



Supporting Document  
for Motion to Amend Rule 1  
by Adur Valley Circle

## Rationale

The change will enable circles to enrol ladies as members of their circle AND therefore into the Association with all the benefits and entitlements that this brings.

### Why this Change is necessary

Since our foundation in **1908**, the Catenian Association has provided Catholic men with a vital network of **Faith, Family, and Friendship**. We have supported each other through life's challenges, served our communities, and built lasting bonds.

But now, in 2025, we must ask ourselves a simple question:

### Are we doing everything we can to remain relevant, vibrant, and true to our values?

Today, half of the Catholic population in the UK—**Catholic women**—are excluded from our Association. Many of these women share our faith, our commitment to community, and our desire for friendship and service. By amending Rule 1 to welcome **Catholic laity**, we can build a stronger, more inclusive Association that reflects both the modern Church and the society in which we live.

### Why Now?

When the Catenians were founded, the world was a very different place:

- Women couldn't vote.
- Few women worked outside the home.
- Public life, including professional networks, was male-dominated.

Today, that world is gone. Catholic women are leaders in parishes, schools, charities, and businesses. They are vital to the Church's mission and to the Catholic community. Yet in the Catenians, they remain on the sidelines.

By making this change, we are not discarding our traditions. We are renewing them—bringing our values of faith and friendship to everyone who shares them.

### Why this Change Strengthens Our Association

- **We become more relevant:** Mixed groups better reflect modern Catholic life, making us more attractive to new generations.
- **We reflect Church values:** The Catholic Church acknowledges the vital role of women in faith communities. A mixed group better reflects the Church's teaching on the dignity and value of women as equal participants in the mission of the Church.
- **We grow together:** Adur Valley Circle has already welcomed women into our Circle membership. Our numbers have grown, our meetings are enriched, and the spirit of friendship has only deepened.

***Faith, Family and Friendship,  
let's make it mean something in today's world.***

- **We future-proof the Association:** Gender-exclusive organisations can be perceived as outdated or irrelevant in today's society. A mixed group is more likely to appeal to younger generations, who value inclusivity and diversity, thereby ensuring the group remains relevant and attractive to new members.

## Who Would Join?

This proposal is not aimed at the partners of male Catenians, though they are welcome to join. It's about creating space for all Catholic women who are seeking faith-based friendship and support, including:

- Catholic women with non-Catholic husbands who seek support in their faith.
- Catholic women attending Mass alone who would benefit from friendship and encouragement.
- Catholic women (with Catholic partners who are not interested in membership) but who are eager to share their talents with an organisation like ours.

## Practicalities of Implementation

### How this would work in practice

This proposal is about opening a door—not forcing anyone through it.

- Each Circle would decide when they are ready to become open to female members.
- All Circles would continue to welcome visiting members, regardless of gender, maintaining the spirit of inter-Circle friendship.
- Male-only and female-only spaces can still exist. We propose regular men-only and women-only events to ensure that all members continue to find the fellowship they most value.
- Titles and traditions: Just as we refer to one another as Brother, we propose welcoming women as Sister. While it may take some getting used to, it is a simple, respectful way to continue our shared traditions.

## Success Story

Adur Valley Circle has already embraced this approach by enrolling women as Circle members (not Association members) and our membership has grown by 30% in the last year.

## Conclusion

This motion is not driven by concerns over dwindling numbers but by a commitment to inclusivity and doing what is right. However, this change presents a tremendous opportunity to rejuvenate our Association and foster growth.

For Circles that are reluctant to embrace the new opportunities, Provincial Councils should establish new Circles to ensure that women in their provinces have access to membership.

Rather than fearing this transition, we should embrace it as a fresh beginning—one that honours our founding principles while addressing the needs of today's Catholic community.