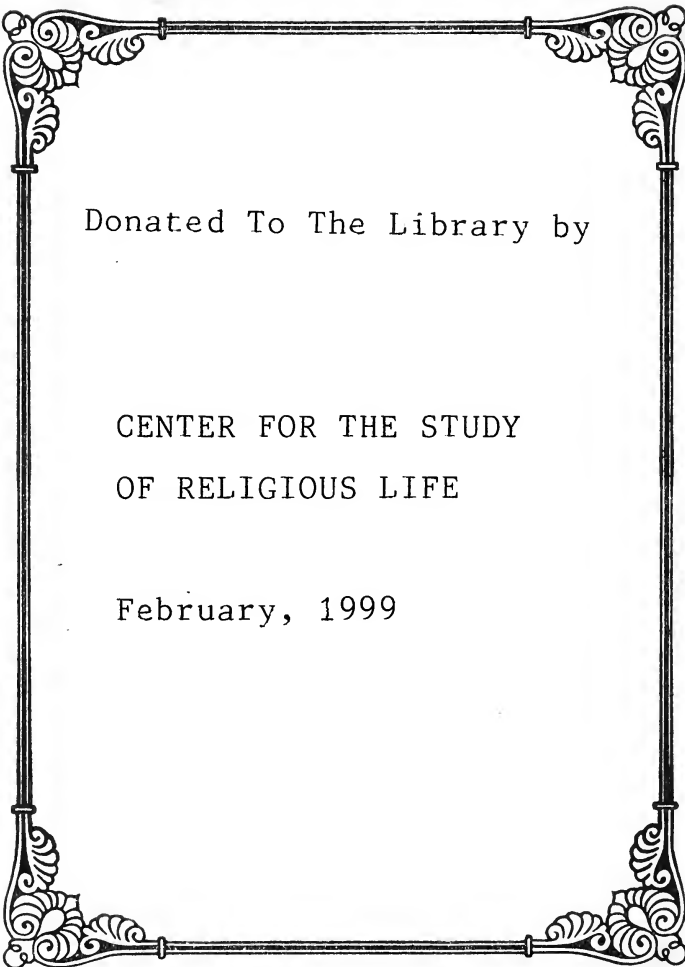


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# CONSTITUTIONS

OF THE

# Sisters of Charity

OF THE

*Blessed Virgin Mary.*



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# CONSTITUTIONS

OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF THE  
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

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## CHAPTER I.

ON THE PERFECTION TO WHICH THE SISTERS  
OUGHT TO ASPIRE, OR ON THEIR INTERIOR  
SPIRIT AND RELIGIOUS PERFECTION.

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*The Aim of the Institute, Its Means, Vows and  
Other Virtues.*

1. The object for which God in His goodness has deigned to call and bring together the Sisters of Charity of the B. V. M., is their own perfection and the salvation of their neighbor; to secure this end according to the proper vocation of this Institute, they consecrate themselves by special devotion to the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary and Joseph. To this, therefore, shall they direct their labors, that they imitate more and more the hidden life of this Holy Family.

2. It belongs to our vocation to live in any part of the world, where there is hope of promoting the greater honor of God, and of being serviceable in the salvation of souls.

3. To honor the holy Childhood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Sisters shall instruct children, whose minds they shall store with

the principles of the true Faith, and whose hearts especially they shall train to love God by the most diligent practice of all virtues, so that, whilst they sow in their minds the seeds of learning, they shall unite their souls to God by a fervent love.

4. The better to obtain the end of the Constitutions, by which they may acquire abundant merit for themselves and be useful to others, let them take the utmost care not to neglect any point of perfection, which by the grace of God they may obtain.

5. To the more easy attainment of this, an application of themselves with their whole mind to the exercises of the spiritual and interior life helps very much, and they should strive as much as possible to let these animate all their actions.

6. Therefore, first of all, let the Sisters seek their own perfection and the salvation of their souls; and giving this the first place, let them spare no endeavor to obtain it.

7. Let all thoroughly understand how much it helps and conduces to the attainment of this perfection to apply themselves with all their souls to the study of the virtues of Charity, Simplicity and Humility which especially are the characteristic virtues of their Institute. Thus each member and the whole congregation shall be animated by these three virtues, as the body is by the soul.

8. Let all have always a right intention, especially when they rise in the morning, and as much as possible let them recall it before every action.

9. Let all who have joined this congregation earnestly apply themselves to the study of solid virtues, and of spiritual things, and be persuaded that these are of greater value than any natural gifts, for they are, as it were, the soul, from which all our life should receive force and strength.

10. Let them be ever mindful that they are Sisters of Charity of the B. V. M., a title by which God has deigned to honor them. Let them endeavor, therefore to show themselves worthy of that title, and accordingly, not only to feel honor and love for one another in their hearts, but, moreover, to express it in their actions, especially by sweet address, by humbly yielding, so that every one may be such as the Apostle desires "having become all to all," etc.

11. And as it is necessary that Charity be the principal bond of the Sisters, let all carefully shun as most opposed to true charity, all particular friendships, by which in a short time, the whole Community would be destroyed.

12. If then, they desire to obtain true perfection, let each one endeavor to divest herself of every inordinate affection, especially in regard to places, offices and persons; and let her be ready to leave everything as soon as Obedience shall desire it, following that counsel of Christ: "He who shall leave," etc.

13. Moreover, it will help very much thereunto to place themselves and all they have with great confidence in the Hands of Divine Providence, for thus having been divested of

all things created, they shall the more easily live for God alone.

14. Loving with a pure love God alone and their neighbor for the love of God, inasmuch as they can, let them cheerfully and promptly accept, and aided by the grace of God, love and ardently desire privations, insults and injuries, all of which may befall them without their having given occasion thereunto, yea, even though they have acted well; and thus let them endeavor to be likened in some manner to our Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered greater things for us, and so left us an example for our imitation.

15. All who desire to live in this congregation, should ardently love holy poverty, which Jesus Christ, our Lord, and His holy Mother so diligently practiced; therefore let them be satisfied with the things that are merely necessary according to the spirit and customs of the Community.

16. The more easily to obtain this, no Sister shall have anything as her own; but all things shall be possessed in common. Therefore, no one is allowed to have or use anything as her own; to lend or borrow or dispose of anything that is in the house, without the consent of the Superior.

17. Should they perceive that they need anything, let them with great simplicity make it known to the Sister to whom it belongs to provide for all in the Lord.

18. The Sister whose duty it is to provide, should diligently inquire as to what may be necessary for the Sisters, and let her supply



this with great charity; in such a manner, however, that due regard be had both to the spirit of Poverty and to the means of the Community.

19. As regards clothing and all other things given for their use, let them not put aside nor alter them as they may think fit, without the special consent of the Superior.

20. Any money confided to their care should be used most discreetly, and let them understand that they sin against their vow of Poverty whenever they use even the smallest things without the special permission of the Superior, at least reasonably presumed.

21. In order that that Poverty which belongs to the Institute may be most scrupulously observed, no one, not even the Mother, nor the Superior, shall be allowed to depart in any way from that simplicity and that spirit of poverty which belong to them, as regards clothing, food and furniture.

22. By the Vow of Poverty the Sisters are by no means deprived of the ownership of their property, if they have any, but only of the administration, usufruct or use of it.

23. Hence it is necessary that before taking their vows, they give up the whole administration, usufruct or use of their property.

24. Nevertheless, they can reserve to themselves the power of revoking this concession, but they cannot make use of this power whilst bound by their Vows, unless previously permitted by the S. Cong. of the Propagation of the Faith. The same is to be observed of whatsoever the Sisters may receive

by will or gift, after having taken their vows.

25. The Sisters, however, can whenever they wish, dispose of the said goods by will or donation, having previously obtained the permission of the Superior General. Moreover, the Sisters, with the consent of the same Superior General, are not forbidden to use proprietary rights, in accordance with the civil law.

26. As regards Chastity, let them understand how earnestly they must strive to cultivate this angelic virtue; hence they must carefully avoid everything opposed to its spirit, such as the desire of seeing and hearing all things, long conversations with seculars, and the wish to attract the notice of others, whether interns or externs.

27. They will more easily observe this, if such modesty of the eyes and of the whole person shine forth in them, that they may be like models and never fall into the slightest suspicion of anything contrary to this angelic virtue.

28. To preserve this virtue let them be persuaded that, although exterior mortification helps very much thereunto, yet, unless this be accompanied by that of the interior, by which the intellect and the will and all desires of flesh and blood are kept in continual subjection, under the guidance of obedience, it will neither last long nor profit much.

29. Such is the obedience desired from all the Sisters, that everywhere and always they entirely and with profound humility subject themselves to the will of their Superior, so

that in all things in which sin does not manifestly appear, they give to the Superior, whoever she is whether of rough or gentle disposition, that obedience of which Our Lord gave so bright an example, since they ought to know clearly that they give themselves and their obedience not to man but to God himself in the person of the Superior.

30. To promote more and more the welfare and the end of this Institution, it is very necessary that all the Sisters should give themselves to perfect obedience, and therefore, they shall give it to the Ordinary of the Diocese in which they reside, to the Confessor, to the Mother Superior, or in her place to the Sister Assistant, in all things that appertain to their office.

31. Those who teach in the schools should, with great humility obey the Sister Directress and whilst traveling the one named by the Superior.

32. At the Superior's voice and at the sound of the bell, all should be most prompt in obeying, leaving everything else.

33. Every one must fulfill whatsoever penances may be enjoined for her defects, negligences or anything else. And let every one endeavor to receive and perform her penances promptly, with a true desire of amendment and spiritual progress, though they should be enjoined for some defect not blameworthy.

34. Besides the ordinary exercises of piety and religion, let the Sisters go to Confession every eight days, and according to the advice of their Confessor, receive the Most Holy

Sacrament of the Eucharist. Let there be one Confessor for all, appointed by the Bishop, and to him all must lay their consciences entirely open. Moreover, four times a year the Bishop will appoint an extraordinary Confessor, to whom all the Sisters shall go; yet they are not obliged to Sacramental Confession.

35. Every one who desires to live in this Congregation must, in the beginning, make a general confession of her whole life, and after, receive the most sacred Body of Christ, Our Lord; and all shall, whenever the renovation of Vows takes place, as explained in the common rules, make a general confession, beginning from the last.

36. For their greater progress in spirit, and for their greater submission and humility, and for their mutual correction, as also for their safer direction, each one should make it her duty that all the errors, defects and dangers which the Sisters may have noticed, should be manifested to the Superior; for it is impossible for the Superior herself to see and hear everything, and therefore, should any one know any grievous temptation of another, let her, with charity inform the Superior.

37. To guard against temptations the Sisters should practice those virtues which are especially opposed to their evil inclinations.

38. They must conceal no temptation which they ought to manifest to their Confessor, nay, they should have their whole soul entirely unfolded before him, in order that they

may be better and more safely guided in the Lord.

39. All should take a moderate care of their health, and therefore, if they perceive that anything is hurtful to them, or is needed, whether in diet, clothing, lodging, or office, let them inform the Superior or the Sister who has care of these things, that she may provide what is most expedient in the Lord.

40. In time of sickness let them show humility and patience, and confide themselves, their health and its treatment entirely to the Superior and to the physician.

## CHAPTER II.

ON THE DISCIPLINE TO BE OBSERVED BOTH  
WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE HOUSES OF  
THE CONGREGATION.

*The Constitutions or Common Rules which Chiefly  
Regulate Their Duties Towards Themselves,  
Towards Others, Towards Superiors,  
Towards Strangers, Etc.*

1. Every day all must be present at Mass, and, during the week, no one shall recite long prayers privately, with the omission, or to the notable injury of their special duties.

2. No one may undertake any labor which seems to be above her strength. If such should be enjoined, let her inform the Superior, and be ready to do what the Superior, having understood the matter, shall think best in the Lord.

3. They must carefully shun idleness as the parent of all vices, and should they have finished the duties of their offices, and time be left, they must employ it in other occupations suitable to the condition of each. But if they have no such occupation, let them go to the Mother or Superior to learn what should be done.

4. They shall never be allowed to keep in the house birds or other animals, in the feeding and care of which, much time is lost.

5. Cleanliness, without affectation, should be observed in their dress, as well as in all things, and they should avoid all childish levity, immoderate laughter, frivolous talk and gestures, or whatever may, in the least, seem to be opposed to religious modesty.

6. No one shall eat anything out of the accustomed times, nor out of the house; at home, nothing may be taken except in the refectory, during the time of meals.

7. As moderation in eating greatly promotes the health of the body and purity of the soul, let all, even those who live in mission houses, endeavor as much as possible to observe modesty and mortification, and let all conform themselves, as regards the quality and quantity of food, to the customs of the Mother House. Besides, they must keep with great fervor, the fasts and vigils prescribed by the church. And, in order that they may be distinguished by greater mortification than other Christians, let them fast on the vigil of the feast of the Purification, and of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin

Mary, and let them abstain from meat on the three days preceding the renovation of their Vows.

8. Before a Confessor is appointed by the Bishop, let all earnestly beg of God that in His mercy He may choose the one He knows to be best fitted for this office. But as soon as he is appointed, let all receive him as a guide sent from God, and follow his advice as that of Jesus Christ.

9. Let all carefully prepare themselves to celebrate the feasts of the Purification, Annunciation, Visitation, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the feast of her Immaculate Conception. And every year, after eight days of retreat (which is most conveniently made during the long vacation) the Vows shall be openly renewed by all the Sisters on a certain day, or on the Feast of the Assumption of the B. V. M. But let the Sisters understand that when, according to the formula, they renew their Vows for three years, the time is to be counted, not from any one renovation, but from three to three years since their first taking the Vows.

10. If any Sister, for any grave reason, can not perform these exercises, then she will afterwards make a retreat of at least four or five days.

11. Out of time of recreation silence is to be strictly observed, as is becoming religious persons. Therefore, if through necessity or utility, any one have to speak, it must be done briefly and in a low voice.

12. Let all be careful in their conversation

not to praise their own nationality to the seeming contempt of others, but let them show charity in all things, and let them emulate with all their might those whom they know to be more advanced in perfection, no matter to what nation they belong.

13. As becomes the Sisters of Charity of the B. V. M. let each one be ready to forego her own convenience whenever there is question of either the good of the community or even of another Sister.

14. They are allowed to embrace each other with charity, as religious affection requires, especially when any one has taken her Vows, or returns home after a long absence, or for reconciliation; but care must be taken that it be done in a becoming manner and modestly, and never in the public streets, especially if it should attract attention.

15. Never, even for the smallest space of time, shall any one be alone with men, unless the door remain open; and on no condition shall any man, even a priest, spend a night in the house.

16. Although there should always appear in the Sisters an angelic modesty, they should show this especially in the presence of men, and never should they allow the least familiarity.

17. No one shall consult a physician, nor take any medicine without the permission of the Superior.

18. No one, except when traveling, shall be allowed to pass the night, lodge or take her meals in the houses of relatives or others.



19. No one, when going from one place to another, shall take anything along with her without leave of the Superior, who shall, with great charity, provide everything necessary; and when she arrives at the other house she must give the Superior an account of all the things she brought with her.

20. To avoid many inconveniences, and to take away the cause of much trouble to the community, no one shall disclose her temptations or difficulties to any one except the Superior or Confessor; and whatever is said in such conversations, as also in the chapter of faults, and whatever else is told them by the Superiors, should be kept secret.

21. Those who are sick for a long time should endeavor to receive Holy Communion every eight days.

22. As the manner of living, in exterior things, ought to be common, no one shall undertake any penance without the consent of the Confessor or Superior, whose duty it is to decide what penances are best suited to further the spiritual progress of each.

23. The Sisters in the Mission must write to the Mother whenever anything of consequence shall have happened; with great simplicity, however, lest charity or the religious spirit might suffer from it.

24. Those who live in the houses of the Missions should, as much as they can, take care to conform themselves to the same rules which are observed in the Mother House; and they shall not introduce anything new though it might appear to be much better.

25. That due order may be kept, the Superior shall occupy the first place, the Assistant the second, and let the other Sisters be arranged according to the order of their profession. But when the Mother or her Assistant comes to the house the first place shall be given to her. The Superior of another house, or the Sister Visitor, shall occupy the second place.

26. Every one is bound to answer with simplicity and modesty all the questions which are asked by the Sister Visitor, and which tend to the greater glory of God, the welfare of the community, or her private good; and each one must keep secret whatever is said by her and by the Visitor; should any reprimand or advice be given, it must be received in all religious humility as coming from God.

27. Letters which are sent by a Sister to the Mother, or by the Mother to a Sister, shall enjoy perfect freedom, so that the immediate Superior is not allowed to open, to read, or to inquire to which Sister a letter has come, or who wrote to the Mother; and if this letter contain anything which has reference to the immediate Superior, let it be communicated orally or in writing, without showing the letter.

28. No one shall write to any other without obtaining leave, and showing the letter to the Superior; and should letters be sent to the Sisters, they must first be given to the Superior, who, after having read them, may give them or keep them, as, in the Lord, she may judge expedient.

29. No one shall curiously inquire about the actions and sayings of any one else, or seek to know why, for instance, one Sister is sent hither or goes to another house, or what qualities others have, and the like; for all these things give rise to complaints; yet should any one notice anything which she thinks should be communicated to the Superior, let her tell the Superior only.

30. Let no one ever presume to blame the actions or commands of Superiors; nay, let all avoid as much as possible even talking about these matters; and, fulfilling their offices faithfully, let them receive, as from God Himself, whatever may be determined about themselves and others by Superiors.

31. If time and duties allow, the Sisters may visit the sick, especially the poor, but only with the permission of the Superior, and never without a companion. They must not leave the house before daylight, and should be home before dark.

32. No one may stop in the streets to talk, especially with strangers; should necessity or politeness, however, require it, let them answer briefly, and avoid all vain and useless talk.

33. No one shall go out of the house without leave of the Superior, whom all must inform about what they are going to do; and when they return, they shall again tell the Superior whether anything contrary to rule has occurred, and this must be observed by the Superior herself towards her Assistant. Let them know, moreover, that only necessary visits are allowed.

34. Before they leave the house they shall go to the chapel and there pray to God, offer Him the actions which they are going to perform, and, on their return, let them again repair to the chapel to give thanks to God.

35. Never shall any Sister obtain permission to go out without a companion, whom the Superior shall appoint.

36. When strangers come to the house to visit any one, they must always be received in the parlor. The sisters shall not come to them, nor hold any conversation with them without first obtaining leave from the Superior.

37. In the parlor every Sister must have a companion, and the conversation must not be prolonged beyond half an hour without leave of the Superior.

38. It shall never be allowed any one of the Sisters, under any condition whatever, to take care of the sacristy, to direct the choir, or to play the organ in any church or public oratory; the articles, however, that belong to divine worship may be made or repaired at home.

39. No Sister is allowed to invite any one, even a relative, to dinner, much less to a lodging, without the special permission of the Superior, who shall very rarely grant it, and never to men.

40. Secular rumors and the defects of others are never to be related; if anything new has happened which may afford edification, let it be related with humility.

41. Should it happen that any priest, even

their Confessor, should wish to grant them privileges contrary to their rule or the spirit of the Institute, as, for example, leave to travel or to incur expense, and the like, let them answer with humility and firmness, that these things are not allowed, as being far removed from the spirit by which the Sisters of Charity of the B. V. M. should be animated.

42. Finally, let all hold their rules in great esteem, and let them be persuaded that they are the means by which Almighty God in His mercy and goodness wishes them to arrive at the highest perfection, and lead many other souls to Heaven ; and should anything seem hard, let them remember that "the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." To observe them more easily, let all recall them to memory once a month, by reading or hearing them read.

## CHAPTER III.

ON THE SPECIAL ACTS OF PIETY AND RELIGION  
TO BE PERFORMED DAILY AND WEEKLY.

1. Every day, in summer, they shall rise at half past four, and in winter at five o'clock. After twenty minutes they shall all assemble in the chapel and there pray to God, offering Him the actions of the day, and let them recite the Pater, Ave, Credo, Confiteor, and the Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity. On every second day they shall recite the Litanies ; all

these are followed by meditation or mental prayer for half an hour; then let them be present at Mass.

2. On communion days they shall make their thanksgiving for not less than twenty five minutes; after which they breakfast, and then they must immediately go to work.

3. Let them make an examination of conscience for ten minutes before dinner, during which there shall be spiritual reading. Let grace be said before and after dinner, and then let them visit the Blessed Sacrament and say the Angelus.

4. After this, let them have recreation for one hour, and at a given signal let all religiously observe silence until recreation time after supper.

5. In the afternoon, at an appointed time, they shall make another visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and recite the beads. In the evening after supper, there shall be recreation, and then spiritual reading for half an hour.

6. After this they shall recite the Pater, Ave, Credo, Confiteor, and the Act of Consecration to St. Joseph, and the seven Dolours of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Let them make an examination of conscience for ten minutes and the points for the next day's meditation having been read, they shall silently retire to rest.

7. On Sundays and feast days they shall recite in a distinct voice the Little Office of the B. V. M. in their chapel or oratory.

8. They shall approach the Holy Table on

those days and with that intention specified in the Catalogue of Communions.

9. When any of the Sisters die they shall offer to God for the repose of her soul the first three communions which they receive, and nine Rosaries, which they shall recite after her death. And it is the Superior's duty to see that one High Mass be sung, and three Low Masses be said at the Mother house, and one Mass in each of the other houses.

10. Let all be present at the chapter of faults on Friday, and at the instructions which are to be given on Sundays.

11. Once a week, on Friday, or on the day most convenient, the Superior shall call the Sisters together for the chapter of faults. All being arranged in order, let them recite "Veni Creator" with the prayer, "O God, who instructest the hearts of the faithful," etc. Then let some one read a part of the constitutions; after which, each one kneeling, shall accuse herself and be accused of her faults, ask pardon and humbly receive the reprimands or penances which the Superior shall enjoin.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ON THE GOVERNMENT AND THE ELECTION OF SUPERIORS.

1. St. Joseph's Convent, in the County and Diocese of Dubuque, will continue to be the Mother house and Novitiate of the whole

community ; neither can be removed therefrom without the permission of the Bishop of Dubuque ; and no foundation can be made without the permission of the Mother Superior, nor without the previous petition, or at least the full consent of the Bishop of the place in which it may seem advisable to establish new houses.

2. The congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the B. V. M. shall be governed by a Sister who shall bear the title of Mother during the time of her office.

3. The office of Superior General, or Mother, of the four consultors and of the Superiors of the different houses of the congregation lasts for three years only. The Mother, however, and the four consultors can be elected for another term of three years immediately following, if it should seem expedient. And the local Superiors, some or all, if advisable, can be confirmed in office for another term of three years by the Mother and consultors newly elected.

4. The election should be made, not by the convocation of a chapter, but by ballot in the following manner :

5. A month before her three years of office expires, the Mother should notify the Bishop of Dubuque ; and at the same time, she should acquaint, by suitable letters, the Superiors of the different houses, of the renewal and election of Superiors, that they may prepare all things for it, and pray to God that a worthy choice may be made. Then let her advise with her Sister consultors concerning the



Sisters to be proposed as candidates ; she can invite also to this council other Sisters of approved wisdom and experience, especially any who may have held the office of Superior General before. The Sisters concerning whose election the council is to be held, should never be admitted to it. After these arrangements, let her write, in appropriate letters, the names of three Sisters, one of whom may be chosen to the office of Mother ; and also the names of six other Sisters, four of whom may be chosen to the office of Consultors. Any of the foresaid three Sisters can furthermore be elected to this office ; nor does anything hinder other Sisters not named in these letters, from being chosen to the office of Mother or Consultors. Let her send these letters to the Superiors of the different houses ; and let these write secretly in a list the name of the Sister whom they select for the office of Mother, and likewise the names of the Sisters for the office of Consultors ; afterwards let them seal it. If there should be in a house more than three Sisters five years professed (for they have not a vote before that time), let the local Superior call them in chapter, and make known to them the names of the Sisters proposed as above, and let her tell them that they may select these or others. She shall merely preside, since she must give her vote independently of this local chapter ; and she shall appoint two tellers to collect the votes given by ballot in an enclosed list, or secretly communicated to them orally by any unable to write. Then let the votes be

counted publicly and in a clear voice, by the tellers, and afterwards let the names of those who received votes be published, but in no way should the names of these electing be made known, nor should the votes of those who are absent be supplied. Then let the lists be burned, and let the local Superior send the result of the voting, written and sealed, together with her own vote, to the Bishop of Dubuque, who, with the two persons selected by him, after having collected all the lists, shall secretly receive or hear the votes; and that Sister shall be considered elected who will have received the greater part of the legitimate votes, although the excess above half the number be only one or half a vote, according to the general terms of law. If, however, no Sister shall have obtained more than half the votes, the half will suffice, provided that a difficulty do not arise from the fact that another Sister has received the other half. Now, should such a difficulty arise, or should the number of any Sister's votes not reach the half, then let the Bishop refer the matter to the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, to which it shall belong to provide in the Lord.

6. To be eligible as Superior General, a Sister ought to be forty years of age, and eight years professed, but if one cannot be found with these and the other necessary qualities, let her be at least thirty-five years of age and five years professed.

7. The Consultors to be eligible should have

held for three years the office of local Superior in some house of the congregation.

8. The Bishop shall declare the name of the Mother elect, likewise the names of the four Sister Consultors elect, and if no grave defect occur in the act of election, he will confirm it. Then the Mother elect, together with the four Consultors assembled shall, by secret ballot, elect anew, or confirm the Superiors of the different houses and the Sister Assistant. Afterwards the Mother and the Consultors shall elect, not by ballot, but orally, the Sister Visitor, the Mistress of Novices, the Procurator, and the Directress of Schools. The other offices can be distributed by the Superiors of the different houses.

9. A house of the congregation shall always be immediately subject to the Bishop of the Diocese in which it is situated.

10. If the Mother Superior should die during the time of her office, the first Sister Consultor shall succeed her and take her place during the remainder of the three years.

11. But if the Mother Superior should become unfit to discharge the duties of her office by reason of grave defects of body or mind, the Sister Assistant, after having seriously, as is becoming, considered the matter before God, can of her own authority assemble the four Consultors and, after consultation, lay the whole case before the Bishop, who, in his prudence and justice may suspend the Superior General from the administration of her office, and refer the case to the S. Congregation of the Propagation of the

Faith. In the mean time, the Sister Assistant, or one of the Consultors designated by the Bishop, shall take the place of the Mother Superior. If the Sister Assistant should refuse to call the council, or, in accordance with the plurality of votes, to refer the matter to the Bishop, then the Consultors can do both, if three of them judge it necessary in the Lord.

12. If the suspension or deposition of the Superior General be approved of by the S. Congregation, then, according to its decision of the case, they shall proceed to a new election, either immediately or at the end of the three years' term.

13. But if any of the Superiors of houses should act improperly, or become unfit for office, she shall be removed therefrom by the Superior General, with the secret consent of the four Consultors.

## CHAPTER V.

### ON PARTICULAR OFFICES.

#### SECTION I.

##### *On the Mother Superior.*

1. Let the Mother Superior, mindful that authority amongst religious brings with it duty and responsibility rather than honor, be persuaded how great and manifold are the obligations imposed upon her by her office. Hence let her strenuously labor, that the Sisters may progress in solid virtue.

2. Before any one is admitted into our congregation, the Mother should use every care to discover whether the person who demands admission possess the requisite qualities.

3. It is the duty of the Mother Superior to preserve all accounts, letters, contracts and other documents, which should be registered in a book, so that they may be easily found, if required ; and these things must be kept in a safe, with three keys, one of which should remain in her own possession, the second in that of the Assistant, and the third in that of the Procurator.

4. In the same safe should be kept all the money and valuables of the house.

5. It belongs to the Mother to see that all the Sisters, Superiors as well as inferiors, make use of the same dress and furniture ; and she shall never allow any change in this regard.

## SECTION II.

### *On the Sister Assistant.*

1. The Assistant should be mindful that it belongs to her to help the Mother in all her duties ; moreover, she shall act as Superior of the Community in the house in which the Mother resides, and shall provide for everything.

2. It belongs to the Assistant to see that all the rules be most carefully observed in the Mother House, and therefore she shall examine diligently whether all perform their duty faithfully and well.

3. That this may be done more accurately

and easily, let her arrange every morning what is to be done by each and every one, so as to inform them in due time.

4. Once a month she shall inspect the whole house, and every single room, that she may better know what is to be corrected, and whether anything be needed.

5. If any one be sick, she shall, with the greatest solicitude and charity, provide what is necessary, as well for the body as for the soul.

### SECTION III.

#### *On Local Superiors.*

1. The Superior of a house should thoroughly understand that the observance of the rules depends upon her, and therefore, she should take the utmost care that they are observed.

2. Although excessive severity and harshness do harm, yet, too much indulgence has the same effect; therefore, the Superior should govern with a certain maternal kindness, and with due moderation.

3. Let her understand that she cannot grant leave to any Sister to travel for more than a day, and she must require of her to return on the same day; nor can she allow any one to receive valuable donations; to make use of extraordinary remedies; to lodge or take meals in the houses of strangers.

4. Although she has power, according to the direction and counsel of the spiritual Father, to allow the Sisters to receive Holy Communion, or to forbid it, yet, since this

denial is rather hard, she should not refuse such permission but for very grave reasons, and with the consent of the spiritual Father.

5. Let her take special care that none of the Sisters acquire the habit of indulging in long conversations with worldly-minded and young persons, as this is very much opposed to the religious spirit.

6. And though at all times she should treat inferiors with great charity and kindness, yet, when any Sister is sick, she should provide for her with greater care, as for a beloved daughter of the same Heavenly Father, whatsoever may seem necessary or useful.

6. In those of our houses to which schools are attached, no arrangement or change shall be made without her consent; for this reason let her have the same care of the school as the Sister who has the immediate charge thereof.

8. When the Sister Visitor shall come to a house, let the Superior inform her of all that is done in the house, or of anything that is necessary for it, with simplicity and religious modesty; and let her consult the Visitor as to what is to be done in the future.

9. One month, at least, before the time of her office expires, the Superior must let the Mother know, that she may provide whatever may seem best in our Lord. In the mean time, let the Superior fulfill her office very carefully, and if she should leave the house, she shall not take anything with her, more than the other Sisters, without leave of the Superior appointed by the Mother.

## SECTION IV.

*On the Visitor.*

1. Our houses should be visited in order that the religious spirit should be renewed in them, and that any obstacles or difficulties which may exist, be removed ; therefore, that these visitations may be productive of greater fruit, it is necessary that both the Visitor and the Sisters visited should be animated with the true spirit of religion and humility ; to obtain this, the Visitor should see that the hymn "Come, O Holy Ghost," be recited when she begins the visitation of the house.

2. And let her first care be to inquire diligently concerning the spirit of fervor and religion by which the Sisters should be animated ; and should they be found wanting in anything, let her correct the defect with maternal kindness and authority, encouraging them to make greater progress in the way of perfection.

3. She shall visit each one of the Sisters, and inquire into the practice of her spiritual exercises, and the duties of her office ; should any difficulties or aversions, or anything else have occurred in the Community, she must investigate the cause thereof, and carefully endeavor to remove all obstacles.

4. The Visitor should be endowed with great prudence and discretion, and she must keep secret whatever has been communicated to her by the Sisters.

5. The children of our schools must be examined with the same care, that she may



discover whether they are thoroughly instructed in whatever belongs properly to them, especially in the principles of our religion.

6. Whatever belongs to the house must be examined by her—clothing, furniture, etc. She must, moreover, examine the book of accounts, that she may fully understand the state of the house.

7. The Visitor must have two books at hand, in one of which she shall write down whatever relates to the schools; in the other, whatever else relates to the house so visited. And, at her return, she should give an exact account of everything to the Mother.

8. The traveling expenses must be paid by the Sisters of the house which she visited.

9. When the Bishop visits a house it will be the duty of all the members to make known to him any negligence in the observance of the rules, or any departure from the spirit of the Institute they may have noticed, or, whatever else they may conscientiously deem advisable to communicate; and the book of receipts and expenses must be laid open to his inspection.

#### SECTION V.

##### *On the Secretary.*

1. The Secretary should be convinced that her office is of great importance, and therefore, she should fulfill it with the greatest diligence, and, at the same time, observe all the Constitutions and Rules, and thus endeavor to give good example to the rest.

2. It will be her duty to transcribe all letters of importance, which either the Mother herself, or some other Sister appointed for that purpose, may have written, also, to inscribe in a register the names of the Sisters who have died ; and to make a memorandum of all matters and events of importance to the community.

3. To do this the more easily, let her have a diary.

4. Let it be her study that her letters be very clear, and breathe the spirit of piety. Besides, she shall not presume to write or command anything without the approval of the Mother Superior.

#### SECTION VI.

##### *On the Procurator.*

1. It belongs to the Procurator to help our Community in temporal matters, and, therefore, let her diligently attend to these, so that the Mother may, with greater liberty, apply herself to spiritual things, and to the government of the house. She shall, however, undertake no business without first consulting the Mother.

2. Let her beware lest the love of temporal things be a hindrance to her religious spirit, and for that reason let her always have in view God, and the good of the Community.

3. It is her duty to keep account of the receipts and expenses, and note them in a book, so that, at stated times, when it will appear necessary, it can be seen what the pecuniary condition of the house is.

4. She must have a list on which she must note whatever provisions and supplies are needed for the use of the Community, and what is to be bought, and when ; so that nothing may ever be wanting or be spoiled.

5. Every three months she must give to the Mother and her Consultors an exact account of all expenses and receipts since the last account.

6. Should it be impossible for her to attend to all the buying, let her have a Sister to help her, and she must put to that Sister's name all the expenses made by the same.

7. Whatever is brought to the house by postulants must be registered in a book, and signed by them, and none of these things must be used until the postulants shall have taken the Vows.

## SECTION VII.

### *On the Sister Consultors.*

1. It is the duty of the Consultors to help the Mother in everything that belongs to the government of our Congregation ; and, therefore, let each Consultor endeavor to understand thoroughly our Constitutions and the spirit of our Congregation, that her advice may always be given according to this same spirit.

2. Should they notice anything that is at variance with our manner of living, let them make it known to the Mother, that the defect may be corrected. Let them be mindful, however, not to make observations of this kind without due deliberation, lest they seem to act through passion.

3. Let them ever keep in view the good of our Congregation, especially when any one asks admission; let them examine whether she be fit or not.

4. When called upon to consult together, especially concerning matters of importance, let them first pray; for thus they shall be better enabled to advise what seems best in our Lord, and in accordance with the spirit of our vocation.

#### SECTION VIII.

##### *On the Mistress of Novices.*

1. It is the duty of the Mistress of Novices to form the Novices according to the proper spirit of our Institute, and to ground them in solid virtue, that they may be fit instruments in the hands of God to promote His glory.

2. To obtain this end let her explain to them, and carefully instruct them in all the Constitutions, with the spirit, of which they should be animated.

3. Let her take care that the rule of the Constitutions which says,—“let no point of perfection be omitted,” be diligently observed; for thus, being led by the love of perfection, they will be animated with the spirit which is peculiar to our Institute.

4. Let her carefully endeavor to understand, as well the natural dispositions as the habits and talents of each one, that she may be better able to direct them.

5. Let her most carefully avoid anything like impatience or excessive warmth, a thing

very much opposed to the direction of souls ; but, on the contrary, let her always show herself affable and kind in all things.

6. As it is plain to all how greatly mental prayer helps to obtain perfection, she should carefully teach them the method of meditation, that, being animated with the spirit of prayer, they may the more easily learn to live united to God.

7. Should any of the Novices be tempted, she must proceed with great charity and prudence, by speaking kindly, by encouraging her, and by suggesting the proper remedies, especially prayer.

8. Finally, let her be mindful that the good of the whole Congregation and the spirit which ought to exist in it, greatly depend on her ; and, therefore, it is most necessary that the Mistress of Novices fulfill her office with the greatest diligence.

## SECTION IX.

### *On the Directress of the Schools.*

1. It belongs to this Sister to direct, with prudence in the Lord, whatever appertains to the schools ; to help the Sisters in teaching, and to endeavor strenuously, that the children sent to our schools make continual progress, both in virtue and learning.

2. The more easily to do this, she should earnestly strive to give good example, as well to the Sisters as to the children.

3. She must be careful lest the Sisters employed in teaching be burdened with too much labor, which would be an obstacle to

their spiritual exercises, as well as to their health of body.

4. She should see that all the Sisters make use of those books, and of that manner of teaching, which are approved by our Institute.

5. Let her take the greatest care that the children never read any book or anything else, in the least contrary to virtue or good morals.

6. At stated times she should give notes of approbation to the children, and when necessity or utility requires it, she should visit their parents, having obtained permission from the Superior, and with a companion appointed for her; she must appoint the time of examination, and of distribution of premiums, and carefully examine whatever is to be spoken in public; and nothing shall be done in the schools without her approbation.

7. If any girl wish to enter our schools, she must be examined by the Directress, who will send her to the class for which she is judged to be fit.

7. Every month let her call together the teachers to speak about the schools, whether everything has succeeded, and whether there is anything to be corrected or changed; and let her also see that the Sisters are each day better instructed in the duty of teaching.

#### SECTION X.

##### *On the Sisters Who Teach in the Schools.*

1. Those who are sent to take charge of a

school, should, as soon as they arrive at the parish or mission, go to the Rector, ask and receive his blessing, and during the whole time that they are in that place, they must give him respect and obedience, provided that nothing contrary to the rule be enjoined.

2. As the office of instructing little children belongs especially to our vocation, let all esteem it very highly, and prepare themselves for it by prayer and study, that thus they may become useful to the young.

3. Let them always remember that example is better than words; therefore, they must not only teach children to love God, but they themselves should, by their religious life and their holy manner of acting, sweetly draw the children to perfection.

4. Let it be their principal care to so form the hearts of the children to virtue, that they may always detest sin.

5. They must carefully prepare the lessons and recitations to be taught in the schools, for thus they will be able to explain them more clearly and with greater fruit.

6. They shall not apply themselves to any study without the consent of the presiding Sister.

7. Should it happen that two Sisters teach in the one room at the same time, they must take care not to speak too loudly, lest they cause confusion to the children.

8. They shall exact perfect order in the schools, and neglect nothing that may seem necessary for or useful to the advancement of the children; and, finally, they must religiously obey the Directress.

## SECTION XI.

*On the Sacristan.*

1. In our houses a Sister shall be appointed who must take care of everything that belongs to divine worship. In the morning she shall open, and at night, lock the chapel; ring the bell at the time appointed for spiritual exercises, ornament the Altar according to the feasts, and keep the Altar linen very clean.

2. She should endeavor to have everything for Mass, or any other divine service, prepared in due time.

3. The most strict silence should be observed both in the chapel and in the sacristy, and this rule must be kept by all, even by the Superior.

4. Let her have everything in the sacristy and chapel neatly arranged, and be very attentive never to allow the light before the Blessed Sacrament to be extinguished, or holy water to be wanting.

## SECTION XII.

*On the Infirmarian.*

1. Although all the Sisters should acquit themselves of their respective charges with diligence and care, yet, the Sister Infirmarian must exercise the greatest charity towards the sick; and, therefore, let her show, in the performance of her duties, great mildness and patience, care and unceasing watchfulness, and also tender compassion.

2. When any Sister is sick, let the Infirma-



rian inquire of the Superior whether the physician who usually visits the house, or another, is to be called in.

3. She should always accompany the physician in his visit to the sick Sisters, so as to receive his orders and diligently fulfill them.

4. She shall always be most attentive to the wants of the sick, and cheerfully render them any service, even the lowest.

5. The beds of the sick shall be made, at least, once a day, and the linen changed as often as is necessary ; and the soiled linen must never be left in the Infirmary.

6. When any of the Sisters come to the Infirmary to visit the sick, she must see that they do not speak in a loud tone, or remain too long.

7. The Infirmarian shall also carefully see that the convalescent do not disturb the sick in any way.

8. If it be necessary to watch with a sick Sister, or should the Infirmarian be in need of help, or of anything else, she shall make it known to the Superior, that the latter may provide.

9. Every day she shall recite, for the sick, the morning and evening prayers, and, from time to time, read for them something short and pious, by which the sick may be entertained, and reap some fruit for their advancement in spirit.

10. When the disease grows worse, let her tell the Superior, who shall more particularly recommend the sick Sister to the prayers of the whole Community ; and should there be

danger of death, let her see that as many of the Sisters as can do so, be present to encourage and assist, by their prayers, the dying Sister.

### SECTION XIII.

#### *On the Portress.*

1. Let the Portress take care that the door be always closed, and she shall give the keys to no one, without leave of the Superior. At night, after having locked all the doors, she must place the keys in the Superior's room, and, if it be necessary to open the door at night, she must have a companion appointed by the Superior.

2. Should any strangers come to the house they must be led into the parlor; the Portress shall immediately inform the Superior; and she shall not call any of the Sisters, or deliver any letters or messages without leave of the Superior.

3. When the Confessor, physician, or any other officer comes to the house to perform what appertains to his office, he must be conducted to the parlor, where he shall wait for the Superior or some other Sister to show him the place of duty.

4. Should any one come to the house to see the Portress, she must inform the Superior, who shall appoint another Sister to perform the office of Portress in the meantime.

5. At the first tap of the bell let the Portress go promptly to open the door, as if she were going to open it for our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

## SECTION XIV.

*On the Postulants.*

1. No one shall be admitted into our Congregation who has not completed her twelfth year; and since the consent by ballot, of the Mother and of the Sisters of the Novitiate is required for this admission, they shall, with great prudence and discretion, examine the postulant as to the requisite qualities, and especially about the motives which have induced her to ask admission into religion.

2. No one is to be admitted unless she enjoys good health and strength, is of good disposition, and has a good moral standing, from which we can prudently judge that the postulant is fit to undergo the duties of our calling. Therefore, any one who seems much inclined to pride, or to the vanities of the world, or given to inconstancy, should not be admitted.

3. No one who is in debt, or who is needed for the support of her parents, shall be admitted.

4. Those who are admitted must wear their secular dress during the time of probation; they must, however, be present at all the exercises of the Community, excepting the chapter of faults.

5. After they shall have been sufficiently tried and found to be fit, they shall be allowed to take the religious habit; if they are not found suitable, they should be sent from the house as soon as possible.

6. Before taking the religious habit they must enter on a retreat for some days, the better to begin their new life for God.

7. As soon as they shall have received the habit, they must sign the Act of Reception in a book, which must also be done by the Priest who performed the ceremony, by the Superior, and by two Sisters.

## SECTION XV.

### *On Novices.*

1. The Novices before they are allowed to take their vows, must spend at least two years of novitiate, after they have taken the religious habit; and this time may be prolonged for grave reasons, but never shortened.

2. While they are in the novitiate they must live apart from the other Sisters, and should not be with them except in the chapel and refectory.

3. When they shall have finished the time of the novitiate, completed their sixteenth year, and shown themselves fit to be admitted to profession, before taking the vows, they should make a retreat, the better to prepare themselves to make to God the sacrifice of their lives.

4. They are not to be admitted to profession without the approbation of the Mistress of Novices; and they must have the private votes of the majority of the Sisters of that house, who have already taken the vows; then the Mother Superior General can admit them, in the presence of the Bishop, or of a priest appointed by him, to the profession of the three simple vows of Poverty, Chastity

and Obedience, for three years, in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the B. V. M.

5. As soon as they have taken their vows, the new Sisters shall sign the act in a book, which is also done by the Priest who has received them, by the Superior, and by two witnesses.

## SECTION XVI.

### *On Dismissal.*

1. As in the human body, so in a religious community, it is sometimes necessary to cut off a member, whereby the others may be secure; hence it is very important to point out the rules to be observed in such a case; and, first of all, the causes which lead to dismissal are—

*First*—A very irregular way of living, so as to give scandal to others, especially after frequent admonitions.

*Second*—A serious and hidden obstacle not manifested at the time of entering.

*Third*—Deliberate and grievous insubordination or disobedience.

*Fourth*—A very serious fault against the Vow of Poverty, by which the house would be exposed to incur great expenses.

*Fifth*—A grievous fault against the Vow of Chastity.

*Sixth*—Giving just reasons for displeasure, or offering an insult to any stranger, and not being willing to repair the injury.

2. The Superior General shall propose the matter of dismissal to the Consultors in

council, and if it be sanctioned by secret vote, let that resolution be subjected for approbation to the Bishop, who, should he approve of it, will, in the act of dismissal, release the Sister from her temporary Vows.

3. Those who leave our Congregation, of their own accord, or are dismissed from it, shall receive no remuneration for all they have done in the house ; but all they brought with them from the world shall be returned, after deducting all expenses for board and clothing.

## SECTION XVII.

### *On the Religious Dress.*

The dress of the Sisters of Charity of the B. V. M. shall show forth humility and modesty ; therefore, let the custom prevailing in the year 1877 as to the material and make of the dress to be worn, be retained, both in the house and outside it (due allowance being made for the winter and summer seasons).

## ADMONITION.

Let them know, in fine, that, with the exception of the vows, these constitutions, in their ordinances concerning the observance of the vows, oblige under pain of venial sin only ; the commands of Superiors do not

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I will pay my vows

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Aug-25-1897.



bind under pain of grievous sin, unless they be formal precepts, in virtue of Holy Obedience, which the Superior should impose rarely, and for grave reasons; but as to the offices in detail, and all other regulations, they do not bind under pain of sin, but under a penalty imposed, or to be imposed by a Superior, unless they have acted in contempt of rule or unless the contrary of what is prescribed be, of its own nature or from circumstances, a sin.

### FORMULA OF THE VOWS.

Almighty and Eternal God, prostrate at the feet of thy Divine Majesty, and impelled by the desire of consecrating myself entirely to Thee, in presence of the Blessed Mary, ever Virgin, and the whole heavenly court, I, ....., vow to Thee, Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, for three years, in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the B. V. M., according to its constitutions. O! Father of Mercies, let this offering of my heart be acceptable to Thee; receive me into the arms of Thy Infinite Goodness, and grant me the grace to so fulfill these things which my vows require of me, that one day I may see Thee, praise Thee, and love Thee for ever, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

## DECRETUM.

Cum Institutum et constitutiones Sororum Charitatis B Mariae Virginis, quarum princeps domus in dioecesi Dubuquensi in Foederatis Americae Septentrionalis Statibus extat, Decreto hujus S Congregationis diei 15 Septembris 1877 ad Sexennium pro experimento approbatæ fuerint, Sorores præfati Instituti mense Septembri anni 1883 labente experimenti constituto tempore huic Sacrae Congregationi supplicem porrexerunt libellum ut earum regulæ et constitutiones in perpetuum approbarentur. Eminentissimi autem Patres S Consilio Christiano Nomine propagando præpositi cum ex exhibitis documentis perspexerint Sorores ipsas omni studio tum ad propriam perfectionem comparandam, tum ad salutem proximorum curandam incumbere, necnon zelo ac studio ad laborare puellarum piæ religiosæque institutioni, attentis præsertim litteris commendatis Antistitum locorum, SSmo supplicandum censuerunt ut præfatum Institutum uti Congregationem votorum simplicium sub regimine Moderatricis Generalis, salva Ordinarium jurisdictione ad præscriptum Sacrorum Canonum et Apostolicarum Constitutionum, necnon

## DECREE.

WHEREAS, The Institute and Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose Mother house is situated in the Diocese of Dubuque, in the United States of North America, were approved of by a decree of this Sacred Congregation on the 15th day of September, 1877, on trial for six years; the Sisters of the aforesaid Institute, in the month of September, 1883, as the time of trial was about to expire, sent a respectful petition to this Sacred Congregation, that their Rules and Constitutions may be approved without limit of time. And

WHEREAS, Their Eminences, the Fathers presiding over the Sacred Congregation for the propagation of the Christian Name, having understood from the documents presented to them, that these Sisters apply themselves with the utmost earnestness as well to secure their own perfection as to promote the welfare of their neighbor, and furthermore that they labor with zeal and diligence for the pious and religious training of girls; and having had regard in an especial manner to the commendatory letters of their local Bishops, resolved to supplicate that His holiness would be pleased to approve forever the aforesaid Institute as a congregation having

ejusdem Regulas seu Constitutiones, adjectis etiam mutationibus in adnexo folio propositis in perpetuum approbare dignaretur.

Hanc autem S. Congregationis sententiam die 15 Martii 1885 SSmo Domino Nostro Leoni divina providentia P. P. XIII a R. P. D. Dominico Jacobini Archiepiscopo Tyrensi ejusdem Sacrae Congregationis Secretario relatum, Sanctitas Sua benigne approbare dignata est, et super hoc praesens Decretum fieri mandavit.

Datum Romae ex Aedibus Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide die 25 Aprilis 1885.

Joanis Card. Simeoni Praefectus  
[L.S.] †D. Archip Tyren.,  
Secr.

simple vows under the government of a Moderator General, preserving intact, according to the prescript of the Sacred Canons and Apostolic Constitutions the jurisdiction of Ordinaries, as also to approve their Rules and Constitutions with the addition of the changes set forth in the annexed page.

This resolution of the Sacred Congregation presented by the Most Rev. Dominic Jacobini, Archbishop of Tyre, and Secretary of the same Sacred Congregation to His holiness, Leo XIII, by divine providence, Pope on the 15th day of March, 1885, His holiness graciously deigned to approve, and furthermore commanded that this present Decree be issued.

Given at Rome, from the office of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, on the 25th day of April, 1885.

John Card. Simeoni Prefect.  
[L.S.] †D. Archbishop of Tyre,  
Secr.

Ex AUDIENTIA SSMI }  
DIEI 28 JUNII 1885. }

SSmus Dominus Noster  
Leo Divina Providentia P.  
P. XIII, referente me in-  
frascripto Archiepiscopo  
Tyren., S. Congnis de Prop-  
aganda Fide Secretario, R.  
P. D. Joanni Episcopo Du-  
buquesni necessarias et op-  
portunas facultates benigne  
concedere dignatus est, qui  
bus confirmare valeat in  
perpetuum in officio Super-  
iorissae Generalis Sororum  
a charitate actualem earum  
Superiorissam Sororem Ma-  
riam Franciscam Clarke,  
attento unanimi Sororum  
Vocalium praefatae Con-  
gregationis consensu.

Datum Romae ex aed.  
dictae Congnis, die et anno  
ut supra.

Pro R. P. D. Secretario,

[L.S.] ZEPLYNIUS ZITELLI OFF.

Gratis quocumquetitulo.

[From an audience of His  
Holiness, given on the 28th  
day of June, 1885.]

Our Most Holy Father, Leo  
XIII., by Divine Providence,  
Pope (on the representation  
of the undersigned, Arch-  
bishop of Tyre, Secretary of  
S. Congregation of the Prop-  
agation of the Faith) taking  
into account the unanimous  
wish of the professed Sisters  
of Charity of the B. V. M.,  
graciously deigned to grant to  
Rt. Rev. John Hennessy,  
Bishop of Dubuque, necessa-  
ry and suitable faculties, by  
which he is empowered to  
confirm for life in the office  
of Superior General, Sister  
Mary Frances Clarke, their  
present Superior.

Given at Rome, from the  
office of the above named  
Congregation, on the above  
date.

For the Most Rev. Sec'y,

[L.S.] ZEPLYNIUS ZITELLI, OFF.

# DECREE.

It is the common condition of all human things, however good and holy they may be, and of laws wisely established, that men can abuse them, and turn them aside from their proper end, and apply them to objects foreign to them. And, therefore, it sometimes comes to pass that the end which legislators had proposed to themselves, is no longer attained, and indeed sometimes even a contrary effect is produced.

This, indeed, greatly to be deplored, has occurred in regard to the laws of many Congregations, Societies or Institutes, both of women having simple or solemn vows, and of men who, by their state and their rule, are purely laic. Sometimes, indeed, in their Constitutions, manifestation of conscience was permitted, so that the experience of Superiors might serve to clear away the doubts of subjects, and to facilitate for them the arduous way of perfection; but on the contrary by some among them has been introduced an intimate scrutiny of conscience, which is reserved only to the Sacrament of Penance. Likewise in their Constitutions, made according to the guidance of the Holy Canons. it was prescribed that Sacramental Confession in such communities be made to their respective ordinary and extraordinary Confessors; now some Superiors have pushed arbitrariness so far as to refuse an extraordinary Confessor to their subjects, even in a case in which they greatly needed such Confessor to quiet their conscience. Finally, there was laid down by these Constitutions a law of discretion and prudence, permitting Superiors religiously and rightly to direct their subjects as to peculiar penances and other works of piety; but even this law has been extensively abused by some Superiors permitting Holy Communion arbitrarily, or sometimes wholly prohibiting it. Hence, it has been brought about that such regulations which were salutarily, beneficially and wisely established heretofore for the spiritual advancement of members and for the observing and cherishing of unity, peace and concord, have not unfrequently been turned to produce danger to souls, uneasiness of conscience, and moreover to disturb exterior peace, as appeals and complaints of subjects of different places, addressed to the Holy See, evidently prove.

Wherefore His Holiness, Leo XIII., by Divine Providence Supreme Pontiff, moved by the particular solicitude

which he has for this chosen portion of his flock,—in the audience which he granted us, Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, December 14th, 1890.—after having weighed all things deliberately, has willed, established and decreed the following :

I. His Holiness annuls, abrogates and declares of no value in the future all the rules of the pious Societies, Institutes of Women with simple or solemn vows as well as of men purely laic, even though the same said Constitutions should have received the approbation of the Apostolic See, under whatsoever form, even that which is called very special, so far as these rules regard the intimate manifestation of heart and conscience in whatever manner and under whatsoever name. So it is on this account that he seriously enjoins the Superiors and Superioresses of such Institutes, Congregations and Societies to wholly omit and completely expunge such rules from their Constitutions, Directories and Manuals. He in like manner annuls and does away with all the usages and customs even immemorial regarding this manifestation of conscience.

II. Further, he strictly forbids the said Superiors and Superioresses of whatever degree and pre-eminence they may be, to attempt directly or indirectly, by precept, counsel, fear, threats or flatteries, to induce persons subject to them to make to them such manifestation of conscience. On the other hand, he commands subjects to denounce to higher Superiors the lower Superiors who have dared to induce them to do so ; and if there be question of the General Superiors or Superioresses, the denunciation must be made by them to this Holy Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

III. This in nowise prevents subjects from freely and fully opening their hearts to Superiors, in order to obtain from their prudence, in doubts and anxieties, counsel and direction for the acquisition of virtue and progress in perfection.

IV. Moreover, that remaining unchanged as to ordinary and extraordinary Confessors of Communities, which was prescribed by the Holy Council of Trent, Sess. 25, Chap. X. OF THE REGULARS, and by Benedict XIV., of holy memory, in the Constitution which begins with the words PASTORALIS CURÆ. His Holiness admonishes Rulers and Superiors not to refuse their subjects an extraordinary Confessor, as often as subjects are urged to consult one about their own conscience without the said Superiors inquiring in any way

into the reason of this demand and without their showing that they take it amiss. Also, lest so provident a prescription be vain, he exhorts Ordinaries to designate in the places of their Diocese where Communities of Women exist, Priests capable and provided with the necessary faculties, to whom the said religious may easily have recourse for the Sacrament of Penance.

V. As to what regards the permission or the prohibition to approach the Holy Table, His Holiness decrees that such permissions or prohibitions pertain solely to the ordinary or extraordinary Confessor, without Superiors having any authority to interfere in this matter, except the case in which any one of their subjects should, after the last preceding Sacramental Confession, give scandal to the Community or should commit a grave exterior fault, until the guilty person shall again have recourse to the Sacrament of Penance.

VI. All are exhorted to strive carefully to prepare themselves for Holy Communion, and to receive it on the day fixed in their particular rules. And as often as the Confessor, on account of fervor and for the spiritual progress of anyone, shall judge it expedient for such a one to approach more frequently, it can be permitted by the Confessor. But one who shall have obtained from the Confessor leave for more frequent or even for daily Communion, shall be bound to make it known to the Superior; if the Superior or Superioress think that there are just and weighty reasons against these frequent Communions, he or she shall be bound to expose them to the Confessor, whose judgment must be entirely acquiesced in.

VII. His Holiness furthermore commands each and every Superior, General, Provincial and Local of the Institutes, whether of men or women, hereinbefore mentioned, to observe carefully and exactly the directions of this Decree, under the penalties against Superiors violating the commands of the Apostolic See, to be incurred *IPSO FACTO*.

VIII. Finally he ordains that a copy of the present Decree, translated into the vernacular, be inserted in the Constitutions of the said pious Institutes, and, that at least once a year, on a day appointed in each house, it be read in a loud and intelligible voice, either in the refectory or in a chapter specially convoked for that purpose.

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Thus His Holiness has determined and decreed, notwithstanding all contrary things, even those which merit a special and individual mention.

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Given at Rome, from the Secretariate of the said Holy Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, December 17th, 1890.

J. CARDINAL VERGA, *Prefect.*

✠ FR. ALOYSIUS, BISHOP OF CALLINICEN,  
*Secretary.*



## APPENDIX.

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### FORMULA OF RENOVATION OF VOWS.

Almighty and Eternal God, prostrate at the feet of Thy Divine Majesty, and impelled by the desire of consecrating my entire self to Thee, in presence of the Blessed Mary, ever Virgin, and the whole heavenly Court, I, N. N., reiterate this day the vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience which I have made to Thee, in the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, according to the Constitution of the same; O Father of Mercies, may this offering of my heart be grateful to Thee; receive me into the arms of Thy Infinite Goodness, and grant me the grace that I may so fulfill the things, which these my vows require of me, that one day I may behold Thee, praise Thee, and love Thee forever. Amen.

### THE RELIGIOUS DRESS

#### OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

1. The habit shall be of black merino, made plain, one yard and three-quarters wide, and should not touch the ground.

The sleeves, which should be twelve inches wide, must extend to the end of the fingers.

The cape, to which a small linen collar must be fastened, should extend two inches and a half below the cincture which confines the waist.

Their shoes must be of plain black leather.

The head-dress must be a small muslin cap and hood, a black veil, and a band of muslin to encircle the neck.

A crucifix of brass, on black wood, attached to a rosary, must be suspended from the cincture on the left side.

When they go out, they shall cover the head with a bonnet of black cambric muslin and a black veil.

On the shoulders they must wear a shawl, which, in summer, should be of black merino, and in winter, of black wool, and a cloak of material like the habit.

## CATALOGUE

OF COMMUNION DAYS OF THE CONGREGATION, WITH THE INTENTIONS.

All Sundays in the year, for the Congregation.

First Friday of every month, for Rev. Father Donaghoe and deceased Sisters.

Ash Wednesday and Fridays in Lent, for each Sister's private intention.

Holy Thursday, for Paschal Communion.

The remaining Fridays not festivals, for the conversion of Sinners.

Feast of the local Patron, for the local Mission.

The day of entering the Novitiate, for each Sister's private intention.

Jan. 1, Circumcision, in Thanksgiving to God for all His graces during the past year.

Jan. 6, Epiphany, for the Rt. Rev. Bishop.

Jan. 29, St. Francis de Sales, for the local Confessor.

Feb. 2, Purification of the B. V. M., for Benefactors.

March 19, St. Joseph, for the Congregation. Thanksgiving.

March 25, Annunciation B. V. M., for the Congregation. Thanksgiving.

May 8, St. Michael, for a happy death.

May 24, Help of Christians, for Rev. Father Donaghoe.

Ascension Thursday, for the souls in Purgatory.

Corpus Christi, for all Bishops, Priests and Religious.

Feast of the Sacred Heart, for the Congregation. Reparation.

June 24, St. John the Baptist, for the Superiors of the Congregation.

June 29, St. Peter and St. Paul, for the Pope.

July 2, Visitation B. V. M., for deceased Parents and Relatives.

July 16, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, for Missions, Sisters and Children.

July 19, St. Vincent of Paul, for the Congregation.

July 31, St. Ignatius, for the conversion of Sinners.

Aug. 15, Assumption B. V. M., for all in their last agony.

- Sept. 8, Nativity B. V. M., for the Sisters' private intention.
- Sept. 24, Our Lady of Mercy, for all suffering persecution.
- Sept. 29, St. Michael, for Rev. Father Donaghoe.
- Oct. 2, Guardian Angels, for the Congregation.
- Oct. 4, St. Francis Assisium, for Mother.
- Oct. 15, St. Teresa, for the Sisters' private intention.
- Nov. 1, All Saints, for Rev. Father Donaghoe.
- Nov. 2, All Souls, for all the souls of the faithful departed.
- Nov. 21, Presentation B. V. M., for the Congregation.
- Dec. 8, Immaculate Conception, for our Holy Father the Pope.
- Dec. 25, Christmas Day, for the Sisters' private intention.
- Dec. 27, St. John the Evangelist, Rt. Rev. Bishop.
- One Mass each month for Rev, Father Donaghoe and deceased Sisters.
- One Mass each month for the souls in Purgatory.

## EPISTLE OF ST. IGNATIUS

## ON THE VIRTUE OF OBEDIENCE.

*Ignatius of Loyola to the Brethren of the Society of Jesus who are in Portugal, wishes grace and love everlasting in Christ our Lord.*

1. It is a cause of great comfort to me, most dear Brethren in Christ, when I hear it reported with how earnest desire and endeavor you strive to attain to the highest perfection of all virtue and piety, by his favor, Who, as He has called you to this kind of life, so in His mercy keeps you in the same, and directs you to that blessed end, whereunto those that are chosen by Him do arrive.

2. And truly, though I wish you to be perfect in all spiritual gifts and ornaments, yet especially do I desire (as you have understood of me heretofore) to see you most eminent in the virtue of Obedience; and this not only for the excellent and singular fruits thereof, which are proved by many testimonies of Holy Writ, and by examples both in the Old and New Testament; but also because, as St. Gregory says, *\*Obedience is the only virtue that plants all other virtues in the mind, and preserves them after they are once planted.* As long as this virtue shall flourish, all others doubtless will flourish, and bring forth such fruits as I desire in your hearts, and

\* L. 35. Moral c. 10.

He with good reason requires, Who by His salutary Obedience repaired mankind when afflicted and destroyed through the crime of disobedience, *\*becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross.*

3. More easily may we suffer ourselves to be surpassed by other Religious Orders in fasting, watching, and other severities in diet and apparel, which, according to their institute and rule, every one does piously practice; but in true and perfect Obedience and the abnegation of our will and judgment. I greatly desire, most dear brethren, that those who serve God in this Society should be conspicuous, and that the true and genuine progeny of the same should, as it were, be distinguished by this mark, that they regard not the individual whom they obey, but in him Christ our Lord, for Whose love they obey. For the Superior is not to be obeyed because he is prudent, or virtuous, or excels in any other divine gift whatsoever it be; but for this only, that he is in the place of God, and has authority from Him Who says, *†He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me.* Neither, on the other hand, if he be of less understanding or prudence, is he therefore to be the less obeyed in that wherein he is Superior; since he bears His Person Whose Wisdom cannot be deceived, and who will supply whatsoever shall be wanting in His substitute, whether it be virtue or other qualities. Wherefore Christ our Lord, when He said in express and open

\*Ad Philip ii. 8.

† Lu. c. x. 16.

terms, \**Upon the chair of Moses have sitten the Scribes and Pharisees; presently added, all things, therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do; but according to their works, do ye not.*

4. Wherefore, I desire that you should earnestly endeavor, with all care and diligence, to acknowledge Christ in every Superior, and, with great devotion, reverence and obey in him the Divine Majesty. This will seem to you less strange, if you consider how the Apostle St. Paul commands us to obey even secular Superiors and Gentiles as Christ Himself, from Whom all well-ordered authority is derived; for thus he writes to the Ephesians: †*Be obedient to them that are your temporal lords according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ; not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with a good will serving as to the Lord and not to men.* And from this you yourselves may judge what account in his heart a religious man ought to make of his Superior, to whom he has given himself to be ruled and governed, not only as to a Superior, but expressly as to one that has the place of Christ:—whether he should look on him as a man or as the Vicar of Christ.

5. Moreover, I desire that this should be thoroughly understood and deeply imprinted in your minds, that it is but a base and very imperfect kind of Obedience which consists

\* Matt. xxiii. 2.

† vi. 5.

in the external execution only of that which is commanded ; and that it is not worthy the name of virtue, unless it pass to a further degree, making the will of the Superior our will, and so agreeing with the same that not only is there external fulfillment of the command, but also agreement of will ; that so both may be of one mind in willing and not willing the same. And for this reason it is said in Holy Writ, *\*Obedience is better than sacrifices*. For, as St. Gregory teaches us, *†In victims the flesh of another, but in obedience our own will is killed*. And because this part of the soul is so excellent, hence it is that the offering of it to our Lord and Creator through Obedience, is of great price and value.

6. Oh, in how great and dangerous an error are not only they involved, who, in things appertaining to flesh and blood, but such also as in things otherwise very holy and spiritual, as fasting, prayer, or other good works, think it lawful to swerve from the will and appointment of their Superior ; let them give ear to what Cassian prudently remarks, in the Conference of Daniel the Abbot, saying ; *‡It is one and the selfsame kind of disobedience, whether in earnestness of labor, or the desire of ease, one breaks the command of the Superior, and as prejudicial to go against the statutes of the Monastery out of sloth as out of watchfulness ; and finally, it is as much to transgress the precept of the Abbot*

\* 1 Reg. xv. 22.

†L. 35. Moral c. 10,

‡ Serm. ad Milit. Templ. c. 13.



*to read, as to contemn it to sleep.* Holy was the action of Martha, holy the contemplation of Mary Magdalene, and holy the penance and tears wherewith she watered the feet of Christ our Lord; but all this was to be done in Bethania, which word is interpreted the house of Obedience, whereby our Lord would signify to us, as St. Bernard says: *\* that neither the endeavor of good works, nor the quiet of contemplation, nor the tears of the penitent, could have been grateful unto Him out of Bethania.*

7. Wherefore, most dear Brethren, cast off wholly, as far as you can, your own wills; deliver freely and dedicate to your Creator in His substitute the freedom He has bestowed upon you. Consider it no little advantage of your free-will, that you are able to give it back fully, through Obedience, to Him from whom you received it. And by so doing, you not only do not lose the same, but rather increase and perfect it; since, by this means, you direct all your wills, by that most certain rule of rectitude, the will of God interpreted unto you by him, who, in place of God, governs you.

8. And, for this reason, you must always be very careful that you never seek to wrest the Superior's will (which you ought to hold for the will of God Himself) unto your own; for this would be, not to conform your will unto God's, but to endeavor to rule His will by yours, inverting the order of His Divine Wisdom. Oh, how great an error it is, and one

\* Serm. ad Milit. Templ. c. 13.

which belongs to such as self-love has blinded, to account themselves obedient, when, by some means or other, they have brought the Superior to that which they desire. Listen to St. Bernard, a man eminently experienced in this matter: \* *Whosoever, says he, endeavors either openly or covertly to have his Spiritual Father enjoin him what he himself desires, he deceives himself if he flatters himself he is a true follower of obedience; for in that he does not obey his Superior, but rather the Superior obeys him.* It follows, therefore, that whosoever is desirous of the virtue of Obedience, must necessarily attain to this second degree, so as not only to fulfill the Superior's command, but to make also the Superior's will his own will, or rather to put off his own will that he may put on the will of God, declared to him by his Superior.

9. But he that will wholly sacrifice himself to God, besides his will, must also offer up his understanding (which is the third and highest degree of Obedience), that he may not only will, but also think the selfsame with his Superior; and submit his own judgment unto him so far as a devout will can bend the understanding. For, though this part of the soul has not that freedom wherewith the will is endowed, and by nature itself is drawn to assent to whatsoever is represented unto it as true, yet, nevertheless, in many things, in which the evidence of the known truth does not force it, it may, by the strength of the

\* Serm. de trib. Ordin. Eccl.

will, be inclined more one way than another. When these things happen, whosoever professes Obedience must submit himself to the judgment of the Superior. For, Obedience, being a holocaust, in which the whole man, nothing at all excepted, is offered up unto his Creator and Lord in the fire of charity, through the hands of His substitute, and as it is also a full renunciation, in which a religious man freely yields up all his own rights, to dedicate and bind himself to God, to be possessed and governed by His Divine Providence by means of his Superior; it cannot be denied that Obedience comprehends, not only the execution, so that the person do that which is commanded, and the will, so that he do it willingly, but also the judgment, that whatsoever the Superior commands and thinks good, seems just and reasonable to the inferior, so far, as I have said, as the will by its force and vigor can bend the understanding.

10. Would that this Obedience of the understanding and judgment were as much understood and put in practice by men, as it is grateful to God, and necessary to those who live in religion. For, as in the celestial bodies and globes, to the end that one may receive motion and influence from another, it is necessary that, with certain conformity and order, the inferior globe be subject to the superior; so, amongst men, when one is moved by another's authority (as happens in Obedience), it is necessary that he who depends upon another be subject and subordi-

nate, to the end that he may receive some virtue and influence from him who commands. Now, this kind of subjection and Obedience can, in no wise stand, unless the will and judgment of the inferior agree with the will and judgment of the Superior.

11. Moreover, if we regard the end and intention of Obedience, as our will, so our judgment may be deceived as to what is good for us; wherefore if, lest our will should stray, we conform it to the will of the Superior, our understanding is also to be ruled by his, to the end it may not err: *\*Lean not upon thy own prudence*, says the Holy Scripture. And, even in worldly matters, those who are wise, judge it to be the part of a prudent man, not to trust his own wisdom, especially in his own cause, in which, when the mind is troubled, one can hardly be a good judge. And, if in matters concerning ourselves, we are to prefer the judgment and counsel of another, who is not our Superior, before our own; how much more the counsel and judgment of the Superior, to whom we have yielded ourselves to be directed, as to one who is in place of God, and interpreter of His Divine Will. And certain it is, that, in spiritual matters and persons so much the more heed is to be taken, as the danger of a spiritual course is greater, when one runs along therein without the bridle of counsel and discretion. Wherefore, Cassian, in the Conference of Abbot Moses, says: †*By no other vice does the devil draw a monk head-*

\* Prov. iii. 5.

† Col. ii. 11.

*long, and bring him to death sooner, than by persuading him to neglect the counsel of the Elders, and trust to his own judgment and determination.*

12. Moreover, unless we have this Obedience of our understanding, it is impossible that either the consent of our will, or the execution, will be such as they ought to be ; for, nature itself has so ordained, that, the concupiscible power of the soul must follow the apprehensive, and the will without violence, cannot long obey against the understanding. And if there be any who for some time obey, induced by that common apprehension, that obey they must, though commanded amiss ; yet, doubtless, this cannot be firm and constant, and so perseverance fails, or at least the perfection of Obedience, which consists in obeying promptly and with alacrity : for, there can be no alacrity and diligence, where there is discord of minds and opinions. There perishes that zeal and speed in performing, when we doubt whether it be expedient or not, to do what we are commanded ; there perishes that renowned simplicity of blind Obedience, when we call in question the justice of the command, and, perhaps even we condemn the Superior, because he bids us do such things as are not very pleasing unto us ; there fails humility, for although, on the one hand, we obey, yet on the other, we prefer ourselves before our Superior ; there fails fortitude in difficult enterprises, and (to conclude in brief) the whole force and dignity of this virtue is lost. And

in place thereof there arise pain, trouble, reluctance, weariness, murmurings, excuses, and other vices of no small moment, by which the value and merit of Obedience is wholly destroyed. Wherefore, St. Bernard, of those who take it ill when things are enjoined that seem somewhat hard unto them, speaks as follows: *\*If you begin to grieve at this, to judge your Superior, to murmur in your heart, though outwardly you fulfill what is commanded, yet this is not the virtue of patience, but a cloak of your malice.* And if peace and tranquility of mind is desired, he certainly shall never arrive unto it, who has within himself the cause of his disquiet and trouble, to-wit: the disagreeing of his own judgment from the law of Obedience.

13. And, therefore, for the maintaining of union, which is the bond of every society, the Apostle so earnestly exhorts all †to think and say the same thing, that, by the agreeing of their wills and judgments, they may be mutually comforted and sustained. Now, if there must be one and the selfsame sentiment between the members and the head, you may easily judge whether it is more just that the head should yield to the members, or the members unto the head. It is plain, then, by what has been hitherto said, how necessary is this Obedience of the understanding.

14. But how perfect the same is in itself, and how pleasing to God, we may gather by this: first, because thereby the most excellent

\*Serm. 3 de Circumcis.

†Rom. xv. 5. 1 Cor. i. 10. 2 Cor. xxiii. 11. Philip. ii. 2.

and precious part of man is consecrated unto Him; secondly, because the obedient man is by this means made a living holocaust most grateful to His Divine Majesty, keeping nothing whatsoever to himself; lastly, by reason of the great difficulty of the combat; for the obedient man overcomes himself for the love of God, and resists that natural inclination which all men have, to embrace and follow their own opinion. Hence, therefore, it follows, that Obedience, though its proper fruit seems to be to perfect the will, inasmuch as it makes it prompt and ready at the beck of the Superior; yet, it must also belong to the understanding, as we have declared, and bring it to be of the self-same opinion in all things with the Superior, that, all the forces of our will and understanding, being united together, we may fulfill what is commanded with all speed and integrity.

15. It seems to me, most dear brethren, I hear you say, that you now no longer doubt of the necessity of this virtue, but that you earnestly desire to know how you may attain to the perfection thereof. To this question, I answer with St. Leo: *Nothing is difficult unto the humble, and nothing hard unto the meek*: so that, if you want not humility nor mildness, assuredly God will not be wanting in His goodness, to help you to perform that which you have promised Him, not only patiently but also willingly.

16. Moreover, three things I will lay down unto you, which will greatly further you in the attainment of this Obedience of your un-

derstanding. The first is: that, as I said in the beginning, you do not behold in the person of your Superior a man subject to errors and miseries, but Christ Himself, Who is the Highest Wisdom, Immeasurable Goodness, and Infinite Charity, Who neither can be deceived, nor will deceive you. And, because you are conscious within yourselves, that you have undergone this yoke of Obedience for the love of God, to the end that you might, in following the Superior's will, more assuredly follow the Divine Will; doubt not, but the most faithful charity of our Lord continually directs you, and leads you the right way, by the hands of those whom He has given you for Superiors. Wherefore, hear their voice no otherwise than if it were the voice of Christ, seeing that the Apostle writing to the Colossians,\* and exhorting subjects to obey their lords, says as follows:

*Whatsoever you do, do it from the heart, as to the Lord, and not to man, knowing that you shall receive of the Lord the reward of inheritance; serve ye the Lord Christ. And St. Bernard: †Whether God, or man, His substitute, commands anything, we must obey with equal diligence, and perform it with like reverence, when, however, man commands nothing that is contrary to God. And thus, if you do not look upon man, with the eyes of the body, but God, with those of the soul, it will certainly not be hard to conform your will and judgment to that rule which you yourselves have chosen.*

\*iii. 23. †Tract, de Præcep. et Dispen. C, xii.



17. Another means is, that you always seriously endeavor to defend within yourselves that which your Superior commands or thinks good, but never to disapprove of it. And to this it will help, to be well affected towards whatsoever he shall command; whereby you shall not only obey without trouble, but even with joy and pleasure. For, as St. Leo says: *\*It is not hard to serve, where we love that which is commanded.*

18. The last means to subject your understanding, both more easy and secure, and also in use among the holy Fathers, is to determine within yourselves whatsoever the Superior commands, to be the commandment and will of Almighty God Himself; and as to believe what the Catholic Faith proposes, you at once bend all the forces of your mind to consent thereunto; so in doing that which your Superior commands, you must be carried with a kind of blind impulse of your will, desirous to obey. So it is to be thought that Abraham† did, when bid to sacrifice his son Isaac: so, in time of the New Testament, did some of those holy Fathers whom Cassian speaks of; as John, the Abbot,‡ who did not question whether that which he was commanded was profitable or not, as when, with such great and continued labor, for a year together, he watered a dry stick; nor whether it could be done or not, as when he endeavored so earnestly to move a huge rock, which many men together

\*Serm. 4 de jejun, sep. mensis.

†Gen. xxii.

‡L. 4. C. xxiv et xxvi.

could not have stirred. This kind of Obedience, we see sometimes to have been confirmed by miracle. For, to say nothing of others, whom you yourselves are not ignorant of, Maurus, St. Benedict's disciple,\* going by command of his Superior into a lake, did not sink. Another† being bid by his Superior to bring a lioness to him, took hold of her and brought her unto him. Wherefore, this manner of subjecting our own judgment, so as without questioning to sanction and approve within ourselves whatsoever the Superior commands, is not only a common practice among holy men, but also to be imitated by all who are desirous of perfect Obedience in all things where manifestly there appears no sin.

19. Neither are you hindered by this, if anything occurs to you different from the Superior's opinion, and it seems (after you have commended the same humbly to God) that it ought to be declared, but that you may propose it unto him; wherein lest self-love and your own judgment should deceive you, this precaution is to be taken, that you remain both before and after you have made the proposition most indifferent, not only as to undertaking or relinquishing the matter of which there is question; but, also, as to approving and thinking better, whatsoever seems good to the Superior.

20. And this which I have said of Obedience, is equally to be observed by every private person toward his immediate Supe-

\*Greg. 2. Dial. C. vii. †In vit. PP.L. 5, libel. 14, n. 4.

rior, and by the Rectors and local Superiors towards the Provincial, by the Provincials towards the General, and by the General towards him whom God has placed over him, to-wit: His Vicar upon earth; to the end that thus, a perfect distinction of degrees, and, consequently, peace and charity, may be preserved; without which the right government, neither of our Society, nor of any other congregation, can be maintained. And this kind of proceeding the Divine Providence uses, in disposing all things sweetly, and bringing them to their appointed ends, the lowest by the middlemost, and the middlemost by the highest. Whence also flows that subordination in angels of one Hierarchy towards another, and that perfect harmony of the celestial bodies and all things which are moved, each in its own determined place and position; whose revolutions and motions proceed orderly from one supreme mover by degrees unto the lowest. The same we see upon earth, as well as in all well-ordered commonwealths, as most of all in the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, whose members and functions are all derived from one General Vicar of Christ our Lord; and by how much the more exactly this disposition and order is kept, by so much the whole government is better; and, on the other hand, by the neglect hereof, what grievous damages have befallen various congregations, there is no one who does not see. And, therefore, in this Society, whereof our Lord has delivered unto me some charge and care, I desire this virtue

should be practiced as diligently, and flourish as perfectly, as if the whole good and safety of our Society depended hereon.

21. Wherefore, that where my Epistle began, there it may also end, I most earnestly beseech you for Christ our Lord's sake, Who gave himself unto us not only as a Master, but also as an Example of Obedience, that you will bend all your forces to the attaining of this virtue ; and that, desirous and greedy of so glorious a victory, you will endeavor to overcome yourselves, that is, to conquer and subdue the most excellent and difficult part of your soul, your will, I say, and understanding ; to the end the true and solid knowledge and love of God Almighty, our Lord, may draw you wholly unto Him, and rule and govern you in the whole course of this life and pilgrimage, until at length He bring you, and many others assisted by your help and example, to the last and most happy end of bliss everlasting.

I commend myself most earnestly to God in your prayers.

*From Rome, the 26th of March, 1553.*

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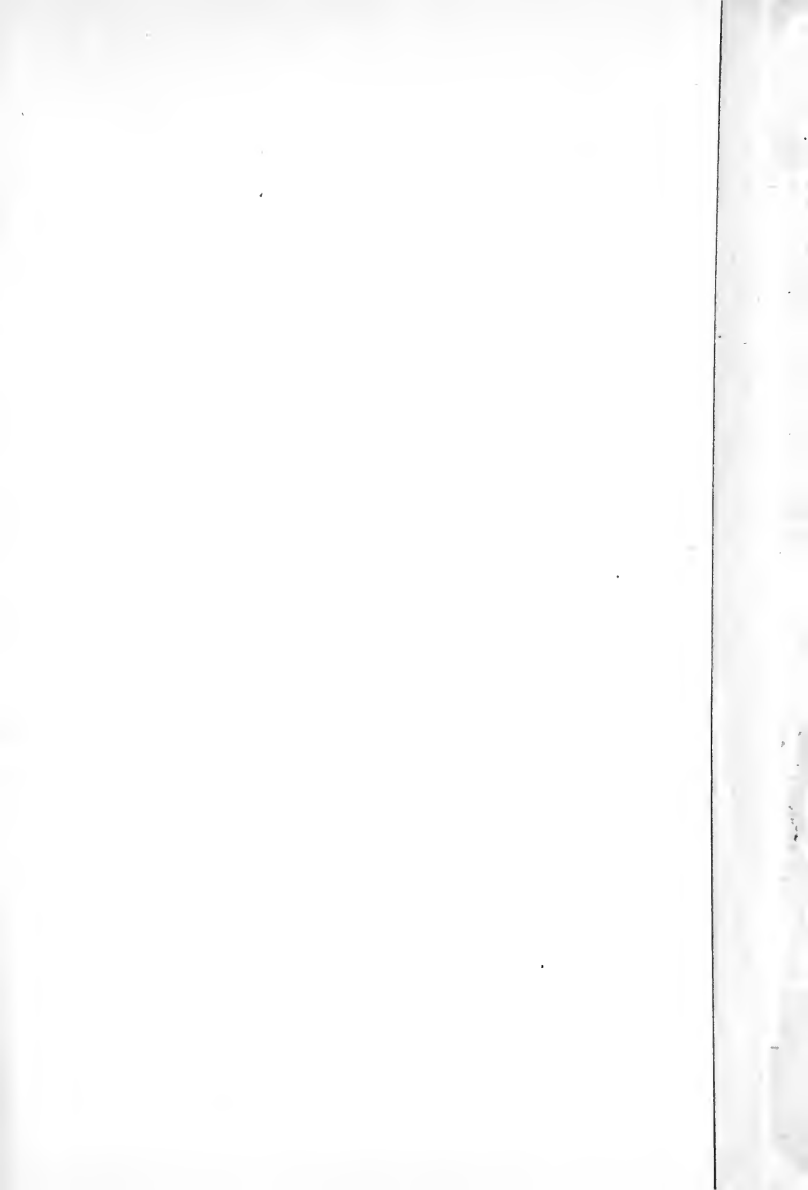
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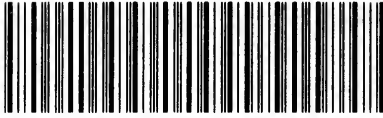
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