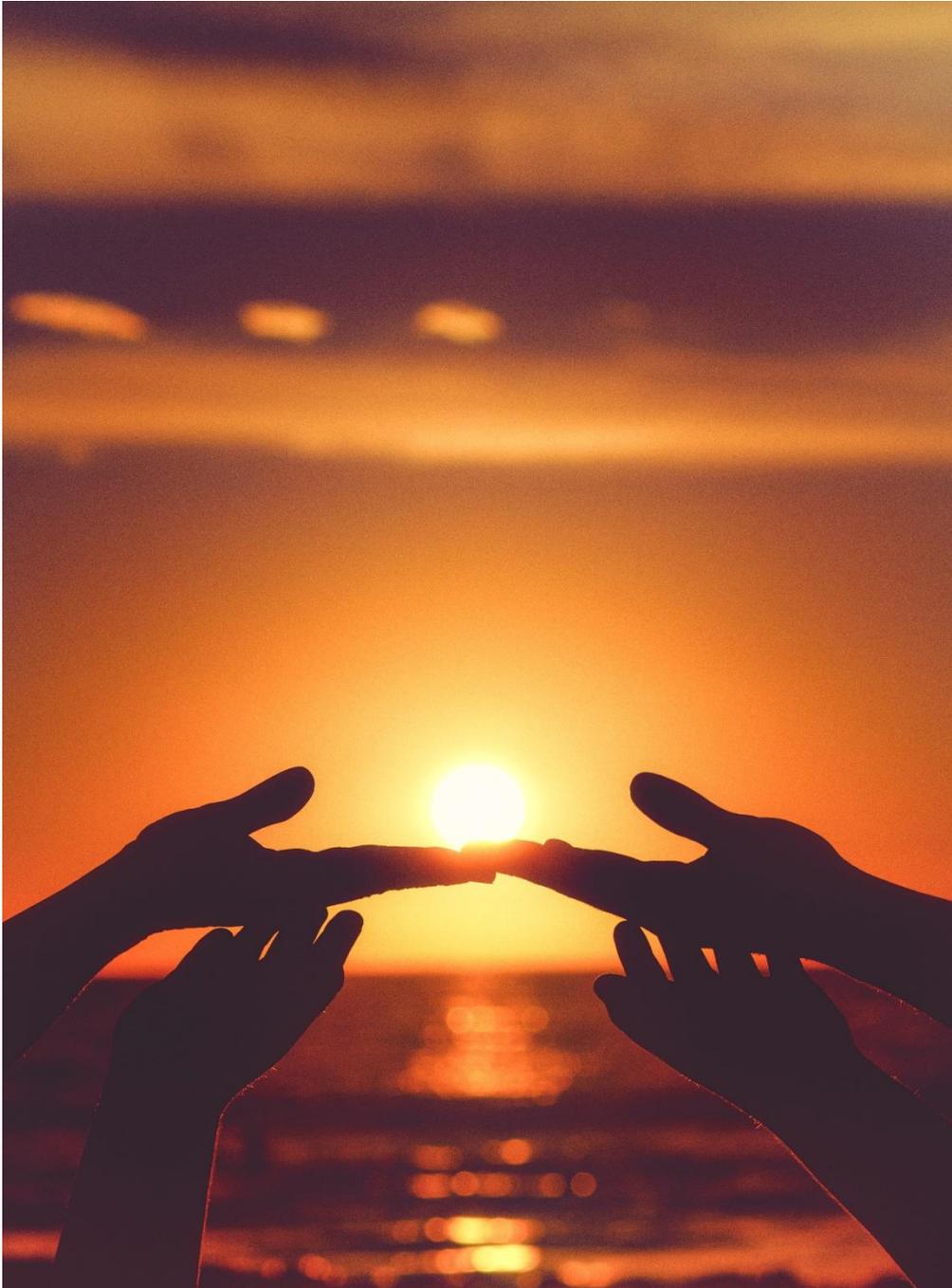


**THE HOSPITALLER ORDER OF ST. JOHN OF GOD  
CODE OF ETHICS**

-----



**General Commission on Bioethics  
Rome, March 2021**

## PREFACE

The 69<sup>th</sup> General Chapter of the Hospitaller Order of St John of God approved the proposal to publish a Code of Ethics. This task was entrusted to the Order's General Commission on Bioethics. Upon completion, it was examined by the General Definitory, which approved it.

Although the Order had produced the Charter of Hospitality in 2000, setting out and elaborating on the principles and essential elements that identify our Institute, including those of an ethical nature, it was felt that we also needed a Code of Ethics, namely, a document laying down the fundamental principles, values, criteria and standards to be adopted throughout the Order by all the Brothers and Co-workers dealing specifically with ethics in our mission, referring to our care and clinical work, as well as social and environmental matters, in accordance with the ethical principles of the Church and the Order, seeking dialogue, and at all times the good of needy people and their families, showing the greatest respect for their condition in life and their convictions.

The main purpose of this Code of Ethics, allowing for all the different social and cultural situations we operate in, is to help to better develop and deploy the Order's mission, which is Hospitality, as the source, value, virtue and essential ethical benchmark of our Institution. We may say that *hospitality* is *our ethical imperative*, the canon that tells us what should or should not be done, what is or is not right. *Hospitality* is the ethos of the standards to which we feel called, and in the final analysis it is the excellence for which we must constantly strive in all we do with the people in our care, faithful to the Order's charism and mission bequeathed to us by our Founder, St John of God.

*Hospitality* is also a universal ethical value and category, where everyone can find a common cause, especially in these times of globalisation and migration flows: it is the right social, human and ethical response we have to make for the today's world that we share with all humanity, in the human sphere and with regard to creation and to the environment.

Seen from this viewpoint, *hospitality* becomes common ground for all men and women in the world, regardless of where they may have been born. A common space where we can all agree. A central point from which we are all called to contribute towards humanising and regenerating society. It is global, universal, inclusive, and a major means of establishing dialogue with all. The opposite is "inhumanity" that creates a *soulless* society.

I trust that this Code of Ethics will be an aid to the entire St. John of God Hospitaller Family, to guide everyone in our daily lives and in the way we provide care to the sick, poor and the needy, with professionalism, humanity and respect, acting responsibly and in the manner the Order's project demands.

I am very grateful to the Order's General Commission on Bioethics and each of its members for their excellent work in response to the request by the General Chapter. It will prove a valuable resource at the service of all the members of the Order which will help us, if necessary, to make our mission and our identity better known today.

Brother Jesús Etayo  
Superior General

## INTRODUCTION

The Code of Ethics of the Hospitaller Order of St John of God was produced by the General Commission on Bioethics, with following members:

Brother Hugues ASSOU (Togo – Africa)

Sister Margarita BOFARULL, RSCJ (Spain – Europe)

Brother Pio CHANG (Korea – Asia)

Brother Joaquim ERRA, Commission President (Spain – Europe)

Mr Dr Salvino LEONE (Italy – Europe)

Brother Robert MOORE (United Kingdom – Europe)

Ms Dr Silvia OGER (Argentina – Latin America)

Brother André SENE, Commission Secretary (Senegal – Africa)

This Code of Ethics was specifically requested by the 2019 General Chapter:

"We must draft a code of ethics for the Order based on our mission of evangelising the world of poverty, sickness and suffering, to provide guidance to the Provinces which, in turn, must adapt them to suit the local environments." (5.3.1.).

We felt it unnecessary to repeat what is already set out in the Charter of Hospitality in this "Code of Ethics" that we are now introducing, and neither is its purpose to summarise its contents.

We wish to offer the Provinces is a benchmark document to be tailored to suit each local situation, setting out the ethical principles that form the basis of the work performed by individual centres.

This Code of Ethics was submitted and approved by the General Definitory on February 16, 2021 and is subject to review and amendment, if appropriate, at least every in each Sexennium.

## THE SOURCES OF ETHICAL ACTION IN THE HOSPITALLER ORDER

Ethics is the science of identifying the good, knowing how to distinguish good from evil and, consequently, pursuing the good. At other times, it is what enables us to choose the best possible good, helping us to move towards excellence as the paradigm and purpose of hospitality. To do this, various universal ethical principles have been formulated as valid at all times and in all cultures throughout time (helping others in situations of need, defending one's own and others' lives, respecting each individual person in their own particular situation, fostering a better quality of life for all, etc.). The life of the Order therefore also includes ensuring the universality of these principles in its deliberations and decisions.

The ethical principles governing the life of the Order through the charism of Hospitality, derive from three main sources:

- *The Magisterium of the Church.* The Hospitaller Order is a part of the Catholic Church and, as such, takes as its benchmarks the Gospel criteria and the teachings of the Magisterium. This has set in motion a dynamic dialogue with the principles of the Magisterium regarding specific situations, particular features of the institutions and individual consciences.
- *Ethics in the life of Saint John of God.* This matter has been studied in depth in recent years (cf. The General Commission on Bioethics, Ethics in St. John of God, 2012). It enables us to allow to set out a series of fundamental principles to offer some general guidance for approaching the main ethically important and relevant problems facing the Order. So far, these have included:
  - the primacy of charity,
  - the transition from individual to institutional hospitality,
  - the practice of the moral virtues,
  - attention to "new poverties",
  - global outreach.
- *Charter of Hospitality* This is a document originally published in 2000 with a revised Ethics section published in 2017. This update was needed to address the new ethical problems that had arisen in the course of about twenty years. The Charter of Hospitality remains the basic ethical benchmark text for the Order. Any other Code, including this, or any other formulation of the different Provinces, must be drawn up within the framework of the ethical principles and regulations enshrined in the Charter of Hospitality.

## THE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES OF HOSPITALITY

1. The Hospitaller Order of St. John of God bases its fundamental ethical principle on its view of the human person as the centrepiece *of its work, especially the neediest human person. Accordingly*, the "other" always becomes the benchmark, not only to be borne in mind but to be given an active part in all its decisions.
2. This basic criterion has traditionally been translated in the Order as humanisation, both in terms of relations between the professionals and our guests being cared for, and between any person who comes to our centres and the hospitaller institution itself.
3. According to this principle of humanisation, we endeavour to ensure universal care in an inclusive manner, with the aim of caring for all those in need, regardless of their ethnic, religious or ideological affiliations. It is not just a matter of avoiding any kind of discrimination, but of actively promoting social inclusion in all the circumstances of life, welcoming and respecting the situation of each individual.
4. For the Order of St. John of God, hospitality, which is an individual moral virtue, also becomes institutional hospitality and the whole healthcare, social, educational and socio-health facilities act as a structure offering a radical sense of welcome and accompaniment to 'the other'.
5. The Order has adopted "the preferential option for the poor" proclaimed after the Second Vatican Council, offering particular care to the most vulnerable people and with a higher risk of being marginalised and falling into financial, as well as existential, poverty.
6. Respect for moral values forms an integral part of the hospitaller charism which is not only spiritual but equally ethical in nature.
7. We may summarise all we must do in our Centres in terms of the principles can be summed up in terms of *Ten Key Principles*
  - Protecting health and defending life
  - Respecting people's freedom and defending universal rights
  - The social accountability of the Order
  - Individual and institutional integrity
  - Seeking excellence as the best possible good
  - Truth and transparency
  - Acting honestly with the civil authorities
  - Humility
  - Respecting universality and pluralism
  - Impartiality, offering equal opportunities in all things.

The practical ways of implementing morally important actions may be grouped into five major areas:

- respect for, and the dignity of human life;
- protecting and promoting the rights of the people in our care;
- protecting the most vulnerable people;
- ethical organisations;
- environmental protection.

## **ETHICAL PROBLEMS THAT ARISE IN CARE**

### **1. Respect for, and the dignity of human life.**

The Order respects, promotes and defends human life in every stage and condition in human existence.

- *The beginning and the end of life.* The Order respects human life from its beginning to its natural end, using the technological aids that science makes available today to protect it. By rejecting both voluntary abortion and euthanasia, the Order is concerned about the people who take this decision and their families, to be able to help people under all circumstances. There are ways of preventing these borderline situations today. Faced with end-of-life or incurable diseases, great attention must be paid to respecting the will of the patient (advance healthcare directives or living wills) and to accompanying those who are at the end of life through programmes such as palliative care or the like.

Advances in reproduction methods and possibilities, as well as family diversity in many of our societies, deserve careful attention and respect, in order to be able to offer assistance guidelines and ethical criteria to accompany these new situations.

- *The Ethics of therapy.* The Order encourages every effort to care for the patient, using all available treatments and resources. Clinical care includes organ transplantation which we encourage by stressing the "donation culture" in our Centres. This culture also expresses a sense of shared responsibility towards the community.

Treatments must also involve the patients themselves who, together with the doctor, is responsible for their own treatment. This requires the model of the therapeutic alliance between doctor and patient to be established.

- *Clinical trials.* Ethics of research. In the Centres where trials are conducted, they must be carried out in compliance with international ethical standards and, always with the basic criterion of respect for the person. Wherever feasible, Clinical Research Ethics Committees shall be instituted. Otherwise advice may be requested of the Ethics Committees of other similar organisations.
- *The ethics of the new technologies.* In the Order's Centres, wherever feasible, new biotechnological and instrumental technologies must also be promoted. For the use of new and often sophisticated resources improve patient treatment, and guarantee and protect their rights.
- *Ethics Committees.* All the Centres of the Order ought to have their own Ethics Committee, according to the type of activity that is carried out there. This makes it possible to specialise in the specific dilemmas that arise in every type of situation. Where having their own ethics committee is not feasible, they can forge links with another benchmark institute or constitute one to serve several centres with similar activities and in the same context. Having the ethical debate close to home fosters an ethical culture among the professionals and makes it possible to deal with specific situations with greater certainty.

## **2. Protecting and promoting the rights of the people in our care.**

The Order responsibly assumes all the rights recognised or proclaimed for the protection and advancement of individuals, and in order to provide comprehensive care, it places emphasis on the following:

- *Privacy.* People in our care must be guaranteed adequate privacy by always taking into account the Order's professional relationship with them and by structuring the environments and facilities to guarantee it. We protect their right to privacy in all its dimensions:
  - physical, by caring for their environment
  - respecting their private beliefs and values
  - promptly seeking their informed consent by giving accurate and objective information.
- *Professional confidentiality.* We must always remember to respect the professional secrecy that has been the cornerstone of all medical care since the time of Hippocrates. Clinical data and information are the property of the person and must therefore be used

only with their consent and only shared with other professionals insofar as is essential for their care, acting with professionalism and respect, and using appropriate means to guarantee it.

Technological advances in the field of information and communications oblige us to comply with all the protection and security systems to ensure that we do not violate people's right to privacy and adequately protect their personal data.

- *Truth.* The right to truth means that the person in care is always kept informed about their health conditions regarding their 'welcoming' skills, with the human attention that this entails. The owner of this truth is the patient alone, and not the members of their family, unless the person requests one of them to participate. Communicating truth is particularly important when faced with clinical situations involving the choice of the person in care.
- *Autonomy and freedom of conscience.* All decisions affecting the health or existence of the person in care must be taken according to the conscience of that person.

They must be properly informed but without coercion or conditioning. With the exception of persons without legal capacity (for whom the legal guardian acts) the person in care must take their decisions alone while still being accompanied and counselled regarding their needs. In our Centres we respect and encourage people to play an active part in recovering their health.

### **3. Protecting particularly vulnerable people.**

Vulnerability is a feature of the typical frailty of every human being. There are nevertheless people whose vulnerability is much more pronounced and who therefore need more care from the Order. In our current situation, we can point out several specific situations:

- *People living in poverty.* Poverty is one specific type of vulnerability which may also create others. Moreover, all other types of vulnerability are aggravated by financial and social marginalization.
- *People with addiction problems.* The problem of addiction poses a huge challenge to the Hospitaller Order which is involved in it in various ways (preventive care and first aid services, clinical treatment procedures, medical treatment of complications and also psychological treatments). For without a powerful proposal that is capable of filling the lack of values leading to addiction, an individual may never win the battle against

substance-abuse. The Order, with its specific mission and model of care, is in a position to promote the offer of healthy values.

Other addictions to be considered are drugs and alcohol on account of its high prevalence in some countries, growing addiction to the new technologies (the Internet, gaming...) as well as gambling, sexual, compulsive spending addictions etc.

- *People with infectious diseases.* In some parts of the world there are various infectious diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and some new viral diseases, which cause many victims. In countries where these diseases are most widespread, and where the Order is present, providing medical and human care to patients suffering from these diseases must be an absolute care priority. The spread of sexually-transmitted diseases and their social repercussions require the Order to find a response in solidarity, with initiatives to reach out and offer appropriate treatment, respecting the patients' dignity and privacy.
- *People with rare diseases.* There are diseases that, because of the small number of patients, or the small returns of sales of some vital drugs (orphan drugs), place people in need of ethical care. They represent a new form of poverty or risk of exclusion from health care policies and economic priorities.

The Order must ensure that it pays due and fair attention to them.

- *People with multiple disabilities.* A truly humane society cannot reach out to the "strong" but towards the "weak", towards the people facing the greatest difficulties. In addition to its specific work of supporting people with disabilities, the Order must also perform a leading role in bearing witness and providing support precisely in this field: people with physical or mental illness or conditions (following the life and personal experience of our Founder, they have always been one particular group of patients on which our Order has always particularly focused our care). All ethical care criteria must be discussed, based on a sound concept of social inclusion for all people.
- *The elderly.* When the Order takes on centres for the elderly, it must strive, as far as possible, to encourage emotional bonds between them and their own families, also by helping to remove any obstacles that may arise. Staying in a house run by the Order should not only be viewed by the elderly as a means of solving the problem of accommodation, but must be thoroughly imbued with its charismatic sense of respect and care for the person and their advancement under all circumstances. The increasingly common cases of dementia and neurodegenerative disease require us to devote special attention to respect for the dignity, protection and rights of these people.

- *Victims of abuse.* One of the problems that has arisen in recent years concerns the abuse of vulnerable children and adults, which may take the form of physical, psychological and sexual abuse or maltreatment. In all the facilities of the Order, one particular type of abuse is institutional in nature. All the types of abuse mentioned above can potentially occur in hospitaler institutions. The Order has developed a set of guidelines for dealing with this issue, urging the Provinces to draw up specific protocols in compliance with the criteria and guidelines described. "The Order's Centres must be secure and safe places for everyone, particularly for the most vulnerable" (2019 General Chapter).
- *Women victims of genital mutilation.* In addition to the physical harm that this causes, consideration must also be given to the psychological damage that this practice does to the women, often expressed by a sense of being abandoned, a lack of motivation and submissiveness. In addition to robustly condemning this practice, particular care must be paid to health care for women who have suffered, properly welcoming them and offering them good social and psychological support.
- *Migrants and homeless people.* The Order responds to these people in the most varied ways, suggested by the creativity of those who know how to heed the "cries" of inequality, and the promptings of the Spirit. Reaching out to engage with their plight and needs makes it possible to offer tangible and appropriate answers according to the social situation in each country. Perhaps, despite the gap of many centuries, today's "suffering humanity" is very similar to what St. John of God had to face in his day. Whatever we do for them (with material support, accommodation, health care, etc.) is therefore in line with a charismatic continuity regarding the person and their social inclusion, as our main benchmark criterion.
- *Victims of people-trafficking.* Modern forms of slavery include trafficking in human beings, often for the purposes of prostitution, organ harvesting, for military purposes, drug trafficking, forced labour, etc. Children are often the victims of trafficking. The Order is sensitive to and keen to care for these people. It aims at protecting and safeguarding them in order to preserve their dignity, give them a chance to have a secure future and enable them to avoid falling into a spiral of abuse and exploitation.

#### **4. Ethical management**

The management of our Centres and services must always be guided by the principle of humanisation that inspires our models of personal care. Ethical principles do not only apply to care alone, but everything we organise as a whole must be held together by an ethical approach.

By its nature and identity, the Order must work to ensure that all our facilities and organisations are recognised and identified as ethical organisations, striving to achieve the highest degree of excellence in every part of the organisation for the benefit of people.

Our Centres cooperate with other entities, institutions and stakeholders of various kinds. This demands mutual loyalty, transparency and respect for ethics

Some of the aspects that we may consider are the following:

- *Resource-use.* Our Founder pioneered the provision of care and assistance in his day, and he did so by laying down standards for organising and distributing resources. Like him, we are also required to introduce cutting-edge innovations in our Centres to ensure compliance with the principles of accountability, fairness and justice.

Anything we use inappropriately or unnecessarily is being taken away from the people who need it to restore them to health or for their social integration. All our assets are for the service we perform to others, which is why they must be used proportionately and appropriately.

- *Transparent management.* In the matter of financial management, our Centres must not only be managed according to ordinary standards of financial transparency, but above all they must stand as examples to other healthcare entities, especially on account of their prudent and honest management of public funds and their financial investments.
- *Security.* Our workplaces must guarantee the maximum degree of safety and security, not only for our guests but also for our staff. They must comply with the laws and international standards governing safety in the workplace by minimizing risks, properly ventilating the rooms, removing architectural barriers, disposing of hazardous waste, and with regular environmental and food inspections.
- *Pluralism.* Our mission in each Centre covers a wide and diversified range, which requires us to organise our Centres to ensure pluralism. Our values and the culture of each Centre are the specific focus of this pluralism. No-one may arrogate to themselves the role of "owners". Those holding posts of responsibility and managers must implement an institutional project that has been previously discerned and agreed upon, that they must lead taking account of everyone involved, professionals and above all the guests in our care. This entails guaranteeing respect for diversity and inclusive universality.

- *Delegating responsibilities. Participation. Accepting functional roles.* We must endeavour to ensure that everyone will acquire all the skills they are capable of using, and be able to do so responsibly whatever their function or position within the organisation. This means that we have to encourage the responsible delegation of powers and work trustingly and for the advancement of all.
- *Human resources policy.* The Hospitaller Order of St. John of God as an organisation must openly demonstrate a sincere readiness to act professionally and transparently in relations with our employees, in compliance with current legislation, the Church's social teaching and safeguarding and protecting everyone's rights. In no case should this be detrimental to protecting and ensuring the rights of the guests in our care, which is the main purpose of our Centres.

Here are a few important principles regarding management and leadership:

*Professionalism.* Since we aspire to providing comprehensive and holistic care, and feel called to make a vocational response in our Centres, our professionalism must be taken absolutely for granted and beyond doubt and dispute. The ethics of responsibility and accountability entails guaranteeing professional care, appropriate to the resources of each context. Out of respect for the people we serve, we are under an obligation to select the best possible professionals (in human and technical terms) to carry out our mission.

*Personnel selection and employment contracts.* Employees must be selected according to their technical and human qualifications, ensuring that their motivations, skills and behaviour are compliant with the Order's principles, with reference to the following contractual criteria:

- Technical skills.
- Human and relational skills
- Ethical qualities.

*Relations with our employees.* Considering that the human person is the centrepiece of our entire organisation we must ensure that human resource management is designed to motivate, attract, promote and integrate employees consistently with their needs and the purposes of our Centres and always based on the social justice criteria.

*Remuneration.* The Church's social teaching considers salary to be the specific means of ensuring social justice in industrial relations. But apart from the actual remuneration,

we must remain receptive to a real commitment to improving the financial and social conditions of our employees.

*Recognition.* In addition to a sound process of staff selection and assessment, it is key to properly accompany people throughout their professional career. In an environment in which people work with limitations, pain, exclusion... we must help each other by having the right tools and procedures in place to help us sustain our commitment to the mission. In addition to remuneration, working conditions, etc, it is important to promote policies to ensure that people, individually and as groups, are given their due recognition. In our Order, people, co-workers and brothers, are the essential elements that enable us to pursue the objectives and the mission of the organisation.

- In order to ensure that the centres of the Order are ethical organisations, they must foster and bear in mind the following:
  - With internal and external information systems that ensure accurate accounting, governed by the principles of honesty, humility and transparency.
  - Having procedures for detecting care and non-care ethical conflicts, to be able to properly address them.
  - Applying ethical criteria to deal with any conflicts of interest that may arise in both internal and external relations.
  - Applying ethical principles in business dealings, relationships, agreements, contracts, and other interactions, with suppliers, entities or groups with which any kind of agreement or cooperation arrangements are established.
  - Promoting up-to-date formation and promoting an ethical mindset among the Brothers and Co-workers in the Order's Centres.

## **5. Environmental protection**

The Order of St. John of God pursues a holistic vision in its work in the field of preventive medicine, treatment and the promotion of health. We know that it is not possible to be healthy on a sick planet. Protecting and defending the environment is an ethical-moral principle that we must always bear in mind in all we do.

The ethics of responsibility and accountability means that we may not neglect solidarity with future generations or ignore the consequences of our actions on the environment.

We must also take into account the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) guiding the United Nations "Agenda 2030 " for Sustainable Development. We consider some of them to be closely related to our mission:

Ending poverty.

Zero hunger.

Clean water available to all.

Eradicating hunger.

Primary healthcare goals (vaccinations, antibiotic treatments, hygiene, etc.)

Gender equality.

Reducing inequalities.

Peace, Justice and solid Institutions.

Alliance by objectives.

The pursuit of these goals will lead to building a more hospitable society and greater ethical commitment.

- *Responsibility for the resources* of the biosphere. Protecting the integrity of creation lies at the heart of the growing interest shown in the environment. The ecological balance and the sustainable and fair use of the world's resources are important elements in relations with all the communities in our global village. We must promote strategic attitudes that create responsible relationships with the environment in which we live and share, and of which we are merely its stewards.
- *Some operational strategies.* In order to promote genuine respect for the environment we can also perform certain tasks in our centres as a matter of priority:
  - Guaranteeing the vital interests of future generations in the face of the less urgent interests of the present generation.
  - If any measures cause damage, priority must be given to reversible ones.
  - Giving priority to renewable energy sources.

- Defending the value of every part of Nature. In our centres we often have gardens or grounds that we must take care of. Others are located in the countryside, in villages, in natural areas for which we must show special respect.
- Combining modern technologies with the experience of natural rhythms and other natural things and of creation
- Rationally and responsibly using our resources and assets.
- Always opting for the most ecological alternatives possible, and properly treating all the waste we generate in our centres.
- The idea of social justice cannot be separated from ecological commitment. Social, economic, political and ecological dilemmas cannot be addressed in isolation. An ethical approach to integral ecology includes protecting cultural and environmental diversity, combating poverty and its causes, and restoring the dignity of all Creation.

## **FOSTERING ETHICS IN THE ORDER**

All the topics mentioned in this Code of Ethics together with those discussed at greater length in the Charter of Hospitality must also be incorporated in specific education and formation programs in the Order for both Brothers and Co-workers.

Fostering an ethical culture among the people and the organisations connected with the Order helps us to pursue our mission in the best possible way. This is a key, cross-cutting aspect that concerns not only clinical work, but also social, environmental and research aspects, as well as standing as a model and a way of organising the Order's structures.