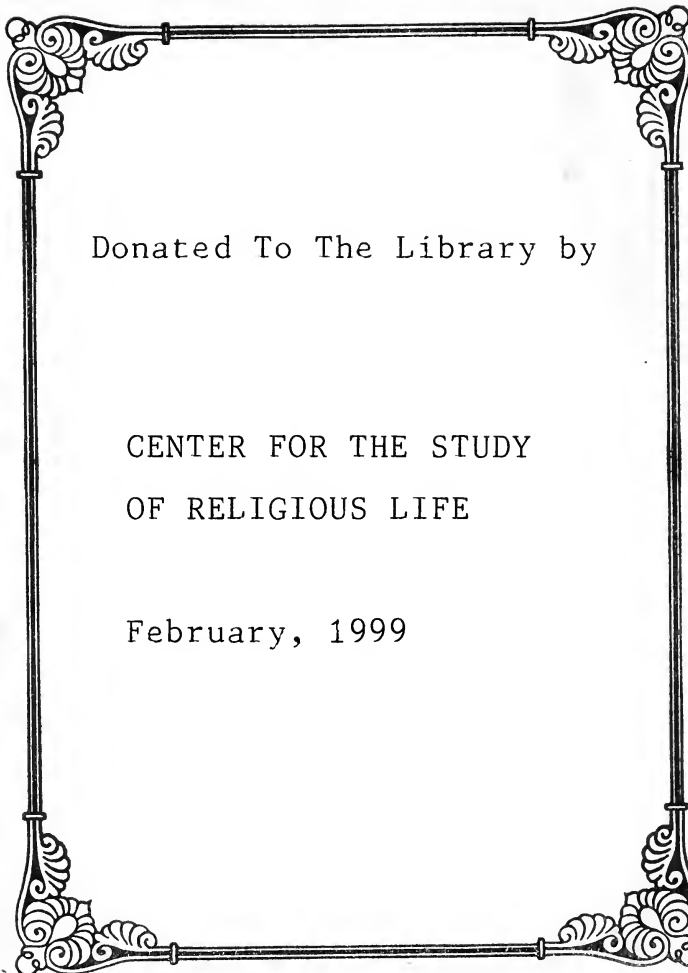



1875



Donated To The Library by

CENTER FOR THE STUDY
OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

February, 1999

A circular library stamp with a double-line border. The text inside is centered and reads:

The Catholic
Theological Union
LIBRARY
Chicago, Ill.



CONSTITUTIONS AND RULES

— OF THE —

Sisters of Charity

BVM
MOUNT CARMEL ARCHIVES
DUBUQUE, IOWA, U.S.A.



— OF THE —

Blessed Virgin

The Catholic
Theological Union
LIBRARY

Chicago, Ill.

CHICAGO:
OTTAWAY & COLBERT.
1875.



APPROBATIO.

Has Constitutiones et Regulas approbamus.

*Apud Dubuquum, } + JOANNES,
24 Aprilis, 1875. } Epus Dubuquensis.*

Item Approbamus.

*+ THOMAS FOLEY,
Epus Coadjutor, et Administrator,
Chicagioe, } Diocesis Chicagiensis.
8 Maii, 1875. }*

*+ JOANNES M. HENNI,
Milwaukiæ, } Epus Milwaukiæ.
25 Maii, 1875. }*



CONSTITUTIONS.

1. The object for which God in His goodness has designed to call and bring together the Sisters of Charity of the B. V. M. is to honor the Holy Family, namely, Jesus, Mary and Joseph. To this end they will consecrate all their labors, that they may imitate more and more the private life of the Holy Family. Yet it belongs to their vocation to live in any part of the world where there is hope of promoting the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

2. To honor the holy childhood of our Lord Jesus Christ, they shall instruct youth whose minds they shall store with the truths of the true Faith, and whose hearts especially, they shall teach to love God, and to serve Him, by the diligent practice of all virtues, so that, whilst they sow the seeds of learning in their minds, they unite their souls to God by a fervent love.

3. The better to obtain this end of the Constitutions, by which they will acquire abundant merit for themselves and be useful to others, let them take care that no point of perfection to which, by God's grace, they may obtain, be neglected.

4. The more easily to obtain this, it will help very much to apply themselves with their whole mind to the exercises of the spiritual and interior life, and they should strive as much as possible to let these animate all their actions.

5. Therefore, first of all, let each one take care of her own perfection and the salvation of her own soul, and, giving them the first place, let her spare no endeavor to obtain them.

6. Let all thoroughly understand how much it helps and conduces to this end of the Institute, to apply themselves with all their souls to the study of the virtues of Charity, Simplicity and Humility, which are the characteristic virtues of their Institute.

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

action, that thus, every member, and hence, the whole community, may be animated by these three virtues, as the body is by the soul.

8. 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, and of which they should endeavor to show themselves worthy; and, therefore, not only should they feel that charity for one another in their hearts, but should show that respect and love in act, especially by sweet address, by humbly yielding so that every one may be such as the Apostle desires, "having become all to all," etc.

9. 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.

10. If, then, they desire to obtain this degree of perfection, let each one endeavor to divest herself of every natural attachment to everything, as well places and offices as persons; and let her be ready to leave everything immediately when Obedience shall de-

sire it, following that council of Christ :
 “ He who shall leave,” etc.

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

12. Embracing with a pure love God, only, and the neighbor for Him, as much as possible, let them strive to receive, at least with resignation, and with the grace of God to love and to desire ardently, annoyances, slanders, false accusations and injuries, with which they may meet, even though they should have given no cause for them, but on the contrary, should have done good. And this, because they desire to be similar to, and, in some manner, to imitate, Our Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered greater things for our sake, and gave us an example for our imitation.

13. All who have given themselves to this congregation should apply themselves to the study of solid virtues, and spiritual things, and let them be convinced that these are of greater value

than learning and all other natural gifts; for the former are, as it were, the soul from which our whole life should receive its strength and vigor.

14. 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.

15. The more easily to obtain this, no one shall have anything as her own; but all things shall be possessed in common as among the first Christians, and therefore, no one is allowed to have anything nor to make use of anything as her own; to lend or borrow or dispose of anything that is in the house, without the consent of the Superior.

16. 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. Let them leave the matter, so declared, to her, and, whether the things be granted or not, remain undisturbed.

17. To this end, it will greatly help if the Sister, whose duty it is to provide, diligently inquire as to whatever 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.

18. As regards clothing and all the 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.

19. 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 permission of the Superior.

20. 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 belongs to them, as regards clothing, food and furniture.

21. 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.

22. As regards Chastity, let the Sisters understand how strenuously they should bestow all their care to practice this angelic virtue with the greatest affection, and let them most carefully avoid anything contrary to the spirit of this virtue; as, for instance, the desire of seeing and of hearing everything, of pleasing or being seen, and engaging in long conversations, especially with worldly persons.

23. 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 even the suspicion of anything contrary to the angelic virtue.

24. 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 one, by which the intellect, the will and all desires of the flesh and blood are kept in continual subjection,

under the guidance of obedience, it will neither last long nor profit much.

25. Such is the obedience desired from all the Sisters, that, everywhere and always, they entirely and with profound humility, subject their intellect and will to the commands of their Superiors, so that, in all things in which sin does not manifestly appear, they give to the Superior, whether of a rough or sweet disposition, that obedience of which Our Lord has given so bright an example, since they understand clearly that they give themselves and their obedience not to man, but to God, in the person of the Superior.

26. 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 that obedience which is laid down in the Constitutions, to the ordinary of the Diocese, to the Confessor, Mother Superior, or in her place, to the Sister Assistant, or the Visitor, and to all other Superiors, in those things that belong to their office.

27. Those who teach in the classes

should, with great humility, obey the Sister Directress, who is at the head, and, whilst traveling, they must obey the one appointed by the Superior.

28. At the Superior's voice, and at the sound of the bell, just as they heard the voice of Christ our Lord Himself, all should be most prompt in obeying, leaving everything else.

29. Every one must fulfil 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 blame-worthy.

30. All shall daily make use of the examination of conscience, and every eight days, let them confess and 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 conscience 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.

31. 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.

32. For their greater progress in spirit and for their greater submission and humiliation; as also, for their safer direction, each one should be satisfied that all her errors and defects and dangers, which the Sisters may have noticed, be manifested to the Superior, who cannot see and hear everything herself; and, therefore, should any one know any grievous temptation of another, let her, with charity, inform the Superior.

33. Temptations must be prevented by their contraries, so that, if any one is noticed to be inclined to pride, it will help her very much to be exercised in offices that are rather low, which seems adapted to humble her; and so in other evil propensities of the soul.

34. They must conceal no temptation

which they should manifest to their confessor or superior; nay, they should have their whole soul entirely unfolded before them, in order that they may more safely be guided in Our Lord.

35. No one shall write to any other without obtaining leave and showing the letter to the Superior, and, should letters be sent to the Sister, 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.

36. As the manner of living, in exterior things at least, is common, and has no ordinary penance obligatory on all, no one shall undertake any penances, without the consent of the Superior, to whom it belongs to decide which penances are best suited to further the spiritual progress of each.

37. All should take a moderate care of their health, and, therefore, let it be understood by all that, when 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.

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

39. During that time they must observe holy Poverty very carefully, and let them be satisfied to be treated in the manner in which poor people, who are sick, are ordinarily treated, leaving aside all complaints, especially since they cannot know, as well as the physician, what is best for them.

40. No one shall call for a physician nor take any medicine without the knowledge and permission of the Superior.

41. 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.

COMMON RULES.

1. Every day all must be present at mass, and during the week no one shall recite any long prayers besides those ordinarily said in common by all.

2. No one shall approach the Holy Table, unless with permission from the Superior, and if this be denied, let her bear the privation with humility.

3. Out of the time of recreation, silence is strictly to be 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.

4. None must stop in the streets to talk, especially with strangers; should necessity or politeness, however, require it, let them answer briefly, and avoid all useless and vain talk, and they must not inquire about worldly news, or family affairs, as this is unbecoming to the spirit of religion.

5. Let all beware of that feeling by which those of one nation are accustomed to think and speak unfavorably of other nations. Let them rather cherish, with peculiar affection in our Lord, those of other nations.

6. No one may undertake any labor which seems to be above her strength. If such should be enjoined by anyone, let her inform the Superior, and be ready to do what the Superior, having under-

stood the matter, shall think best in the Lord.

7. 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 (especially those engaged in teaching) must employ it in sewing or knitting, etc., and, if they have no work of the kind, let them go to the Mother or the Superior to learn what should be done.

8. They shall never be allowed to keep in the house birds or other animals, by which much time is lost.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. They are allowed to salute one another as true religious affection re-

quires, especially when any one has taken her vows, or returns home after a long absence, or for a reconciliation (which must be made kneeling), but never in the church or streets. On other occasions they may shake hands when the hand is offered, but they shall not offer it first.

12. As to visit strangers is as much opposed to their perfection and salvation as it may be advantageous when done through obedience, 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 the rule has occurred, and this must be observed by the Superior herself toward her assistant. Let them know, moreover, that only necessary visits are allowed.

13. 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.

14. Never shall any Sister obtain per-

mission to go out without a companion, whom the Superior shall appoint.

15. When strangers come to the house to visit any one, they must always be received in the parlor. No one shall converse with them nor call any other Sister to them before obtaining leave from the Superior.

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

17. 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 the night in the house of the Sisters.

18. 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.

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

20. 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, and no one is allowed to invite any strangers, even though they are relatives, to dinner, much less to a lodging, without the special permission of the Superior, who shall very rarely grant it, and never to men.

21. 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 custom of the Mother house.

22. Nevertheless, should any one perceive that some food or drink is necessary for her between the times appointed for meals, let her, in all humility, make it known to the Superior that she may provide. They shall never use wine or spirituous liquors, unless they are sick, and then only with special permission from the Superior.

23. No one, except when traveling,

shall be allowed to pass the night, lodge or take her meals in the houses of strangers or relatives.

24. No one, when she goes 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 to the Superior an account of all the things she has with her. -

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 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 shall occupy the second place.

26. 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.

27. What has been said in the Constitutions with regard to letters must be understood in such a manner that, let-

ters 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 even to inquire to which Sister a letter has come, or who wrote to the Mother, and, if there be anything in the letter which should be communicated to the Superior, let it be done orally or in writing, without showing the letter.

28. 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.

29. No one shall curiously inquire about the actions and sayings of any one else, or why 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 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.

31. 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 to 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 Superiors, should be kept secret.

32. Before the Confessor is appointed by the Bishop let all earnestly beg of God that, in His mercy, He may choose the one whom 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 in spiritual matters as that of Jesus Christ, and let them reject, as coming from the evil spirit, anything to the contrary that may enter their minds.

33. Let all carefully prepare themselves to celebrate the Feasts of the Purification, Annunciation, Visitation and Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and on the day of her Immacu-

late Conception, as also every year at the end of the eight days' retreat (which is most conveniently performed during the long vacation), all shall renew their vows.

34. If any Sister, from necessity or from any other reason, cannot perform these exercises, then she will afterward make a retreat of at least four or five days.

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

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

37. Should it happen that any priest, even their confessor, should wish to grant them permissions contrary to their rule or spirit of the Institute, as,

for example, leave to travel or to spend money that is left after providing what may be necessary and the like, he must, with humility and firmness, be told that such 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.

38. Finally, let all hold their rules in great esteem, and let them be persuaded that they are the sole means by which Almighty God in His mercy and goodness wishes them to arrive at the perfection of their Institute, 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 the memory of them once a month by reading them or hearing them.

OF THE VARIOUS EXERCISES AND THE ORDER TO BE KEPT IN THEM.

1. Every day, in summer, they shall rise at half past four, and in winter, at five o'clock. After twenty minutes

they shall assemble in the chapel to pray to God by offering to Him all the actions of the day, and let them recite the Pater, Ave, Creed, Confiteor, and the acts of Faith, Hope and Charity. On every second day they shall say the Litanies; all these are followed by mental prayer or meditation for half an hour; then, let them be present at mass.

2. On Communion days they shall make their thanksgiving for twenty minutes, after which they breakfast, and then they must immediately go to their work.

3. At half-past eleven they shall make their examination of conscience for ten minutes, then follows dinner, during which there must be spiritual reading. Let grace be said before and after dinner, which is followed by a visit to the Most Blessed Sacrament, and the saying of the Angelus.

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

5. At two o'clock they shall visit the Most Holy Sacrament and recite the

beads. Let supper be ready at five o'clock, after which there shall be recreation till half-past seven.

6. At half-past seven there shall be spiritual Reading for half an hour; at eight o'clock they shall recite the Pater, Ave, Creed, Confiteor and read the Act of Consecration to St. Joseph, and the Seven Dolors 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 quietly 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 for those intentions 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 that they receive, and nine Rosaries, which they shall recite after her death. And let the Superior see that one High mass be sung and three low masses be said at

the mother house, and three in each of the other houses.

10. 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 the "Veni Creator," with the prayer "O God, who to," etc. Then let some one read a part of the Constitutions or Rules, after which, each one kneeling, shall accuse herself and be accused of faults against the Rules, and ask pardon, and she must humbly receive the reprimands or penances which the Superior shall enjoin.

OF THE GOVERNMENT.

1. St. Joseph's Convent, in the County and Diocese of Dubuque, will continue to be the Mother-House and Novitiate of the Community; and neither shall be removed therefrom, without the permission of the bishop of Dubuque; nor shall any new Foundation be made in another Diocese without his permission and approbation.

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 term of her office. When a Mother is to be elected, the election will be conducted thus: Three Sisters, none of whom shall be under thirty years of age, nor less than seven years in religion, after profession, will be nominated by the Superiors of all the houses of the Community, without regard to the number of Sisters. For these Sisters, all the members of the Community, five years in religion after profession, will vote; and the Sister, receiving the largest number of votes, shall be declared elected, and entitled to office, after the election will have been ratified by the Bishop of Du-buque.

3. The Mother shall be assisted by four consultors, who will be chosen by the Superiors of all the houses of the Community, and called the private Council; that of the Superiors shall be called the General Council.

4. The time of all offices is three years. The Consultors shall not hold office for more than six years in succession.

5. Should the Mother Superior,

through ill-health or even misconduct, become unfit for her office, the Sister Assistant, after duly considering the matter before God, shall have the right to convoke the General Council for the election of a new Superior. In the meantime, in case of ill-health, the Sister Assistant shall hold the place of the Mother, and shall govern the Community. But, in any other case, and under no circumstance whatever, shall she assume the authority of Mother, without the consent of the Private Council, and the knowledge of the Local Superiors.

6. Should the Mother Superior be guilty of misconduct, so that she be rendered unfit for governing, the General Council shall have the power to deprive her of authority, and, if necessary, to dismiss her like any inferior.

OF THE MOTHER SUPERIOR.

1. Let the Mother Superior be mindful that authority amongst religious consists, rather in serving the servants of Our Lord, than in being honored; therefore, let her be persuaded how great and manifold are the obligations of her

office; and, bestowing her first care on her own perfection, let her strenuously labor that the Sisters make progress in solid virtue.

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

3. It is the duty of the Mother Superior to preserve all accounts, letters, contracts and all 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, 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, as well, Superiors as inferiors, make use of the same simple dress; and she shall never allow of any change in this regard.

OF THE SISTER ASSISTANT.

1. The Assistant should be mindful that it belongs to her to help the Mother

in all her duties. 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; therefore, let her examine every day whether all fulfill their duty faithfully.

3. That this may be done the more accurately, let her foresee every morning what is to be done by each and every one, so as to inform them in due time.

4. Once every month she shall examine the whole house and every room in it, that she may know whether anything is to be corrected or whether anything is wanting.

5. Should any one be sick, she must, with the greatest possible charity, provide everything necessary for soul and body.

OF LOCAL SUPERIORS.

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

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

3. Let her understand that she cannot grant leave to any Sister to travel for more than one 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 to allow the Sisters to receive Holy Communion or to forbid it, yet, since this mortification is rather hard, she should not refuse such permission but for very grave reasons.

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 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 useful or necessary.

7. 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 care thereof.

8. When the Visitor shall come to the house, let the Superior inform her of all that is done in the house, and let her answer all questions with religious modesty and simplicity; and let her learn from the Visitor what should be done for 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 meantime, 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.

OF THE VISITOR.

1. Our houses should be visited, in order that the religious spirit may be renewed in them, and that any obstacle or difficulties which may exist may be removed; therefore, that these visitations may be productive of good, it is very 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 with which the Sisters should be animated; whether the constitutions and rules are observed with exactness. And, should the Sisters 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, 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 and everything else. 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 them she shall write down whatever relates to the schools; in the other, the accounts of expenses and income. And, at her return, she shall show them to the Mother, and give a complete account of the house which she visited.

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

9. Besides the visitation made by the Sister Visitor, the Superiors of the different houses shall invite the Bishop to make an annual visitation; and it will be the duty of the members of the house thus visited, 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.

OF THE SECRETARY.

1. The Secretary should be convinced that she can greatly promote the good of the whole Community, and that her office is of great importance, and, therefore, she should endeavor to observe most exactly all the Constitutions and Rules, and give good example to the rest.

2. She must have a book in which she

must write, 1st, all letters of importance, written, either by the Mother herself, or by some one else appointed for that purpose; 2d, the names of the Sisters who are dead.

3. In another book, she shall write, every day, the orders of the Mother, and all the business to be done on that day.

4. She must endeavor to write all her letters very clearly, and let them be filled with the spirit of piety. Moreover, she must not undertake to write anything, or give any order, without the approval of the Superior.

OF 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 this reason, let

her always have in view, God and the good of the community.

3. All accounts, as well of expenses as of income, must be delivered to her, and they must all be written in a book, so that, at stated times, an account may be made to show whether the expenses exceed the receipts.

4. She must have a safe, which she must keep locked, and in which she shall place all the money necessary for the support of the Community.

5. 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.

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

7. 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.

8. 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.

OF THE SISTERS 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 may seem to act through passion.

3. Let them ever keep in view the greater good of our congregation, especially when any one asks admission, and they examine her 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

OF 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 greater glory.

2. To obtain this end let her explain to them, and instruct them in all the Constitutions and Rules, 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 by them; for thus, being led by the love of perfection, they will, with greater security, attain that perfection 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 any thing 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, for thus she will have the confidence of the novices, and they will be better formed.

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 praying for her.

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

OF THE DIRECTRESS OF THE SCHOOLS.

1. It belongs to this Sister to direct, with prudence in our 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. She should be convinced that it belongs especially to her to give good example, as well to the Sisters as to the children.

3. She must be most careful that no Sister be burdened with too much labor, which would be an obstacle to her spiritual exercises, as well as to her 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 most carefully watch over the morals of the children, so that they may never read any bad book, nor anything else contrary to good morals; and she must never overlook any fault against morality, how trivial soever it may be.

6. At stated times she shall give notes of approbation to the children, and visit their parents; 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 must send her to the class for which she is judged to be fit.

8. 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. For thus they shall be better instructed in the manner of teaching.

OF 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 place, go to the parish priest, and, on their knees, receive his blessing, and, during the whole time that they are in that place, they must give him due re-

spect and obedience, provided 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 souls of children to God.

4. And let it be their principal care to fill the hearts of the young with a very great hatred of every sin as the greatest evil that can befall them in this world.

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 leave of the presiding Sister.

7. Should it happen that two Sisters

teach in the same 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 regularity in the lessons, and perfect order in the schools as most necessary for the children to make progress, and they must, like religious, be subject to the directress.

OF THE SACRISTAN.

1. In our houses a Sister shall be appointed, who must take care of everything which belongs to Divine Worship. In the morning she shall open, and at night lock, the chapel. She shall ring the bell at the appointed time, ornament the altar according to the feasts, and keep the linen of the altar very clean.

2. She should endeavor to have everything for mass or any other divine service prepared in due time, so that there may be no need of entering the Sacristy when the priest is there.

3. Should it be necessary to speak to the priest, it must be done briefly. If it be necessary to speak at greater

length let her have a companion present during the time, and most strict silence should always be observed both in the chapel and in the Sacristy. And this rule must be observed by all, even the Superior.

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

OF THE INFIRMARIAN.

1. Although all the Sisters should acquit themselves of their respective charges with all due 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 tender compassion.

2. When any one of the Sisters fall sick, let the Infirmarian inquire from the Superior whether the physician, who is usually employed for the house, is to be called, or perhaps any other physician, as the Superior may think necessary, or the case may require.

3. She shall always accompany the physician in his visit to the sick Sisters, receive his prescriptions and comply with them exactly, both in the giving of the medicines and in the observing of the prescribed treatment.

4. She shall be most attentive to the wants of the sick, and cheerfully render any service, even the lowest, seeing only Our Lord Himself in the person of her suffering Sisters.

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

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

7. The Infirmary shall also carefully see that the convalescent make no noise that might, in any way, disturb the sick.

8. If it be necessary to watch with a sick Sister, or should the Infirmary be in need of help for any-

thing else, she shall make it known to the Superior, that she 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, call for a priest in due time, and, in danger of death, shall see that as many of the Sisters, as can do so, may be present to encourage and assist, by their prayers, their dying Sister.

OF 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, and 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 come to the house, to perform what appertains to his duty, he must be led into the parlor in which he must wait for the Superior or some other Sister to lead him to the place of duty.

4. Should any one come to the house to see the Portress she must first obtain leave from the Superior to see the visitor, and the Superior should appoint some one 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 to Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

OF POSTULANTS.

1. Should any one ask admission into our Congregation, the Sisters appointed for that purpose, should, with

great prudence and discretion, inquire of her concerning her country, parents, age, habits, qualities, and especially about the motives which have induced her to ask admission into religion.

2. As it is necessary for the religious life to be adorned with virtue, no one is to be admitted unless she enjoys good health and strength of mind and body, and is of a 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 to be 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, should 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), and they shall approach the Holy Table on all Sundays and festivals.

5. After they shall have been suffi-

ently 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 upon 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.

CONCERNING NOVICES.

1. The Novices, before they are allowed to take their vows, must spend two years of novitiate, and this time may be prolonged, for grave reasons, but never shortened.

2. Those who are in the novitiate must live separated from the other Sisters, and they should not be with them except in the chapel or refectory.

3. When they shall have finished the time of the novitiate, and have shown

themselves fit to be received, before taking their vows, they should make a retreat, the better to prepare themselves to make to God the sacrifice of their lives.

4. They shall make their profession before the Bishop, or the priest appointed, by taking the three simple vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience 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 to be done by the priest, the Superior, and two witnesses.

OF DISMISSAL.

As in the human body, so in a religious Community, it is sometimes, though rarely, necessary to cut off a member, whereby the others may be secure. It belongs, therefore, to discretion and prudence to point out the causes for which it seems better, in our Lord, to dismiss a member from the congregation :

1st. A very irregular way of living, so

as to give scandal to others, and being incorrigible, even after frequent admonitions.

2d. A serious and hidden obstacle not manifested at the time of entering.

3d. Deliberate and grievous insubordination or disobedience.

4th. A very serious fault against the vow of poverty, by which the house would be exposed to incur great expenses.

5th A grievous fault against the vow of chastity, especially if it be known to strangers.

6th Giving just reasons for displeasure, or offering an insult to any stranger, and not being willing to repair the injury.

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

OF THE RELIGIOUS DRESS.

The dress of the Sisters of Charity of the B. V. M. shall show forth humility and modesty; therefore, 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 white 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.

FORMULA OF THE VOWS.

In the presence of the whole court of Heaven, and under the protection of the Immaculate Mary, ever Virgin, prostrate at Thy feet, O Almighty and Everlasting God, and actuated by the desire of wholly consecrating myself to Thy service, I, —— ——, do vow to Thee, Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, in the Community of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for one year, according to the Constitutions and Rules of the same. ✕ O Father of all Mercy, let this offering of my heart be acceptable in Thy eyes; receive me into the arms of Thy Infinite Goodness, and grant me the grace, so to fulfill that with which Thou hast inspired me, that, one day, I may see Thee, praise Thee, and love Thee for ever and ever.

Amen.

Catalogue of Communion Days and the Intentions of the Community.

- All Sundays in the year, for the Community.
 First Friday of every month, for Rev. Father Donoghoe 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 local Patron, for Local Mission.
 The day of entering the Novitiate, for each Sister's private intention.
 Jan. 6, Epiphany, for Rt. Rev. Bishop.
 Jan. 29, St. Francis De Sales, for Local Confessor.
 Feb. 2, Purification of B. V. M., for Benefactors.
 March 19, St. Joseph, for the Community Thanksgiving.
 March 25, Annunciation B. V. M., for the Community Thanksgiving.
 May 8, St. Michael, for a happy death.
 May 24, Help of Christians, for Rev. Father Donoghoe.
 Ascension Thursday, for the Souls in Purgatory.
 Corpus Christi, for all Bishops, Priests and Religious.
 June 29, St. Peter and St. Paul, for the Pope.

- July 2, Visitation, B. V. M., for Deceased Parents and Relatives.
- July 16, B. V. M., Mount Carmel, for Missions, Sisters and Children.
- July 19, St. Vincent of Paul, for the Community.
- 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 Sisters' private intention.
- Sept. 24, Our Lady of Mercy, for all suffering persecution.
- Sept. 29, St. Michael, for Rev. Father Donoghoe.
- Oct. 2, Guardian Angels, for the Community.
- Oct. 4, St. Francis Assisium, for Mother.
- Oct. 15, St. Teresa, for Sisters' private intention.
- Nov. 1, All Saints, for Rev. Father Donoghoe.
- Nov. 2, All Souls, for all the souls of the faithful departed.
- Nov. 21, Presentation, B. V. M., for The Community.
- Dec. 8, Immaculate Conception, for our Holy Father, the Pope.
- Dec. 25, Christmas Day, for Sisters' private intention.
- Dec. 27, St. John, the Evangelist, for Rt. Rev. Bishop.
- One mass each month for Rev. Father Donoghoe 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 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 practise; 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

* L. 35. Moral c. 10. † Ad Philip. ii. 8.

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 had said in express and open 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

*Lu

—c. x. 16.

† Matt. xxiii. 2.

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 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 in the external execution only of that which is commanded; and that it is not worthy of 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 fulfilment 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

* 1 Reg. xv. 22.

† L. 35 Moral c. 10.

Conference of Daniel the Abbot, saying: **It is one and the self same 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 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 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*

* Serm. de trib. Ordin. Eccl.

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 fulfil 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 self same with his Superior; and submit his own judgment unto him, so far as a devout will can bend the understanding. For, though this power 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 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, seem 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 for all those who live in religion. For, as in the celestial bodies and globes, to the end that one may re-

ceive motion and influence from the other, 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 subordinate, 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.

II. 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, least 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,

* Prov. iii. 5.

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 headlong, 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 ap-

*Col. ii. 11.

prehensive, 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 into 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 fulfil 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 self same sentiment between the members and the head, you may easily judge whether it is more just that the head should yield to the

— * Serm. 3 de Circumsis. † Rom. x. 5.v
1 Cor. i. 10. 2 Cor. xxiii. 11. Philip. ii. 2.

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 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 whatever 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, in as much 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 com-

manded 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 understanding. 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

* iii. 23.

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, not otherwise than if it were the voice of Christ, seeing that the Apostle writing to the Collossians,* 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.

17. Another means is, that you always seriously endeavor to defend within

* iii. 23.

† Tract. de Præcep. et Dispen. C, xii.

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

* Serm. 4 de jejun. sep. mensis.

† Gen. xxii.

‡ L. 4. C. xxiv et xxvi.

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 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

— *Greg. 2. Dial. C. vii.

† In vit. PP. L. 5. libel. 14, n. 4.

(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 towards his immediate Superior, 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 Provi-

dence 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 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 practised as diligently, and

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

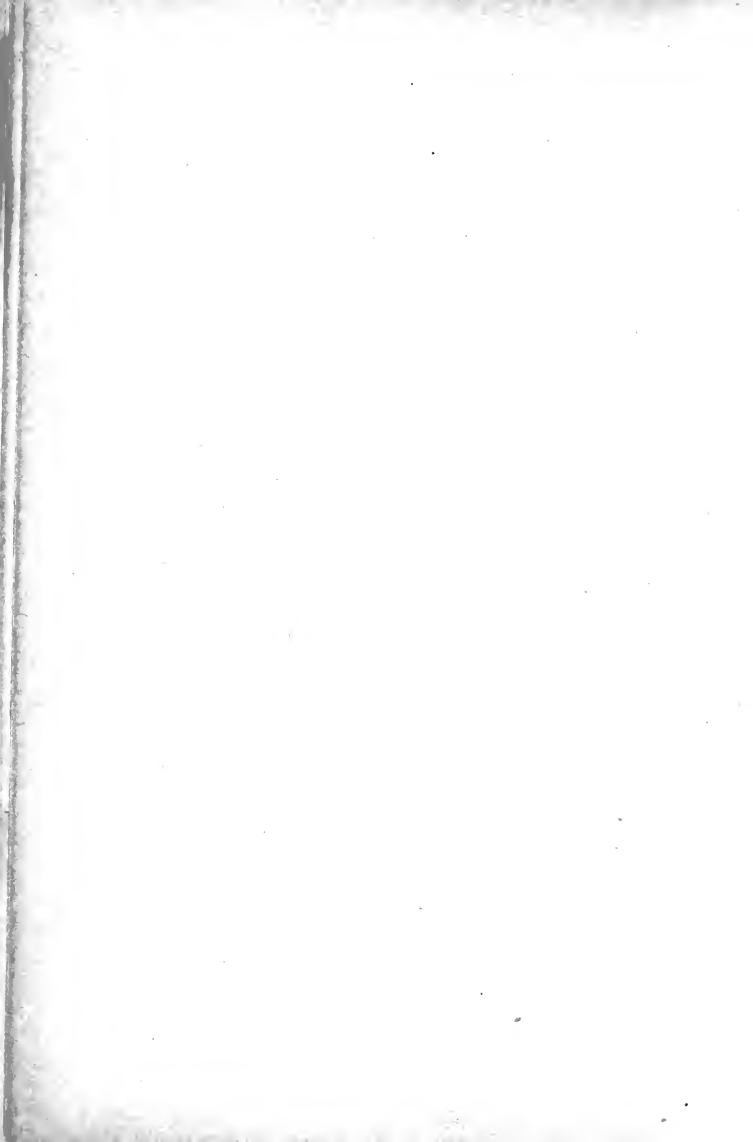
21. Wherefore, that where my Epistle began, there it may also end, I most earnestly beseech you for Christ our Lord's sake, Who gave Himself unto us not only as a Master, but also as an Example of Obedience, that you will bend all your forces to the attaining of this virtue; and that, desirous and greedy 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.

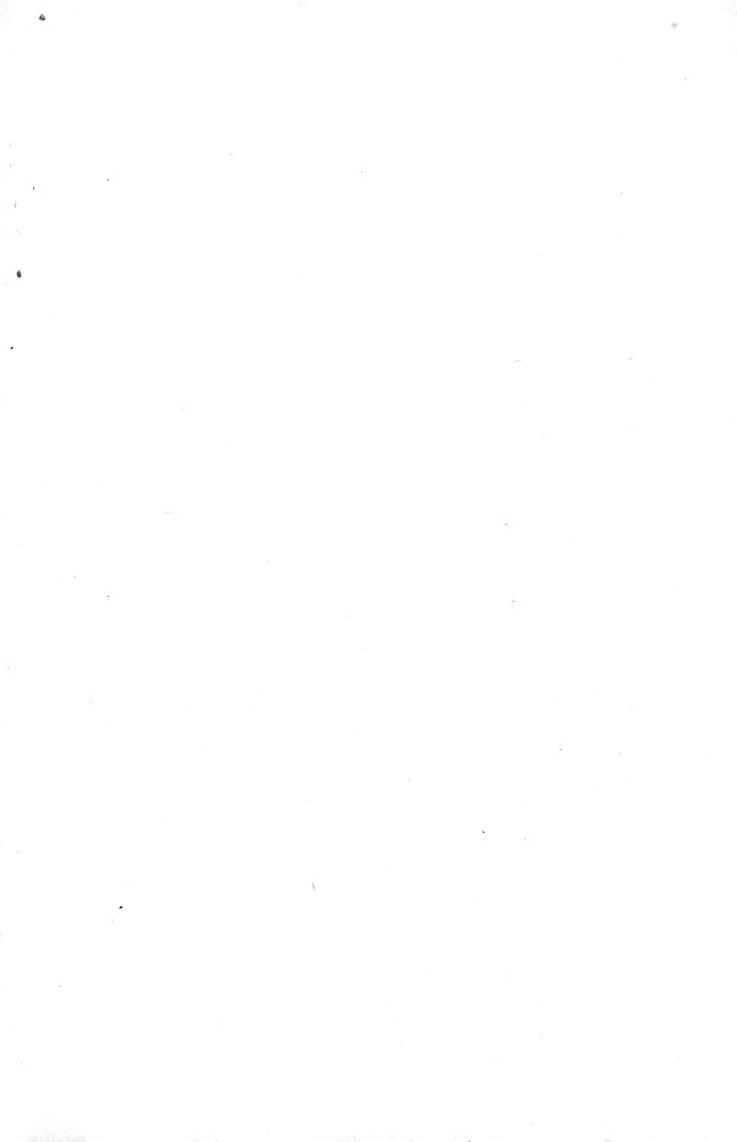
From Rome, the 26th of March, 1553.

INDEX.

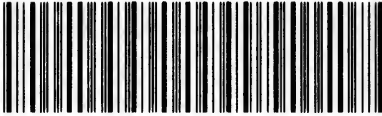
	PAGE.
Letter, - - - - -	5
Constitutions, - - - - -	7
Common Rules, - - - - -	18
Various Exercises, - - - - -	28
Government, - - - - -	31
Mother Superior, - - - - -	33
Sister Assistant, - - - - -	34
Local Superiors, - - - - -	35
Sister Visitor, - - - - -	38
Sister Secretary, - - - - -	40
Sister Procurator, - - - - -	41
The Consultors, - - - - -	43
Mistress of Novices, - - - - -	44
Directress of Schools, - - - - -	46
Sisters Who Teach, - - - - -	47
Sister Sacristan, - - - - -	49
Sister Infirmarian, - - - - -	50
Sister Portress, - - - - -	52
Of Postulants, - - - - -	53
Of Novices, - - - - -	55
Of Dismissal, - - - - -	56
Of Religious Dress, - - - - -	57
Formula of Vows, - - - - -	59
Catalogue of Communions, - - - - -	60
Epistle of Obedience, - - - - -	62







CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL UNION



3 0311 00119 8303

BX 4467 .A3 1875
Sisters of Charity of the
Blessed Virgin Mary
Constitutions and rules



3 0311 00119 8303