**SACRED BEAUTY CONSTITUTION (draft)**

**CHARISM:**

Allowing the beauty and holiness of God to be made present in the world, first through Eucharistic contemplation, then through artistic and intellectual creativity and receptivity informed by and dedicated to Jesus in the Eucharist.

**SACRED BEAUTY PRAYER:**

*O my God, I believe in You; I hope in You; I love You.*

*Beloved Jesus, you came to cast fire upon the earth; allow us to do the same – allow us to extend over the earth the fire of your love, and of your beauty. To you do we consecrate our work and ourselves, to the end that other hearts be set on fire. Beloved Jesus, you yourself be the light, the indefinable radiance – the* claritas *– shining forth in our art[[1]](#endnote-1) and in our lives; we choose no other.*

*Beloved Spirit of Jesus, bestow on us, and on our handiwork, your gifts and your fruits. Fill us with chastity according to our state in life – as befits saints! – that we be ever more enkindled with that holy passion of contemplation which is the divine* eros *itself.[[2]](#endnote-2)*

*Beloved Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, make our hearts like unto yours.*

*Let Jesus, the fullness of Uncreated Beauty, increase; let us decrease.*

*Ever Virgin Mary, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, pray for us.*

*St. Joseph, pray for us.*

*St. Peter Julian Eymard,* *patron of Sacred Beauty, pray for us.*

*St. Alphonsus Liguori, co-patron of Sacred Beauty, pray for us.*

*St. John of Avila, co-patron of Sacred Beauty, pray for us.*

*St. Patrick, co-patron of Sacred Beauty, pray for us.[[3]](#endnote-3)*

*St. John the Baptist, pray for us.*

*St. Mary Magdalene, pray for us.*

*St. Francis of Assisi, pray for us.*

*St. John of the Cross, pray for us.*

*St. John Paul II, pray for us.*

*St. Therese, pray for us.*

*St. Ephrem, pray for us.*

*St. Hildegard of Bingen, pray for us.*

*St. Robert Southwell, pray for us.*

*Blessed Fra Angelico, pray for us.*

*Venerable Hermann Cohen, pray for us.*

**GOALS:**

**For the members of the association:**

* Growth in holiness through soul-level engagement with the Sacred Beauty of the person of Jesus Christ;
* Conscious dedication of artistic, creative and intellectual endeavor to Jesus in the Eucharist;
* Intentional community and opportunities for fellowship among artists so dedicated to this vision;
* Artistic creation in the Eucharistic Presence as a conscious offering of praise to the Beloved Jesus as Sacred Beauty.

**For the Church:**

* Active and receptive participation in the beauty, sacrality, reverence and artistry proper to worship, and most especially to liturgy;
* Sacred Beauty Holy Hours in a parish setting, bringing our love and care for the Eucharist to the People of God;
* Sacred Beauty communal study groups dedicated to the development of an authentic metaphysics of beauty;
* Encouragement and propagation of the Sacred Beauty spirituality.

**For the world:**

* Evangelization of the Church and the world through beauty rooted in the person of Jesus Christ.
* Art for all, art of a worth and merit complemented by its having been created in the light of the Presence, offered to the glory of God and the joy of humankind.

**CONCRETE REQUIREMENTS:[[4]](#endnote-4)**

* Daily recitation of the Association prayer.
* Five minutes’ meditation on the Passion Monday-Saturday daily through Ordinary Time and Lent excluding solemnities, closing with an acknowledgement of our sin before God and with the leper’s prayer from the Gospel: ***Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.***
* Daily Eucharistic devotion (visits to our Lord in the tabernacle, spiritual Communions), as time and circumstances permit.[[5]](#endnote-5)
* One Holy Hour per month for the intentions of all associates.
* One Rosary per week, again for the intentions of all associates.
* Praying the Stations of the Cross once per year during Lent, in the spirit of St. Veronica, that is, in adoration of the face of Christ, beautiful, yet disfigured in his Passion.
* Reverence for the name of God.

**STATUTES**

**VISION:**

*{Preliminary note: For those wishing to participate in the Sacred Beauty mission and charism: Sacred Beauty is committed to supporting you in your primary vocation; whatever you do – thought, work, prayer, creativity, or ministry – must never place undue demands on you, or impede the growth in holiness proper to your life in your marriage, your ministry, your vows or your community. Any disproportion and imbalance in a Christian life cannot reflect the beauty of Christ, to whom we owe our lives and in whom we find our goal, our hope and our solace.}*

1. ***You are the fairest of the children of men/and graciousness is poured upon your lips/because God has blessed you for evermore.*** Ps. 45, 3

Nothing that we can know of earth or imagine of heaven can compare to the all-surpassing beauty and holiness of Jesus Christ. For us, Sacred Beauty is the person of Jesus Christ, above all as He is present to us in the Eucharist.

1. ***A woman came with an alabaster jar of perfumed oil, costly genuine spikenard. She broke the alabaster jar and poured it on his head.*** Mk. 14, 3

From our very beginnings, this has been a shining image for Sacred Beauty: ***Breaking the jar***, lavishing upon the Beloved Jesus (again, above all in the Eucharist) the best of what we have in beauty and dignity, reverence and artistry, cleanliness, silence and the delicacy which love calls forth.

Yet it is said in Luke of the very same woman that ***her sins, many as they are, have been forgiven her, because she has shown such great love.*** (Lk. 7, 47) And so we see that the jar which must be broken is the heart itself; love comes with acknowledgement of sin, with suffering and sacrifice, and with the awareness of our aching and unquenchable need for God. Anything less is craft, artifice, a poor substitute. From the Cross, Christ has given us the exemplar for all of time and eternity: The wounded heart is the heart from which love, life, beauty, healing, proceed. As St. Augustine writes: *Search within your heart for what is pleasing to God. Your heart must be crushed.*

What is the core reality we learn from the heart of all being? Jesus is the model, and sacrificial love is the message. Anything less that adorns itself with the name of Christ can and will be corrupted – corrupted, even, into its opposite.

1. *The saints are oases around which life sprouts up and something of the lost paradise returns.—*Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*.

We are called to be saints; this call is issued at our baptism, and issues again in the crushed heart longing to hear His voice. There is no oasis without water, and no new birth without blood.

In this Age of Mercy, we look to the pierced Heart of Jesus on the Cross as our source of life. St. John Chrysostom mused on the "gleaming riches" opened to us in this breached Temple: ***You shall draw waters with joy out of the saviour's fountains.*** (Is. 12, 3); he writes: "This fountain is a fountain of light, spouting forth rays of truth. By it stand the Powers on high looking upon the beauty of its streams, because they more clearly perceive the power of the Things set forth, and the flashings unapproachable." And where is this fountain to be found? Cyril of Alexandria, on St. John's Gospel: "With the lance they pierced His side, from which blood mixed with water gushed out, as an image and first-fruits of the mystical ευλογία..." ευλογία refers principally to the Eucharist, but this under the aspect of "blessing".

In the streams of mercy overflowing the pierced heart of the Savior, we recognize the wellspring of the sacraments in nuptial joy, and every good thing - each attendant blessing - added unto them; beneath the pierced heart of the sleeping Crucified, we find the source of beauty in liturgy, beauty in art, Beauty Itself. As Pius XII writes, in unbroken continuity with this patristic mysticism, “Under the influence of love, our Savior, by the outpouring of His blood, became wedded to His Church... whence flows that plentiful stream of Sacramental grace from which the children of the Church drink of eternal life..."[[6]](#endnote-6)

1. *The One who is Beauty itself let himself be slapped in the face, spat upon, crowned with thorns…. [Yet] in his Face that is so disfigured, there appears the genuine, extreme beauty; the beauty of love that goes ‘to the very end’.*—Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, “The Feeling of Things, the Contemplation of Beauty,” Message to Communion and Liberation, Rimini 2002.

Thus, the Beauty we serve and worship is a perfection which is found not in harmony or proportion, but in the uttermost pitch of extremity; which is not couched in adornment but naked in surrender, in fathomless vulnerability; which does not pause to charm the eye but rends the soul to its core; which does not shrink from blood, from pain, from wounds, from death. This Beauty brings us in a single moment face to face with our need for a savior, and with the Savior we need. Such is the beauty of the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ.

Under no conditions is Sacred Beauty ever to be identified with any ideology, aesthetic theory, cultural bias or privileged style, but rather with this encounter with the Cross and with the cultivation and perfection of holiness through the beauty, excellence, and holy awe adapted to each person's gifts and call, incorporated in each person’s life in Christ.

1. ***A humbled and contrite heart, o God, you will not scorn.*** Ps. 51, 7

For a field to be made fertile, one must till the soil. Until we acknowledge our brokenness, we remain hard and stony ground that will never bear fruit. Often, the most fertile field is the one furrowed with suffering and watered with tears. Beauty will remain ever foreign to a heart closed in self-righteousness and pharisaical hardness.

And what else is there on this earth that we can give to our Beloved that is truly our own? Surely not our natural gifts, which come from Him; still less our good works, which require a constant influx of grace, lest they vanish into nothingness. Our sins, no doubt, are our own, but He does not want them, for all that He takes them away if we let Him. No, what is truly our own, our birthright and precious, which we can give to our God and which He came to this earth as man to share, is our suffering.

**PRAYER AND SPIRITUALITY:**

1. *[R]ecognizing oneself as a sinner…. means standing in front of God, who is our everything, and presenting him with our selves, which are our nothing.*—Pope Francis, *The Name of God is Mercy.*

Yet our own sufferings have no power to save. It is, again, only through the Passion of our Beloved Jesus, that our own sufferings can be made holy, in his Precious Blood. And if we are to be made holy – and what else is there? – St. Bonaventure writes: “If you would make progress, meditate daily on the Passion of the Lord; for nothing works such an entire sanctification in the soul, as the meditation of the Passion of Christ.” Thus, we begin at the foot of the cross, with daily meditation on the Passion[[7]](#endnote-7) – five minutes in any case, more as our duties permit it and our souls require it.

In contemplating the Passion and Death of our Lord, we must look in the face of our own sin – not merely our sins which we confess, repent and repeat, but our *sin*, the oppressive weight of malice and brokenness and bitterness and warping and obstinacy and self-concern and basic “unlovability” which called down the mercy of God in the infinite and precious sufferings of the Beloved Jesus to be poured out upon us in the first place.

Nothing is more conducive to conversion than the Passion of Jesus – and no conversion is so urgent as this: to offer to God this sin, with the particular ugliness which we have stamped upon our created nature with it – this sin which we are generally at such pains to hide, even from ourselves. In closing our daily meditation on the Passion, we take a moment to present to God this sin[[8]](#endnote-8), and pray with the leper of the Synoptics: ***Lord, if you will it, you can make me clean.*** (Mt. 8,2; Mk. 1,40; Lk. 5,12)

1. ***So I gaze on you in the sanctuary to see your strength and your glory.*** Ps. 63, 3

The Beloved Jesus promised to remain with us until the end of time, and his promises are true. Yet in our own lives, sin and blindness, our own and in others, may hide from us the light of his face. So, on one level, the Eucharist is all we have.

In Eucharistic contemplation, we gaze on him in the sanctuary, and though he cloaks his strength and veils his glory in the accidents of bread, his beauty is manifest to us – not through the delight of the senses, but in the appeal to the heart – the appeal of that loving, even maternal solicitude[[9]](#endnote-9) of our Jesus, who delights to make himself poor, weak and abandoned that he may feed and accompany us, his people, and accept our scant tokens of devotion.

One especially privileged grace of Eucharistic Adoration is the opportunity to learn from our divine teacher the lesson of silence and hiddenness which he wordlessly preaches from every tabernacle, every hour of every day. Truly to learn to be receptive, silent, hidden, enriches us all in our lives of prayer, in our art, in our thought, in openness to creative inspiration and – of infinitely more importance – to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Eucharistic Adoration is perhaps the most particular devotion of Sacred Beauty – both for our own devotional practice and in the apostolate which we offer. Aware, however, that the call to Sacred Beauty may be heard by persons in all circumstances and states of life, and aware also that liturgical Eucharistic Adoration with exposition is not readily available everywhere, we propose a minimal standard of one liturgical Holy Hour per month for the intentions of all associates,[[10]](#endnote-10) in a spirit of Sacred Beauty. Where this is impossible, either due to lack of suitable opportunities or on account of the duties of one’s state in life, a Holy Hour prayed before our Eucharistic Lord reposed in the tabernacle is fully acceptable.

Public Sacred Beauty Holy Hours will be celebrated at regular intervals throughout every month at one or more parishes in the Diocese of Bridgeport and environs; these shall be considered in more detail in our discussion of Apostolate. While we encourage Sacred Beauty members to attend as often as they wish; we do not require attendance at these Holy Hours.

1. ***Who is this, that comes forth like the dawn, beautiful as the white moon, pure as the blazing sun, fearsome as celestial visions?*** Sg. 6, 10

At the same time, we have found in the work of Sacred Beauty a Marian devotion quiet and implicit, yet no less intense or deep for that. A spirituality so logocentric, Christological, sacramental, casts Our Lady in the aspect of the “quasi-incarnation” of the Holy Spirit (in the sense used by St. Maximillian Kolbe)[[11]](#endnote-11), and therefore specifically as most exalted mystic, as Spouse of the Holy Spirit and living bond of unity, exemplifying the most surpassing and exalted intellect, interior life of contemplation, and multi-faceted sensitivity to beauty.

In honoring the Blessed Virgin Mother, we honor Christ – and implore that we be blessed with graces from that infinite treasury of virtues. Thus, we ask one five-decade Rosary per week[[12]](#endnote-12), again for the intentions of all associates, again in the spirit of Sacred Beauty just described.

1. ***I bow down before your Holy Temple, filled with awe.*** Ps. 5, 8

What is this spirit of Sacred Beauty? A commitment to living out beauty, awe, reverence and the spirit of the liturgy personally, in one's own prayer, liturgical participation and relationship to the sacred. While this should be the goal of all who believe, for us this goal is thematic, as a matter of emphasis.

This spirit, fired by love and chastened by awareness of the sin and darkness which lingers at the heart, seeks to make straight a path for Christ, between the Scylla of a rigorism in which technical perfection of rubric and ritual become ends in themselves, and the Charybdis of a formless laxity in which even the most sacred realities become objects of casual indifference. A Church is neither an army nor a club. No formula, no equation, nor less any type of superstition can conjure up for us a living God; neither orthodoxy nor orthopraxis place that living God under one’s power. To believe such is magic, and materially blasphemous. Yet blasé insouciance and carelessness with God are not sustainable; awareness of the Presence is quickly lost. No, orthodoxy and orthopraxis serve, not to bring God under our power, but belong rather to our attempt to put ourselves under His power. They may be necessary but are not sufficient.

Rather, in all ways, we must seek the Eucharistic Christ as *a living person, not a dead object* (*Diary of St. Faustina*, 1385, paraphrased) – a person we love, we adore, who occupies the focus and core and center of our minds and our hearts. The goal of our whole work and prayer is to lay our hearts open to this grace and gift of love from God. Mary too is a living person of flesh and blood, taken body and soul into heaven – our Mediatrix, to whom we open our hearts in love. May our Mother lead us on our way to Jesus.

1. ***I prayed, and prudence was given me; I pleaded, and the spirit of wisdom came to me.*** Ws. 7, 7

The spirit of Sacred Beauty calls each of us to growth in understanding of the faith, especially in terms of liturgy and sacramental life. Obviously, this must be adapted to state in life, individual call and previous formation; while no particular formation is presumed, docility is the more necessary, wherever our formation is lacking; due respect for years spent in study and practice is both just and prudent. By the same token, a spirit of expertise or connoisseurship is repugnant and inimical to all for which we are striving; such a spirit both fosters division and trivializes the sacred. As the Lord himself has told us: ***You have but one teacher, and all of you are brothers*** (Mt, 23, 8) – and this that all may grow together, ***as members in the one body***. (I Cor, 12, 12)

Sacred Beauty communal study dedicated to the development of an authentic metaphysics of beauty will be held, at least intermittently; these, too, shall be considered in more detail in our discussion of Apostolate. We, again, encourage Sacred Beauty members to attend as often as they wish; we do not require attendance at these meetings.

1. ***Let the earth bless the Lord.
Praise and exalt him above all forever.
Mountains and hills, bless the Lord.
Everything growing from the earth, bless the Lord.
You springs, bless the Lord.
Seas and rivers, bless the Lord.
You dolphins and all water creatures, bless the Lord.
All you birds of the air, bless the Lord.
All you beasts, wild and tame, bless the Lord.
You sons of men, bless the Lord.***

Dn. 3, 74-84.

For all due caution regarding the *spiritus mundi*, the spirit of Sacred Beauty is by no means confined to matters of religion, nor does it seek to distance itself from the created order or from the human world of labors, joys and sufferings. We seek to deepen our bond to God and His ways through loving care towards creation, with especial awareness of the beauty of nature, the sufferings of animals in this world of sin, the sacred trust of our natural environment given in the Book of Genesis, and the plight of the poor so loved by the Lord, who made himself poor. Pope Francis, drawing on the wisdom of the saints, expresses this beautifully in *Laudato si’*, 233:

The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face. The ideal is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things. Saint Bonaventure teaches us that “contemplation deepens the more we feel the working of God’s grace within our hearts, and the better we learn to encounter God in creatures outside ourselves”.

**APOSTOLATE:**

1. ***Feed my sheep.*** Jn. 21, 17

If we are true lovers of Christ, we must tend and feed his flock. We envision a number of specific apostolates for Sacred Beauty:

* The celebration of regular Sacred Beauty Holy Hours, some for the faithful in general, some specifically for working Catholic artists, with the objectives of offering the Eucharistic Lord some small measure of the beauty, dignity, reverence and sacrality which He deserves and we seek to cultivate, and of offering the very creative process itself to the Creator of all. These we would undertake, for the present, in a parish setting, thereby preserving “contact with the rich reality of the local parish and to participate readily in the overall pastoral activity of the particular Church,” as Pope Francis writes in *Evangelii Gaudium,* 29.

Public Sacred Beauty Holy Hours offer sacred music in the broadest possible range of styles and traditions, along with meditations from the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, from recent popes, and from writers in like tradition and spirituality, including poetic and literary meditations.

Sacred Beauty Holy Hours for artists are mostly silence, with an especial focus on bringing the artists’ creative work to God – either literally, through writing, drawing, musical composition etc. in the Presence, or spiritually through the offering of the artist and her work to God.

* The hosting and directing of Sacred Beauty communal study groups dedicated to the development of an authentic metaphysics of beauty.[[13]](#endnote-13) We are committed to common study and building fellowship and community among artists, priests, religious, philosophers, theologians, contemplatives and others who seek a deeper understanding of beauty; we continue to hold such meetings, at intervals, and hope for more regular opportunities in the future.
* An intensive mission and ministry of creativity, contemplation and theological and spiritual reflection, to be carried out within the life of the association, with specific reference both to our own souls and to our vocations and missions in the Church and in the world – an apostolate at once inward- and outward-directed, and one which requires more elucidation. This implies creative work as a direct offering to Jesus in the Eucharist, growth in prayer, and intellectual and spiritual formation in the Sacred Beauty charism.
1. *Beauty dilates us, it liberates us. Its clarity is a magic that ravishes our heart. It is like a piece of lost paradise. It is an oasis in the midst of the world’s dereliction. But even so, it makes us suffer. To know beautiful things makes us suffer as we come in contact with those things which are ugly, and this is a real suffering, but it is one from which we would not choose to be delivered.* —Servant of God Charles Journet.

Over and over again, beauty and suffering meet in the life of the soul, as ugliness – material, moral, spiritual – assert and entrench themselves. It is not enough that the mundane and the immanent be soiled with sin and darkness; even the very name of beauty is often profaned … as ego, as ideology, as vanity, under a sanctimonious guise of simplicity and poverty.

An aside: The real enemies of poverty, in this age of affluence, squalor and affluent squalor, are neither beauty nor magnificence nor even lavishness, but convenience, comfort, waste, excess, and above all the superprudence of security – hoarded goods, hoarded money. What matters it, what grade of grain fills your silos? What kind of poverty hoards what is worst and ugliest and pettiest?—*spiritual poverty*.

To bear this suffering, knowing that it is but symptomatic of the first workings of that restoration of sensitivity and wholeness and freshness which is to be completed only in Heaven – this is a part of the work of Sacred Beauty. In this, let us encourage and minister to one another.

1. ***Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father.*** Mt. 16, 17

In specific reference to those with creative gifts: The original etymology of the word *genius* refers to a teaching or guiding spirit within the self that is *not his own*. Even more than the rest of God’s gifts, creativity is given on loan. And a rift opens in a soul that has been vouchsafed a vision that only high virtue, suffering and sacrifice should have been able to give – and yet there it is, and one must answer for it. Thus, high creative inspirations enjoin a tacit call to conversion – a call to prayer, suffering and sacrifice, to close the rift and become someone who would see the world clearly, truly and luminously without such native gifts – which is to say, a saint.

This call usually goes unheard. Where it is heard, it feeds and refreshes the world in the spirit of Jesus Christ: as Benedict XVI writes and as we cited above: *The saints are oases around which life sprouts up and something of the lost paradise returns.*

1. *He who does Christ’s work, must stay with Christ always.*—Blessed John of Fiesole (Fra Angelico)

Being an artist, in itself, does nothing to make one holy – but it can make it much harder to live without being holy. The “artistic temperament”, for all of our abuse of the term, and for all the sin and sickness with which it has been associated, is not a misnomer; much less is it a fiction. The realization of genius often leads to pride, guilt, rebellion or self-absorption – which does nothing to make it less real. This, too, calls us to minister to ourselves and to one another, that the holiness which for us is necessary to wholeness, to integrality, may take root and grow in us, in ourselves, in one another.

1. ***For Wisdom, the artisan of all, taught me; in her is a spirit intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, agile, clear, unstained, certain, never harmful, loving the good, keen, unhampered, beneficent, kindly, firm, secure, tranquil, all-powerful, all-seeing, and pervading all spirits, though they be intelligent, pure and very subtle.*** Ws 7, 22-23.

For many others, creating or receiving great art or thought can open the soul to the experience of the holy. While what she does with this is always in her freedom, art in the spirit of Sacred Beauty, firmly rooted in the source of all holiness, points to the Cross, from which reigns the source and summit of all beauty, lest the experience be permitted to become a cult of its own – sometimes secular, sometimes even ostensibly sacred, a subtle totemism, a cult of accidentals.

1. ***Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.***Jn, 14, 23

Receptivity is as important as creativity – indeed, for us as humans it is more so, as both nature and revelation offer truth and beauty both prior and essential to anything we ourselves create. For the beauty and holiness of God to be made present in the world *through* you, you must first allow that beauty and holiness to be made present *in* you. Yet learning how to see and how to listen requires attentiveness, labor and humility; to do so is both itself virtue and the reward of virtue, and is essential to living in Sacred Beauty.

1. *The Lord gave me to know that, among his chosen ones, there are some who are especially chosen, and whom He calls to a higher form of holiness, to exceptional union with him. These are seraphic souls, from whom God demands greater love than He does from others*.—St. Faustina Kowalska, *Diary*,1556.

There are seraphic souls – and among these souls, there are some who have further gifts of artistic and intellectual creativity. These cannot but offer the first fruits, the best of what they have, to the Lord. This spirit is reflected both in eagerness to make all of their work a total offering to God, and in particular in the dedication of their gifts to the knowledge, love and worship (especially liturgical worship, where appropriate) of the Triune God and of the Eucharistic Beloved.

1. ***I will praise the Lord all my days, make music to my God while I live.***Ps. 146, 2

Among the arts, music has a privileged role, given its closeness to the spirit of liturgy. While clearly not all music is liturgical or appropriate for liturgy, something of the genius of the heavenly liturgy passes down to humankind through music – and perhaps even through poetry, as well. What a privilege, to make a life of singing the praises of the Lord! What a foretaste of the life of Heaven!

Of course, Sacred Beauty members who are liturgical musicians have the especial privilege of bringing the Sacred Beauty spirituality to their music. This should never be taken lightly; prayer and a disposition of recollection in the musician bless the liturgy, the congregation and the music itself.

**GOVERNANCE**

1. ***Jesus summoned them and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great ones make their authority over them felt.*** ***But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave. Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*** Mt. 20, 25-28.

In these past years of foundation, we the founders have witnessed how the activities and apostolate of Sacred Beauty have grown, changed and developed; in all of these changes, we have seen how the initial vision and mission which we experienced as a gift of the Holy Spirit has been strengthened and confirmed. We are still unfolding this gift we have been given – and we can anticipate this unfolding as a process which demands a lifetime (or more) of dedication and full commitment – this alongside the already highly developed theology and spirituality which we know must be instilled in the life of the association over decades. We the founders have already committed ourselves to this work as a lifelong vocation and mission; while we invite others into this work to the extent that it coheres with their own vocations and missions, we certainly do not expect such dedication from them. Should anyone experience a call to total commitment, we would welcome such a person as a brother or sister but urge profound discernment.

On this account, we the founders propose to retain ultimate leadership, so long as we are fit to do so, with possible provision for sabbaticals or extended times of renewal. We cannot deny the spiritual parturition involved in bringing this forth; one does not lightly relinquish care for a belov­ed child or relegate responsibility to others. As our patron St. Peter Julian Eymard writes, *Love does not unburden itself of its obligations on others. Love does everything itself. That is its boast.*

Should a point come when neither founder is capable of continuing, we would hope to be able to choose (either on our own or in consultation with the cooperators) a successor who has deeply partaken of the mission and charism and shares the vocation of Sacred Beauty as a life’s work.

Of course, should Sacred Beauty grow, it may be necessary to have leaders delegated to handle finances, social media, publicity, etc. Any leader in Sacred Beauty – ourselves, successors or delegated leaders for specific works – must have the disposition of a loving parent toward the organization and its members. No leader can place him- or herself above others in any way, save for the privileges of service, abasement, and the least place in everything. Any leader should recognize that true authority is rooted in mutual yielding, and above all in *mercy*. In saying this, we realize our total personal incapacity; these are ruling principles, aspirations, and pleas for divine grace.

1. *Are not the oases of creation that sprang up, say, around the Benedictine monasteries in the West foreshadowings of this reconciliation of creation brought about by the children of God?* –Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth.*

Sacred Beauty aspires to a monastic spirit – not as an archaism, nor in an attempt to reproduce the culture of the past, nor even by necessarily emulating in any way any of the accidentals of past monasticism, but in order ourselves to become in our dispositions and characters the sort of community of persons through whom a culture is created. In the citation above, Benedict XVI refers to monasteries as “foreshadowings of the reconciliation of creation brought about by the children of God,” and Pope Francis writes in *Laudato si’* of how, through monasticism, “personal growth and sanctification came to be sought in the interplay of recollection and work.”

In this light, any leader should be competent and comfortable working with his hands, learned in liturgy and theology without any pretentions to expertise or vain scholarship, exhibit a sensitivity toward beauty[[14]](#endnote-14), maintain a sacramental and devotional life, and practice reasonable care of his or her health, including regular exercise. Such a leader should strive to grow in having a good human formation, and to abide by ordinary standards of courtesy and respect at all times, both in acting as leader and in daily life.

This monastic spirit should help to dispel the human tendency to confuse beauty and luxury. Consider here the wonderful example of St. Francis of Assisi, who practiced a radical standard of material sensitivity with regard to the things of God[[15]](#endnote-15) and radical want in his own person; in fact, the latter could be said to support the former[[16]](#endnote-16). This wisdom should be a model; any leader should willingly embrace poverty and hardship… and, while some commerce with the world is unavoidable given the mission, any Sacred Beauty leader should be much more comfortable with menial labor than with restaurants or entertainments.

1. ***Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?”*** ***He said to them, “Come, and you will see.”*** Jn. 1, 38-39.

We yearn for a chapel – *The Chapel of the Beloved Jesus –* and a residential community, should God send us the person or persons prepared to commit to a common life in Sacred Beauty; we have already earmarked all of our material resources beyond the immediate necessities of daily life for the support of Sacred Beauty (and especially for the ultimate eventuality of a chapel and community). We wait in hope.

1. ***Go out, therefore, into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find.***

Mt, 22, 9.

Given the Sacred Beauty mission, one can see that those having artistic/contemplative gifts and aptitudes in the Catholic tradition are a small subset of any given population. Many artists and intellectuals, by nature of their gifts, suffer disenfranchisement and a degree of alienation. Many live in involuntary material poverty, for lack of suitable employment, and for the high cost of producing their art. With the current resources of media, it is imperative to seek out and reach such souls. To this end, we have already contacted a number of artists in various disciplines, among those well suited for this mission. Such outreach needs to be considered as part and parcel of what we do as an association; we hope to be able to delegate leadership here as soon as it becomes practicable to do so.

In addition to this, we call on the charity of our brothers and sisters in Christ, especially those who sense a call to the support of art and culture through prayer, to pray for us. The prayers of such cooperators are invaluable to us, and we will be proud to number such persons within a larger community of Sacred Beauty.

Although it is highly foreseeable that people may wish to associate themselves with Sacred Beauty for the wrong reasons (career networking, e.g.), no person willing, in good faith, to abide by the prayer requirements will be turned away. We believe that the practices we recommend are desirable, and give glory to God, in and of themselves. We do propose that candidates seek spiritual direction on their own terms, discern in the context of their own families and communities, and come to us freely.

Should a member clearly demonstrate duplicity of life, falsity of motives, an attachment to the production of grossly immoral art or arrant disrespect for the Catholic faith or for legitimate authority in the Church, we would retain the right to point out the discrepancy amicably and ask the member to leave.

Given the nature of the association and the respect for conscience and primary vocation which we prize, we do not see any need for any formal ceremonies of induction at this time. This will obviously need to be re-examined, if anyone other than ourselves is ultimately called to Sacred Beauty as a primary vocational commitment, rather than as a support to their faith life, creative life and primary vocation elsewhere.

1. *Our Lord also has family feast days…. The Forty Hours is the real feast of the heart. Do you not see how beautiful everything is, how everything is music and joy around your good Father, Who is seated on His throne of love?*

*During these days, therefore, all your thoughts and all your actions must be for Him…*

*Spend these holidays well. He is all yours. Gaze at Him and listen to Him attentively. He will shower you with His graces during life and one day He will unite you to the large family of the Blessed in Heaven.*  – St. Peter Julian Eymard, *The Real Presence.*

Given our emphasis on Eucharistic worship, our ideal annual association meeting would be a 40-hours devotion.[[17]](#endnote-17)Such an annual meeting should be a time of joy, festivity, fellowship, growth and renewal; prayer, creativity and artistic sharing should all have their place.

As members will likely be tied to the academic calendar, or liturgical musicians swamped particularly at Easter and Christmas, it would seem appropriate (where possible) to arrange the annual meeting to include August 2, the memorial of our patron, St. Peter Julian Eymard. Given that this spirit of joy and festivity is incompatible with anything outside of a free gift given in accord with right reason, and duly considering the wide geographic distribution and straitened means of many potential members, attendance at such a meeting should in no way be obligatory.

**CONCLUSION**

1. *When Jesus comes to us, He brings with Him all the fruits and flowers of Paradise… The Eucharist is the ladder not of Jacob but of Jesus, who continually ascends to heaven and descends therefrom for our sake. He is unceasingly coming toward us.—*St. Peter Julian Eymard, *The Real Presence*

Our dream, ultimately, is to build up a space for a community of life and of worship, to foster a *habitus*, an orthopraxis corresponding to the glorious teachings of popes and saints. We look in hope to acult of adoration spontaneously arising under the direction of the Holy Spirit, of reverence and beauty and dignity in the stance, the comportment, the posture, the silence which prevails… and in art, thought, study and prayer oriented in a spirit of wonder to the one who is himself Uncreated Beauty.

We hope to offer such a refuge, not for ourselves alone, but for artists, for priests, for seraphic souls, for contemplatives and philosophers, for those of any state in life whose lives and gifts and souls belong explicitly and exclusively to God, to cherish and to be fed by our Eucharistic Lord in a space of Sacred Beauty – a beauty not reducible to any mere human aesthetic, taste or culture, but rather Beauty that heals and nourishes the soul and fulfills the human person.

If we but let God overcome and overwhelm the sin and darkness in us, who can forbid us building a civilization of love, fired by love, directed by the Holy Spirit, rooted in the sacraments? It would seem that little else has the authority truly to elevate the pre-existing culture, transform it in holiness, locate its inner goodness and beauty, and offer it (however vicariously) ennobled and consecrated – for as our own Bishop Frank said in his 2015 Chrism Mass homily, *If we build the house without Christ, we are wasting our time.*

1. The phrase “in our art” may be omitted by any prayer cooperators who do not find artistic creativity to belong to their vocation. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. *Deus Caritas Est*, 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. A brief note regarding St. Patrick: Compared to our devotion to St. Peter Julian Eymard, apostle of Eucharistic Adoration, and to Sts. Alphonsus Liguori and John of Avila, Doctors of the Church devoted to the beauty of Christ and the passionate love of God, the choice of St. Patrick may seem less transparent. Yet St. Patrick’s actual writings indicate a soul with so much sensitivity to beauty, and are themselves extremely beautiful; they reveal a spirituality at once Christological and Trinitarian, doctrinal and poetic, creational and theocentric, highly personal and confessional yet universal – all without contradiction or dilution. Also, St. Patrick carried a nation with him, all the while undergoing deep abandonment, alienation, betrayal, accusation and ridicule. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. All but the last of these requirements may be commuted to comparable devotional or spiritual works by consent of the founders; the prayer requirements themselves may be subject to some change, at the discretion of the founders, as we reflect with discernment on the development of the mission.

 Obviously (see Statutes, preliminary note) our intention, in offering these requirements, is not to bind anyone in conscience, particularly given our commitment to supporting all in the pursuit of their primary vocations. Good faith is expected, far more than perfection of external performance. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. While the specific form and frequency with which it is expressed is left to the discernment of the individual, Eucharistic devotion is indispensable to the charism of Sacred Beauty. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. *Haurietis Aquas,* 76. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. With appropriate exceptions; see Concrete Requirements, above. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. And *not*, that is to say, upon the individual transgressions of our lives, past or present. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Cf. *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Allowances may need to be made for the sick and for those with special responsibilities e.g. mothers with infants. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Both the spiritual significance of St. Maximillian’s words and the necessary qualifications which these words entail are well explained by James McCurry in “The Mariology of Maximillian Kolbe”, *Marian Studies* 36, p. 92-93, (available online at <http://ecommons.udayton.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1535&context=marian_studies>) [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. The weekly Rosary need not be prayed all at once; to pray one mystery per day, for instance, is perfectly acceptable. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Here in the sense of the word *calologie* as used by Etienne Gilson, as opposed to either a mere aesthetics or any attempt to reduce art to a form of knowledge; a similar term, *kalology* (or *kalosophy*) was introduced into the English language in the 19th Century by the Scottish/American philosopher and academic James McCosh. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. As Cardinal Ratzinger wrote, “A theologian who does not love art, poetry, music and nature can be dangerous. Blindness and deafness toward the beautiful are not incidental; they necessarily are reflected in his theology.” (Cited by Vittorio Messori in *The Ratzinger Report*, p. 130). [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. E.g. *“I see nothing corporally of the Most High Son of God except His most holy Body and Blood… I want to have these most holy mysteries honoured and venerated above all things and I want to reserve them in precious places”* (Testament 10-11); *“With all that is in me and more I beg you that, when it is fitting and you judge it expedient, you humbly beg the clergy to revere above all else the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ… They should hold as precious the chalices, corporals, appointments of the altar, and everything that pertains to the sacrifice.  If the most holy Body of the Lord is very poorly reserved in any place, let It be placed and locked up in a precious place according to the command of the Church.”* (First Letter to the Custodians 2-4; 7); *“*For blessed Francis was very sad when he entered some church and saw that it was not clean.  Therefore, after preaching to the people, at the end of the sermon he would have all the priests who were present assembled in some remote place so he could not be overheard by secular people.  He would preach to them about the salvation of souls and, in particular, that they should exercise care and concern in keeping churches clean, as well as altars and everything that pertained to the celebration of the divine mysteries.*”* (Assisi Compilation, C 60).“Moreover, at one time, he wanted to send throughout every region some brothers who would carry many beautiful and decorated pyxes. And wherever they would find the Body of the Lord carelessly lying around, they were to place It fittingly in them.  He also wanted to send throughout every region other brothers with good and beautiful wafer irons for making fine and pure hosts” (Mirror of Perfection, Second Book, P 65). Citations compiled online at http://www.clerus.org/clerus/dati/2010-05/18-13/St\_Francis\_of\_Asssi.html [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Consider St. Francis’s alb, embroidered by St. Clare and still reserved in the Basilica of St. Clare in Assisi, as compared to his rough burlap habit displayed in the same location. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Such a devotion, in a parochial setting, would obviously need the participation of a chaplain or at least the consent of a pastor, and might well need to follow the oft-seen contemporary Forty Hours model of daytime adoration only; unduly to burden the schedules or the minds of busy pastors is not how we propose to honor the Lord. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)