financially are called "Financial Supporters" or "Donors".

5.3. Neutrality

In their capacity as members of the BBG members must not issue any political statements or involve themselves in party politics. They may do so in their private capacity, but must not use their membership in the BBG as a vehicle to propagate their political views.

5.4. Suspension of Membership

Members, who do not fulfil their obligations as members, may be suspended from their membership of the BBG.

Membership can also be suspended if propriety and / or conduct of the member deteriorate or facts become known which would have prevented acceptance of membership in the first instance and as such would hinder and/or impair the functioning or reputation of the BBG.

Suspension of membership debars the member from all rights and privileges of membership until it is officially revoked.

5.5. Disciplinary measures against office bearers, project co-ordinators or group leaders

If an office bearer, project co-ordinator or group leader would not fulfil the duties proper to his/her assignment, he/she may be removed from his/her position.

5.6. Authority to suspend membership or to impose disciplinary measures

Any suspension of membership or disciplinary measure is to be decided upon through a majority vote of the Executive Council.

In cases of urgency suspension of membership or disciplinary measures may be imposed immediately by the President, who has to inform the Executive Council about the circumstances.

Members, who have been suspended or disciplined may appeal against the measures taken, to the Council of the Dedicated Members, who, after due consideration, may modify or revoke such measures.

5.7. Cessation of membership

The membership in the BBG ends through

5.7.1. the death of the member;

5.7.2. the issue of a written notice of resignation to the Executive Council by the respective member; a Dedicated Member doing so must ask his or her confessor for dispensation from the promise made.

5.7.3. expulsion, which can only be decided upon by the Executive Council, if the conduct of a member considerably harms the reputation of the BBG or impairs its activities.

5.8. Membership Fees

5.8.1. The Associate Members decide on the amount of their membership fees themselves. A guide line should be 1% of the member's income.

5.8.2. Dedicated Members contribute to the BBG mainly through their direct involvement in its activities. They are encouraged to make voluntary financial contributions according to their abilities in addition to the membership fees which are the same as for the Associate Members.

5.8.3. Members without income and Spiritual Supporters are exempt from membership fees.

5.8.4. Membership fees may be paid in advance in monthly, quarterly or yearly instalments.

6. Cessation of existence of the BBG

If there is a grave reason to do so, the Council of the Dedicated Members can decide in a meeting convened for the purpose of considering such matter with a majority of three quarters of its members to dissolve the BBG. Not less than 21 days' notice shall be given of such meeting and the notice convening the meeting shall clearly state that the question of dissolution of the BBG and disposal of its assets will be considered. A quorum is formed if all the Members of the Executive Council and two thirds of the other Dedicated Members are present at such meeting. The permission of the competent entity of the SMOM will be required for the dissolution to become legally effective. In case of its dissolution or in the case of its suppression by the competent ecclesiastical authority according to CIC Can. 326 § 1 if there remain any assets whatsoever after the satisfaction of all its debts and liabilities, such assets shall not be paid to or distributed among its members, but shall be given to a similar public benefit organisation, which must be approved by the competent entity of the SMOM and has to use them for charitable purposes according to the original wishes of the donors (CIC Can. 326 § 2).

7. Badge

The badge of the BBG is a white Maltese cross on a red occidental shield with a white border superimposed on a black African shield with a golden border and with a golden cross and crosier crossed behind it and the motto "tuitio fidei et obsequium pauperum" (Protection of faith and service to the poor) inside the African shield in gold.

The Maltese cross symbolises with its eight points the eight beatitudes of Christ's Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5.3-10):

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit.
2. Blessed are they who mourn.
3. Blessed are the meek.
4. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness.
5. Blessed are the merciful.
6. Blessed are the pure in heart.
7. Blessed are the peacemakers.
8. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness.

The shield symbolises the readiness to safeguard faith and fight against evil by means of the above-mentioned beatitudes. The African shape of the shield symbolises the centre of the BBG in Africa.

An African shield usually shows spears or a spear and a knobkerrie crossed behind it as the weapons to defend what the shield wants to shelter. The badge of the BBG shows cross and crosier as its "weapons" to fight for the good. The cross being the sign of Christ's victory over sin and death and the crosier being the symbol of the pastoral care of Christ for his flock.

The motto "Protection of faith and service to the poor" is the traditional aim of the Order of Malta adopted by the BBG.



8. Insignia and vestments

All members wear the BBG medal on a red braid.

At special functions the Dedicated Members of the BBG wear a black cape with the badge in front of the left shoulder.

The Active members wear a short sleeved white pilot style shirt with the badge on the left breast pocket.

Active members may wear a black blazer with bronze Maltese Cross buttons and the badge on the left breast pocket.

Dedicated Members wear a black blazer with silver Maltese Cross buttons and the badge on the left breast pocket.

Members of the Executive Council wear a black blazer with gold Maltese Cross buttons and the badge on the left breast pocket.

Insignia and Decorations, as far as they are approved by the SMOM, are worn as ribbons on top of the left breast pocket of the blazer above the badge.

The highest ranked decoration may be worn in full size next to the badge on the cape.

9. Conclusion and “Vision”

The Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard wants to serve as an instrument in the Church for the people to become one with the Lord by serving the Lord in the poor and being served by the Lord through his body, the Church.

Blessed Gérard once said: "Our brotherhood will be everlasting, because the misery of the world is the ground, within which this plant is rooted - and because, God willing, there always will be people, who want to work towards decreasing these sufferings and increasing the resilience against this misery."

May the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard in adopting it's patron's charisma continue the ancient spiritual tradition of its roots to humbly serve the hungry and thirsty, estranged and naked, sick and imprisoned Lord and thus become a sign of Christian faith, cheerful hope and apostolic love to the people.

10. Language

The language officially used by the BBG is English.

11. Amendment of the statutes

The statutes can only be amended by the Council of the Dedicated Members with a two-thirds majority, provided that all the founder members present unanimously agree to such amendment and must be approved by the competent entity of the SMOM to come into force.