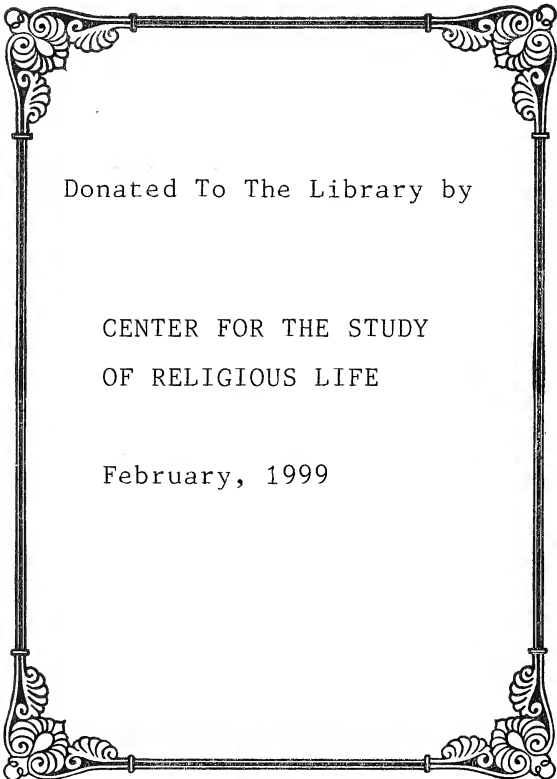


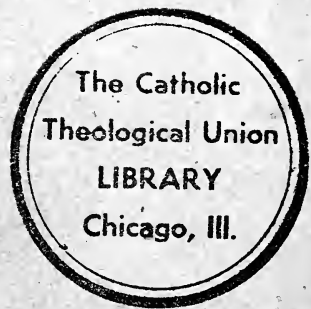
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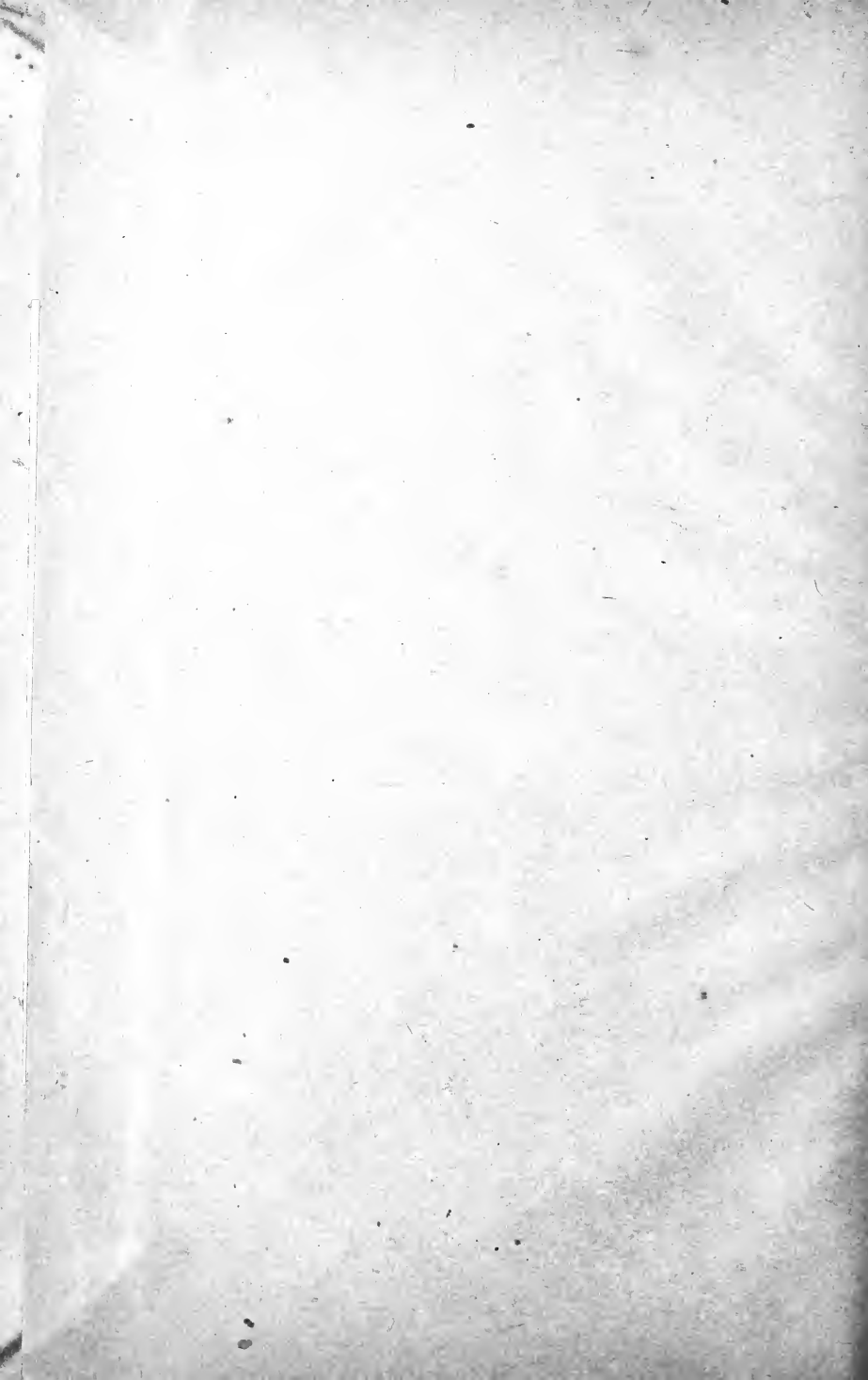
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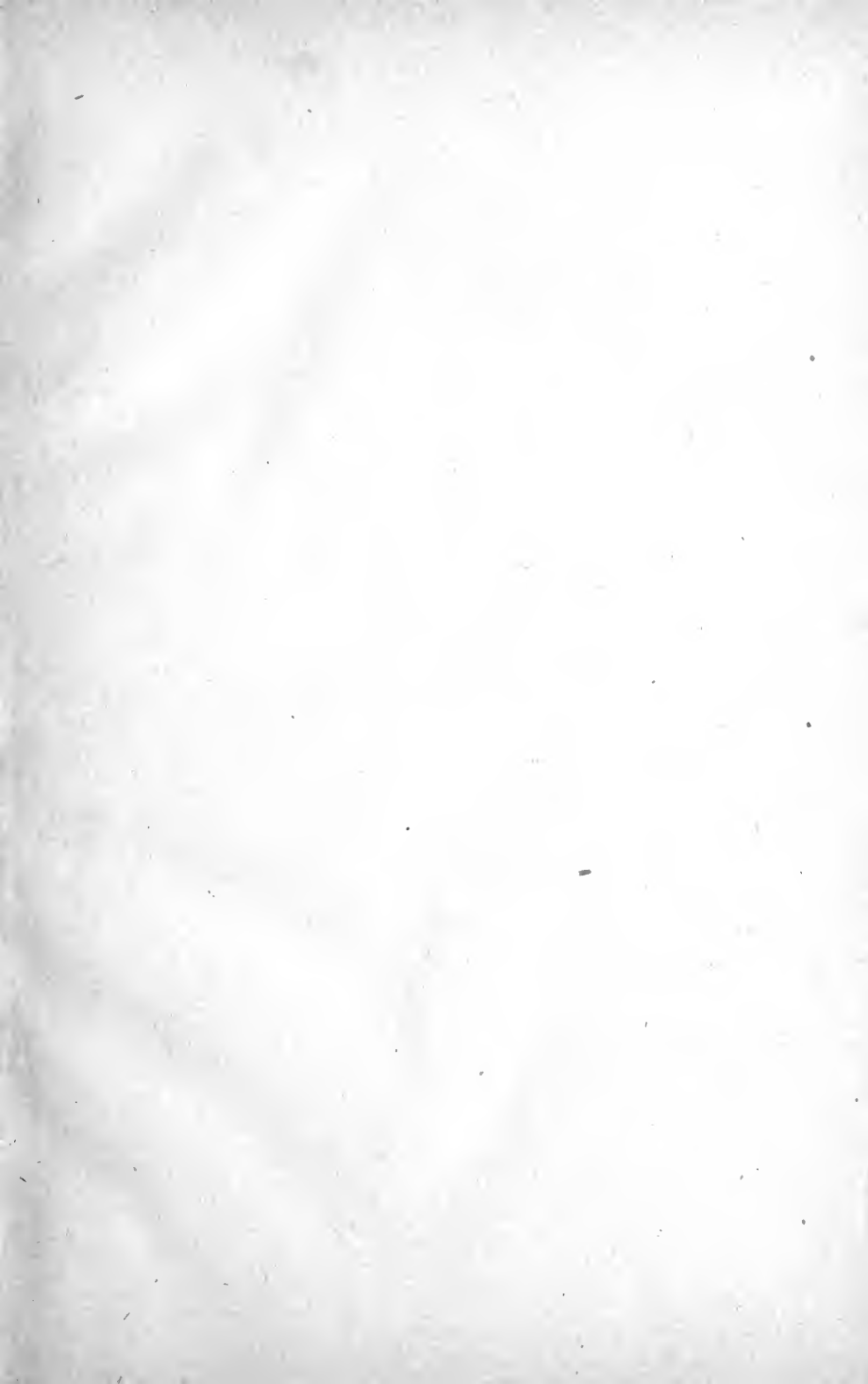


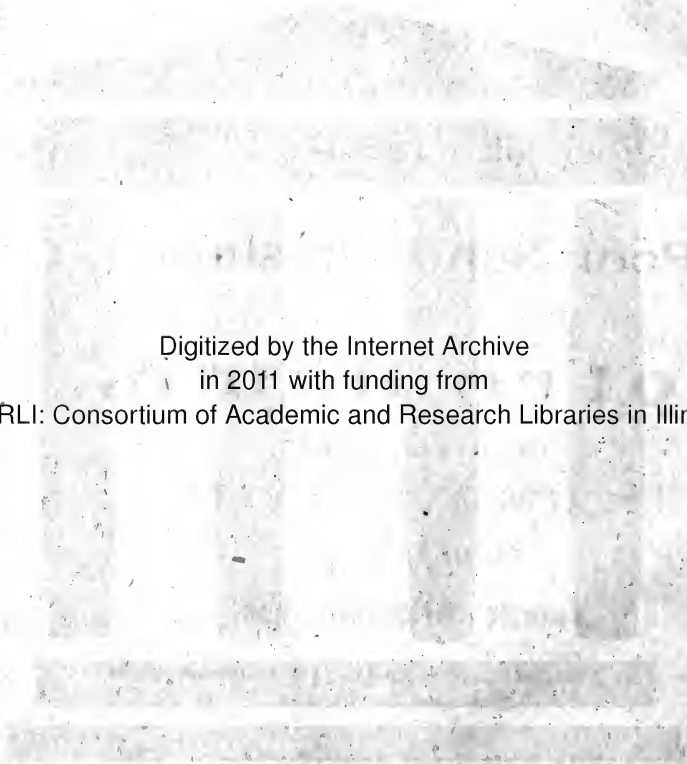
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SPIRIT
OF THE
CONSTITUTIONS
FOR THE
RELIGIOUS CONGREGATION
OF
Poor School Sisters
OF
Notre Dame,

DEVOTED TO THE
EDUCATION OF FEMALE YOUTH.

SKETCHED BY

Francis Sebastian Job,

*Chaplain of the Imperial Court of Austria, and Confessor of the
Empress Caroline.*

With Episcopal Approbation.

Second Edition.

MILWAUKEE,

1892.

Convent Print.

Public School System
of the District of Columbia

1910-1911

Annual Report

Washington

1911

IN NOMINE JESU.

INTRODUCTION.

RAISED be God, the Father of mercies and God of all consolation, the Father of Light that illumines all men who love not darkness more than light! It dawns! Increasing brightness proclaims the final return of day, succeeding a long, fearful night. We begin to feel and behold the sad effects of that spirit which, at the dawn of this century, after long and tedious efforts, by secretly setting every engine at work, succeeded in overthrowing all that our ancestors, in the course of a thousand years, had erected for the benefit of the Church and State. But, despite all boasts, these innovaters have reared nothing that is satisfactory or durable. The leaders of the sophistic, covetous party proclaimed their watch-word to the world: "Down with superstition! On with the march of reason! Light!" They directed their warfare against Christian faith and its only true foster mother, the Holy Catholic Church. The children of the world, more prudent in the prosecution of their plans than the children of Light, aimed their chief blow at ecclesiastical institutions for the Christian Education of Youth. Suddenly all these establishments were suppressed, as if mown down with a scythe.

Much has been said and written on education from that time on, and yet we have really lost sight of education in this pedagogical period. Friends and advocates of licentiousness seized our institutions to secure their funds, and those who expected "no figs from thorns" were not deceived; no, their fears were more than realized. The pupils of this new school - modeled and remodeled every year anew - now play their roles on history's stage, in the sight of kings and princes, as modern tribunes of a modernly cultured people. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes," and in our days we behold effects rapidly succeeding their causes; for not only "the teeth of the children are set on edge," but many a wretched father has experienced the same sad result.

But praised be the Lord! His Light is piercing the clouds; and many, even among the hitherto deluded, again enlightened and warmed by these heavenly rays, feel and recognize how useful are such Catholic institutions, and how irreparable their loss. In our faithfully Catholic father-land, this correct view was ever maintained by the majority; indeed, I may say without presumption, that in no other country, comparatively speaking, have so many fervent hearts unceasingly invoked the mercies of God concerning this matter, as in our own Bavaria. Hence I feel the cheering conviction that in no other land will these salutary institutions be so easily reestablished and so speedily restored to their former flourishing state.

Even now various institutions for training female youth have arisen from their graves. Besides Nuns of St. Elizabeth, St. Francis de Sales, St. Ursula, we have English Ladies and Daughters of St. Vincent de Paul. As yet no morning star beams, as harbinger of a better day

for the education of male youth, exposed to the current of corrupt morals, and especially open to every inducement of heresy. If, however, the pious few persevere in prayer, the Lord will, in due time, supply this need and recall a brotherhood, that he appears to have anointed and destined mainly for instructing and teaching.* Let us meanwhile, do what we can, and, although we ourselves may not be called to sow, or may not even have the good fortune to survive the arrival of the sower, ours will be the merit to have prepared the soil. We are even now able to begin this work by providing for a truly Christian education of female youth. If a new, superior generation is to appear, if better times are to come, the commencement must be made by training female youth. Above all, we again need pious, Christian mothers; they are the first to foster and educate human posterity; they are the vigilant guards of domestic discipline. Teachers and educators will then continue the work of God with best success in each of their pupils, if it may be asserted of each: "He imbibed the spirit of piety with his mother's milk!"

To woman God's finger now directs us; to her He confines us at present. Though woman herself does not crush the serpent's head, He that will do so, is her offspring. Though pleasing the prospects may be as regards female education in our country, we have still to deplore a considerable deficiency. Those institutions for the education of girls, which are at present a source of joy to us, exist only in our larger towns and cities, where, indeed, they can alone exist; for small towns and villages are not adapted to such purposes, as they cannot raise the necessary funds to establish and support them. Now these city schools may justly be considered a great blessing for children of rank; but those of the low-

* This object has been in part realized by recently established Benedictine monasteries.

er and middle classes, whose parents possess but limited means, cannot afford to receive their schooling at such institutions. It would not even be suitable; for if such girls receive a degree of culture far above their sphere in life, they become like green-house plants, which will be chilled and blighted when again exposed to a rough atmosphere. Have we not, moreover, the sad experience that even whole families are rendered unhappy by such miseducated daughters? On the other hand, we still see pious parents who value the spiritual welfare of their children above everything else, and cheerfully contribute all in their power to give them a pious Christian education, according to their rank. For this purpose they take them to the most convenient town and seek a situation for them in some private family, where they can acquire a thorough knowledge of house-keeping, needle-work and various female employments. But alas! these well-meaning parents do not always make the best selection; for too often their daughters return home, not as pious and dutiful girls, but perverted and irreligious—possessed of some vain knowledge, indeed, yet devoid of heart and soul. Shall, then, poor people in villages and country places receive no attention? Are not they, too, sadly in need of the blessings and consolations conferred by solid Christian education? Must not, wheresoever true Christianity flourishes, the Savior's words be verified, "*The poor have the Gospel preached to them?*" Why should it be impracticable? Did not St. Vincent of Paul succeed in giving the Soeurs Grises such rule and organization that their congregation can spread to villages and country parishes, without disadvantage to their internal unity?

"I HAVE COMPASSION ON THE MULTITUDE."

For many years have I cherished in my heart the resolution to cast my hoarded pence into God's treasury for establishing a girls' school, to be conducted by religious who, at the same time, will have charge of boarding pupils. The man of God, secret counsellor of my soul during six and forty years, whom the Lord called to Himself March 8th,* knowing my resolve, worked hand in hand with me; and, if I now proceed to the execution of my design, it is because he gave me the last impulse in his dying moments. This enterprise requires no creation of mine. Everything is prepared. The members to form the corporation of this society, for many years received their training from my aforesaid friend, Rt. Rev. Michael Wittmann. From this saintly Bishop they imbibed that genuine religious spirit which is indisputably the chief requirement. For the interior community life of the Sisters, he gave them, as a basis, the Rule and Constitutions that Blessed Peter Fourier composed and Holy Church approved for the Congregation of Notre Dame.** Concerning external relations, as teachers and educators, the organization of their institute resembles, in some respects, that of the Sisters of Charity, whose beneficent labors extend to small districts, without any disadvantage to community life.

Upon such basis we may hope, with God's assistance and protection, to establish a religious congregation, in compliance with the wish of Holy Church, and adapted to the object in view. This new Institute shall bear the name

Poor School Sisters,

a religious community for the education of female youth especially in smaller towns and country parishes.

* A. D. 1833. — Feb. 13, 1834, Rev. Father Job followed him into eternity.

** Adopted till 1859, when a Rule Proper, approved by Pius IX. was given to the Institute of S. S. of Notre Dame

In speaking of *education*, I, of course, do not employ this word merely in the sense of *teaching*; for the religious training of the young mind and heart must, above all, be the aim of the Sisters. Education, according to my estimate, comprises the entire labor of school, that is teaching and training. Mere school-teaching, without practical training in piety and religion, can exert no beneficial influence, and a school of this type resembles a whited sepulchre, from which corpses come forth, to fill the air with the pestilential odor of corruption. But where shall this new fruit of Holy Mother Church, who, by the power of the Divine Spirit, never ceases to bring forth new off-spring from her virginal womb, come to light? God has declared His will, as regards this chosen spot. Unless everything deceive me, the cradle of this congregation — its *first Motherhouse** — shall be at Neunburg vorm Wald, my native town; not, indeed, on account of being my birth place, but because such is the will of God, which I must recognize in all that recently transpired, as well as for some years past, more especially in the positive declaration and appointment of my dying friend. In order not to send this young creature into the world without a staff whereon to lean, I cannot refuse to take a burthen upon myself, which I would fain have laden upon the shoulders of a more enlightened, ascetic man; hence I shall give the Poor School Sisters, as a dowry, some

OUTLINES OF THEIR CONSTITUTIONS.

For my own tranquility, I have, as above stated, nothing to draw from myself, but merely to collect and arrange what others have prepared. I shall, therefore, strictly adhere—

* There it was till 1841, when it was established at Munich, Bav. instead.

1. To my deceased friend's declared will, which I regard as a sacred legacy, considering myself as the administrator of his last will and testament ;

2. To the book which this enlightened Bishop laid down as basis ; namely, to the Rule and Constitutions for Nuns of Notre Dame by Blessed Peter Fourier — as far as compatible with the number of Sisters, the duties assigned them, and other circumstances requiring consideration.



ORGANIZATION
OF THE
RELIGIOUS CONGREGATION
BEARING THE NAME
POOR SCHOOL SISTERS.

Poor School Sisters. This name shall be borne by the consecrated virgins who are to compose this new Religious Congregation and, if it please God, to propagate the same. The very title designates the entire compass of their vocation : —

- I. POVERTY — the foundation (ground-color;)
- II. SCHOOL — the chief object ;
- III. SISTESHOOD — the religious association.

To give this religious association necessary holiness, solidity and permanence, there will be required

- IV. VOWS — demanding for their security
- V. A SAFEGUARD.

The essential points of the Constitutions for this new Religious Community may, accordingly, be reduced to five sections.

SECTION I.

Poverty, the Basis of the Congregation.

Bishop Wittmann was poor and loved poverty as a child loves its mother. He gave all he had to the poor, because he wished to be perfect in the sense of the Gospel. Poverty was the favorite subject of his thoughts, wishes,

conversations and sermons.

Now, if this new religious community is to bear impress, and to legitimate itself as fruit of his spirit, poverty must be the basis, the fundamental trait of this new cloister. *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that being rich he became poor for your sakes, that through his poverty you might be rich.”* II. Cor. VIII. 9. He became so poor that He could say : *“The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air, nests ; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.”* St. Luke IX. 58. Only those who joyfully embrace poverty, as nurse and companion for life, may claim the discipleship of Jesus, in a higher and stricter sense of the term, and they alone may be enlisted among laborers and instruments in the erection of the living temple of God. By the poor, and not by the rich, has the kingdom of God, even to this day, been established upon earth. Among the comparatively few wealthy persons who are instruments in the glorious designs of God, we find the greater number have hearkened to the call *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* St. Matt. V. 3. *“If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor and thou shalt have a treasure in heaven ; and come follow me.”* Id. XIX. 21. and voluntarily become poor for the sake of the heavenly kingdom.

Whosoever seeks and desires, here on earth, more than bread and raiment, whosoever devotes himself to the service of God and His Church, *“Putting hand to the plow and looking back, is not fit for the kingdom of God.”* St. Luke IX. 62.

The handmaid and servant should not fare better than her Lord and Master ; she should rather rejoice to share His lot which was ever that of poverty and priva-

tion. Nowhere does our Lord say "Blessed are the rich," but "*Blessed are the poor.*" Therefore, we should not seek the things of earth but, with gaze steadily fixed upon that which is above, we should strive to lay up treasures that are lasting, in that abode where Christ sitteth at the right hand of the Father in the glory of God. No paltry tinsels does He offer as reward; in His celestial kingdom all is true, real, eternal.

POOR SCHOOL SISTERS are demanded

I. *By Jesus Christ our Lord* in conformity with the teachings of His Gospel.

II. *By the Chief Object of this Religious Congregation.* A small rural parish cannot support a community, though limited to the least possible number of individuals if, together with nature's wants, they bring with them a host of refined necessities — the usual attendants of luxurious living. Laborers in the vineyard of the Lord these religious are to be, and such laborers thrive most securely under the shelter and at the frugal table of poverty. Poor School Sisters are furthermore demanded .


III. *By the Spirit of the Age* ; for, however it may prate and argue about education, it is not disposed to contribute aught of its surplus towards founding educational establishments, more especially when Christian training, according to the spirit and teachings of Holy Church, is concerned. They are demanded

IV. *By the Congregation*, for its own advantage. Poor School Sisters will be welcome and secure everywhere. A jealous world would be tempted to envy, condemn, plunder, expel them, were they possessed of wealth. Poverty, trusting in God, lives cheerful and happy under the protection of His paternal hand, knowing as little of care and anxiety as the bird on the tree; or the flower of the field.

Poverty always and everywhere meets with sympathy and compassion, readily obtaining assistance, because but little is required to satisfy its wants.

V. *The Example of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, under whose special protection the Poor School Sisters are placed, serves as an inducement to the love of Poverty. A poor mother and rich daughters, a poor lady with rich servants and clients — how inconsistent! Only poor virgins, who love and practice poverty, are true daughters and servants, true clients and imitators of Mary. Poor virgins alone have a claim upon her protection. Aye, if want begins to be felt — especially want that proceeds from an excess of charity, by inviting guests to the marriage feast, without due provision — then Mary, unasked, will say to Jesus: “Son, they have no wine — no bread.” St. John II, 3.

VI. *Poverty shall be the basis of this Congregation; for such is the declared will of the sainted Bishop Wittmann*, father and founder of this religious institute. Sisters, chosen by God’s mercy to see, to hear this man according to God’s own heart, this true disciple of Jesus, this apostle of Ratisbon; you whose privilege it was to observe his mode of life, to discern his spirit, to see in him the living Gospel, to be placed under his direction and, sitting at his feet, to receive the word of God, as it fell from his lips; you know he assigned strictest poverty as the basis of your Congregation, your religious life and labor, commending it as chief means to sanctity. I, therefore, have nothing to add, save to beseech you by the charity of Christ Jesus: Preserve this spirit of poverty in yourselves and transmit it to all that will ever enter your congregation.



SECTION II.

School, the Chief Object of this Congregation.

School is the field into which our Lord has sent His handmaids to labor. When, in this their sphere of duty, they have borne the heat and the burden of the day, they may in the evening securely count upon their wages.

At School, pupils expect to receive:

I. Instruction. Concerning branches to be taught, order to be observed, time and manner of instruction, the Sisters shall conform to the regulations of the respective authorities to which their schools are subject. No further directions are required on this head. One caution, however, may here be properly given—*Away with declamatory exercises in girls' schools!*

Girls should, indeed, be taught to read well, with proper articulation and expression, giving evidence how deeply they feel and understand their subject; but real declamations should remain aloof from a Christian School for girls. If, at public examinations or on other similar occasions, School Sisters cannot possibly avoid such declamatory exercises, they shall take heed not to choose a girl of attractive appearance. He that gives this caution, knows why — *Vestigia terrent* — (the vestiges thereof are alarming) the footprints he saw lead not to the temple of Virtue.

In connection with their Elementary Schools, the Sisters also have an Industrial Department, in which girls are taught needlework, suited to their station in life; such as knitting, darning, mending, plain sewing, dress-making. In these useful branches, pupils should ac-

quire a certain degree of proficiency.

Instruction, is not, however, the only task devolving upon teaching Sisters; the most important is :

II. The Training of the Youthful Heart—not mere culture for display of external politeness, but education of children in the living fear of God and the faithful performance of their Christian duties, according to their state of life. When such training constitutes a part of regular and appropriate school-teaching, we may justly expect :

III. Education of Youth, which is the Alpha and Omega of School. But how shall this high mark be attained? By *doing* and *teaching*. In school, the teacher is placed "*upon a candlestick,*" and wherefore? That she may give light to all that attend. So let your light shine before children, that they may witness the fear of God and the practice of virtue in your behavior, and praise their and your Father who is in Heaven. Observe what is written of our Savior, "*Who was teaching as one having power,*" not as the Scribes and Pharisees; who was sent by the Father as the Teacher of the world: "*Jesus began to do and to teach.*" Acts I, 1. And He Himself declares of those who, following His example, teach in His name: "*Whosoever shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven.*" St. Matt. V, 19.

Example is a most powerful sermon, the impressions of which can never be effaced from children's minds. It is through the eye, and not through the ear, that the first and most fruitful seed of the word of God enters the soul. Although the agency of the ear is subsequently required, it cannot dispense with the co-operation of the eye; if words are to produce fruits apparent in life, example must precede and accompany instruction. "*Whosoever shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the king-*

dom of Heaven."

Mere words or teachings convey a poor idea of Religion to the minds of children, but when they behold piety and virtue exemplified in the lives of those near and dear, they are vividly impressed with the presence of God, and the Divinity of Jesus Christ; they are readily penetrated with the love of the Holy Ghost and attracted by the beauty of virtue. Therefore, children should see only what is honorable, chaste, laudable and pleasing to God; only what inspires devotion, nurtures and strengthens virtuous principles; only what animates the youthful heart with the love of God and his holy fear. One of the earliest traits manifested by children is the disposition to playfully imitate everything they see. Accordingly, if they have models of virtue before their eyes, they will imitate them and gradually become accustomed to the exercises of virtue and religion, so that these assume in their hearts spirit and life.

The youthful mind having been thus prepared, religious instruction does not prove an irksome task, a new, unaccustomed yoke; religious exercises, instead of appearing dull and tedious, become pleasing and attractive. What would, otherwise, seem obscure and confused to the growing intellect, example renders clear and comprehensible, giving air and warmth to foster the germ of religion implanted in the heart, and enables it to sprout heavenward — to blossom, and bring forth fruit in patience.

In this manner alone will pupils derive the chief advantage of a Christian school; this, as my sainted friend Wittmann affirms, consists in the proper direction of the tongue, in order to induce the young to reflect upon things divine, thus cultivating a gentle spirit and an up-

right character. Having acquired these, the proper use of reason will be the spontaneous result.

Poor School Sisters, behold what your vocation demands! How strongly should it urge you to strive for perfection. The school-room is your work-shop; the pupils, your material. You are to train little girls to become chaste and modest virgins; gentle and faithful wives; pious Christian mothers; industrious and vigilant house-keepers. Every young maiden leaving your schools shall bear within her the elementary principles, the fruitful germ of the valiant woman so beautifully depicted by the Holy Spirit in the Book of Wisdom. But how will you instil this spirit of the holy fear of God into the hearts of little ones, if it abide not within you and actuate you in performing the duties of your vocation? How can you awaken and excite the love of God in the tender minds of children, if your hearts be not filled with the same? "*The mouth speaketh the fulness of the heart.*" How can you enkindle devotion in these childlike souls, if the flames thereof be too weak, yea, perhaps, extinguished in your own? How shall children imbibe a love of virtue and the fear of God, if they behold not in their teacher the model of true piety in its purest and most amiable form? No; your own perfection is inseparable from the chief object of your vocation. Your own spiritual gain or loss is, at the same time, the gain or loss of your pupils. The light and unction of the Holy Ghost are necessary for those whose office it is to train a child in the duties of a Christian life. Whoever would be a light for others—and such *you* are called to be—must herself be enlightened. And again, whosoever would anoint others, must not be wanting in the unction and chrism of the Holy Spirit. No one can give what she has not. Finally, of what

avail is every human effort without God, without Christ, without the Holy Ghost? "Neither he that planteth is anything nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase," writes the Apostle who wrought and suffered most for the cause of Jesus Christ. Our Savior declares to His apostles, as well as to all engaged in apostolic labors: "*Remain in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine; so neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing.*" St. John, XV, 4, 5.

Poor School Sisters, if your labor of planting and watering in the young garden of God is not to be a vain and futile endeavor; if the young plants and trees are to flourish at your hands,— you must live and labor *in, with and for God*. If, like sound and hardy vine-branches, you desire to produce good fruit, you must remain united with the Vine, that from Christ you may derive sustenance, life and strength, clinging to Him with your whole heart and soul, mind and strength.

Woe to the Christian! woe, in particular, to the laborer in the vineyard of the Lord, who severs himself from Christ, the Vine, or who is merely attached to Him by a loose external bond! He will be cut off, as a withering branch, and cast into the fire.

Would you have the Holy Ghost abide in you, and the love of God poured forth into your hearts, so that from your own abundance the hearts of children may be replenished; would you be so richly endowed with grace and strength, that no one can resist the wisdom of the Holy Spirit speaking through you,— then you must be sound and living members of the body of Christ, that is

of His holy Church; for the Spirit of Christ animates the body of Christ and the members thereof, as long as they remain attached, just as my body and its members are animated by my soul. Aye, so essential is self-perfection, so intimately must it be connected with the good work of education!

The sower goes not to the field with empty sack.

This is a difficult task of great responsibility — who will comprehend and undertake it? Christian Sisters, love, love—love with predilection the dear little ones, and love will render your labors sweet and light. Ah! you love Jesus, your Heavenly Spouse; closely then, does your love approach these innocent children — but one step farther, and you will also love those who were most beloved by Him: “*Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto me: for the kingdom of Heaven is for such.*” *St. Matt. IX, 13.* Does He not, in these words, evidently declare them the proper heirs and crown-princes of His Father — His coheirs? When children approached Him, led by the hand of their mothers or borne upon their arms, how lovingly and kindly He looked upon them, drawing them close to Himself, embracing, kissing and caressing them — He, the Son of God, the sovereign Lord, condescending to these poor children of men, the offspring of his handmaids. Good Sisters, love the little ones and, I repeat it, your burthen will become sweet and light; yea, it will foster, protect and fortify virtue within you; it will advance you in perfection. Among children you will easily learn what is, in general, most difficult for adults; that is to become as little children, which indeed, is necessary for you, if you would enter the kingdom of Heaven. If, in your intercourse with little children, you will learn of them to humble yourselves, you

shall become as the greatest in that celestial kingdom. Moreover, children will not long remain your debtors. You do them good, while they, in return, are of benefit to you.

In the school-room a constant spiritual traffic is carried on between teacher and pupils. You love Jesus, your Divine Spouse; you extol Mary as happiest of virgins; happy, likewise, St. Joseph, the Shepherds, the Magi, the aged Simeon; those favored sisters, Mary and Martha, their resuscitated brother Lazarus, the disciple St. John, all those privileged souls who had the delight to behold, with mortal eye, *the most beautiful among the sons of men*, to take Him into their arms, to press Him to their hearts, to wash and kiss His sacred feet, to extend Him hospitality, to sit at His feet, or even to repose on His bosom. This blessed privilege kind Heaven accords you, too, dear Sisters. In fulfilling the duties of your vocation, may you not, likewise, behold Christ, receive and shelter Christ, offering Him your services in the children entrusted to your care? From the lips of the Son of God, the Eternal Truth, fell these sublime and delectable words: "*Whosoever shall receive a child in my name, receiveth me.*" St. Luke XI, 48. And "*What you do to the least of my brethren, you do unto me.*" St. Matt. XXV, 40. It was this declaration of our Lord that penetrated the soul of the saintly Bishop Wittmann like a two-edged sword, becoming life and spirit within him and rendering him the Jerome Æmilian of our time. Bishop Wittmann was seldom seen to laugh but, on meeting a child, a sweet, celestial smile would quickly dispel the gravity of his countenance and betray the calm delight of his heart. What caused this sudden transition? My sainted friend saw Christ, loved Christ and served Christ in every child

Were contemporaries to remain silent, ye stones of the solid, old Danube Bridge would speak, to testify how often, day by day, this zealous pastor, though bent by the weight of toil, hastened to the school-house at Stadtamhof. What urged this good shepherd, amid the pressure of manifold cares, to seek so eagerly these lambkins of his flock? It was the love of Christ, the ardent desire to bring and break for Him who hungered in these little ones, the bread of life; to clothe Him, in the destitute; to provide for Him in caring for orphans.

Good Sisters, the majority of you were eye-witnesses of all the good this saintly man accomplished in school. You were admiring disciples of this extraordinary master, and with delight you speak of his wonderful deeds of love. Having before you this shining example of your father and teacher, could I, for a moment, entertain the fear that you, his spiritual daughters, yielding to languor and sloth, will follow him only from afar? Nay, the Divine Master has breathed into your souls His own love for the dear little ones, and this love renders the teacher's burthen sweet and light. Charity is valiant, patient, kind; charity seeketh not its own advantage, nor alloweth itself to become embittered; charity beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

What concerns the education of children in parochial schools, applies as well to boarding pupils entrusted to your care. When such children of Mary have completed their studies in the elementary departments, they shall not employ their time in acquiring vain accomplishments to foster a life of luxury and ease, but, besides useful needlework, sewing and dress-making, they shall be taught all that is necessary to a well-regulated, economical and

cleanly, Christian household. To form in their pupils habits of perfect order, punctuality and cleanliness must be the special concern of the Poor School Sisters. While attending to these external duties, the *One Thing Necessary*, however, must precede and accompany every exercise prescribed by the incomparably beautiful Rule of Life which your boarding pupils observe. Every quarter of an hour throughout the day has its appointed occupation, affording a pleasing variety; prayer alternates with edifying conversation or reading, and again with merry, juvenile songs. The boarders approach the sacraments monthly, for the branches may not be separated from the Vine. Thus partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, receiving the Divine Friend of children into their hearts, they abide in peaceful retreat from the frivolities, gossip and scandals of the world and all intercourse with the other sex. Becoming inured to a simple, frugal life, to silence and self-denial, they learn to think of God and holy things. In this manner a new heavenly life, as my friend Wittmann terms it, is gradually awakened in these young souls. Having tasted this delicious food, discovered the hidden treasure surpassing all the riches of the world, they will gladly give up everything to possess it, and, in maturer years, they will continue the practice of virtue so dear to them in the happy days of youth. The desire to please their heavenly Bridegroom will make them abhor sensual pleasures and induce them to avoid all unnecessary intercourse with the other sex which might give rise to thoughts displeasing to His Divine Majesty. Girls, more particularly those of the middle and ordinary walks of life, that are taught to make a vain display of shallow accomplishments inculcated by the spirit of the age; girls reared to a life of ease and in-

dolence are unfit for Christian duty and become useless and corruptive members of society. In childhood and youth girls, as well as boys, must be habituated to order, regularity and temperance; inured to labor, cold and heat; otherwise, they will be unable, in later years, to fulfill the duties of their vocation and to bear the adversities of life.

In this respect also, Poor School Sisters, Father Wittmann has given you direction; and God will bless your planting and watering in the garden of your schools, if you but ask Him to do so. Cherishing this joyful hope, I pass to the next section.

SECTION III.

Sisterhood and Mutual Relationship of the Members of this Community.

Poor School Sisters, not individually and severally shall you abide, each laboring for her private interest. You shall form a community whose members have one and the same object in view, all striving with united efforts to attain the same end, employing uniform means and methods, under one and the same direction. Close union — faithful clinging together — renders your efforts as teachers the more efficacious and facilitates your own advancement in perfection during your hours of rest as well as in your daily labors. United strength is greater than that which is divided. What is too great for indi-

vidual efforts, can easily be accomplished by associations. Individuals, moreover, pass away with time, whereas societies — continually reinforced by new recruits — have a guarantee for strength and durability. For this reason, societies have arisen spontaneously in every age and among all nations, prompted by necessity or the desire to insure special advantages.

Poor School Sisters, would you strive in good earnest to carry out the designs of God in your labors, would you not weary yourselves in *beating the air*, then you must enter the campaign as one corps, with ranks well closed; you must exist and labor as a corporation — that is, as a *Religious Community*. Religion must be the soul, the *motor*, the highest aim of your congregation — of each member thereof — of your labor and your life. No more than to God Himself, can you assign, with impunity, a secondary place to Religion; no more than God Himself, will Religion suffer aught to be placed on the same level with her. Every society in which Religion does not predominate, resembles a machine, without spirit and life, moving only as long as it is impelled by external force — an institution, if not altogether earthly in its aim, soon to become so — going the way of all flesh, returning to dust.

Outward marks which distinguish societies in general and religious congregations in particular; for example, the same habitation, board, apparel etc., may, indeed, effect much good while these communities are united by a strong interior and spiritual bond. Where, however, this is wanting or becoming lax, all external form gradually dissolves — mouldering like a body from which the spirit has fled.

But where is the bond of this interior spiritual union

of heart and soul? Need you ask? God Himself has provided. Praise your Father in Heaven, who has sent us His only begotten Son! Praise Jesus Christ, who has given you power to become children of God, infusing His love into your hearts by the Holy Ghost. Through Him you are children of one Father of one Virgin Mother, and sisters of the First Born among brothers. Through Him you have *one* doctrine, *one* Faith, *one* Hope, *one* Baptism. Through Him you are members of one body, animated by one spirit, nourished by one bread, — here called to receive one grace and, in the next life, one beatitude. In Him, finally, you have one Sacrifice of Atonement, one Lord, one Mediator and one Advocate with the Father.

Oh! how strong is the bond that unites you! All that believe in Christ should be one and remain one. This is the intention, the will — aye, the last will and testament of our Lord and Redeemer. As He was about to proceed to the Garden of Olives, to deliver Himself as ransom for the sins of the world, He raised His voice and prayed thus: *“Holy Father, keep them in my name, whom thou hast given me: that they may be one, as we also are. St. John XVII, 11. And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in me: that they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” Id. 20, 21.*

This divine unity is the fruit of the Blood of Jesus, the precious pearl of the Gospel, the crown of Christianity, the strength of the Church. It is this divine unity that the apostles, especially St. Paul in his epistles, ever inculcated and commended in the strongest terms. It is this divine unity that the disciples of Christ’s apostles consid-

ered the most important object of their pastoral solicitude and vigilance. It is this divine unity that, during the first centuries of Christianity, produced those heroic souls who, without weapons, conquered the armed hosts of the world. In fine, it is this divine unity, Poor School Sisters, that must now become manifest to the world in your community.

Regard yourselves as what you really are — sisters. You are sisters, for you are children of one Father; Jesus Christ is your brother. You are sisters, for you venerate the Blessed Virgin as your mother. You are sisters, for you call the Holy Church your mother, by whom you have been regenerated and nourished, eating the Bread of Life at her table. You are sisters, because you are children of one home. Love one another, then, as sisters, dwelling together in charity, concord and peace.

But if this spiritual bond that invisibly unites your hearts is to become visible to the eyes of the world, in what form is it to appear? This question is easily answered; for Christ has not left His chosen ones orphans. His wisdom has provided for their spiritual necessities while His Heavenly Father cares for their corporal wants.

This divine unity in its brightest light was manifested to the world by the primitive congregation of the faithful at Jerusalem, and it still continues to shine in the life-like picture which the Evangelist, St. Luke, has left us in his "Acts of the Apostles." Thus has Christ provided for this need of His holy Church. The first Christian community at Jerusalem shall serve throughout all ages, as the type, model, ideal of every religious congregation.

Take the Scriptures and read: "*All they that believed were together, and had all things common.*" Acts II, 44. In common they heard and preserved the doctrine of the

Apostles ; in common they celebrated and received the most holy Mystery of the New Testament ; in common they prayed in their homes, and even for public prayer, they went up together to the Temple. This St. Luke testifies : “*And continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.*” Acts II, 46, 47. When they assembled for prayer, the word of God — clothed in psalms and canticles — arose heavenward in His praise as from one mouth — one heart. “*And the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul.*” Id. IV, 32. So strong was this spiritual bond that so intimately united their hearts.

But this intimate union was not alone visible in spiritual matters and exercises ; it showed itself, as well, in their external affairs ; it removed mountains, brought hills low, filled up the valleys, made the rough ways plain and the crooked straight ; yea, it created an equality and unanimity among the faithful of which the world may dream, but it can never produce, whether by force of might or revolution. “*And all they that believed were together, and had all things common.*” Acts II, 44. “*For as many as were owners of land or houses, sold them and brought the price of the things they sold and laid it down before the feet of the Apostles. And distribution was made to every one according as he had need.*” Id. IV, 34, 35. “*Neither did any one say that aught of the things which he possessed was his own ; but all things were common unto them. Neither was there any one needy among them.*” Id. IV, 32, 34. Lest, however, any one should imagine that the faithful at Jerusalem appeared gloomy and dejected, spending their days in sad-

ness and despondancy, St. Luke expressly adds : “*They took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.*” *Id. II, 46, 47.* Behold these new men among mankind, angels in the flesh ! Behold the divine and veritable union for which Christ, the Son of God, supplicated His Father ! Behold the true model for all Christian communities ! This apostolic mode of life could not, indeed, be maintained on a more extensive plan, after the Gospel was preached every where over the known earth — *leavening the whole measure of meal*,—more especially, as zeal and charity had diminished among the faithful. But Holy Church, the true foster-mother of apostolic Christendom, can never suffer any institution of apostolic origin to perish. In all times and places the example given by the first Christians, under the direction of the Apostles, found imitators within the pale of Holy Church. As lived the faithful of Jerusalem, so also those of Alexandria under the direction of St. Mark ; thus the communities of pious virgins in the first century ; thus the monks and hermits in the desert ; thus, in former centuries, the bishops with their ecclesiastics, as well as religious orders of all times.

Every monastic institution, every convent, must be a faithful copy of the first Christian congregation. For this reason Holy Church has ever sought to uphold this apostolic mode of life among her faithful children, ever and again sanctioning new congregations and religious orders, which she cherishes, protects and promotes with so much zeal.

Poor School Sisters, if you are desirous to have your congregation answer the purpose for which Holy Church has approved it, you must never degenerate from the spirit and mode of life which you admire in the primitive

church of Jerusalem. Among you, too, this divine unity must become manifest. Should it please God to extend your congregation to small towns and country parishes, your poverty will not allow you to rear extensive convents which your limited number could not fill; but what shall prevent you from rendering your humble dwelling a real little convent, by leading a truly religious life like that of the first Christians at Jerusalem?

Rest assured, dear Sisters, the more closely you imitate this model of all religious societies, the more cheerfully you will eat your bread, praising God while you fulfill the duties of your vocation, with results the most blessed; for the divine favor will attend your labors, and thus it will be known that you are true disciples of Christ, because you love one another.

In proposing this model for your imitation, I shall now suggest some special means to insure your success:

If you desire, dear Sister in Christ, to live in peace and concord with others, always seek the lowest place, and gladly be subject to every one. Bear in mind that, after the example of your Heavenly Spouse, you have come to serve, not to rule.

Always strive—as far as compatible with obedience—to do the will of another in preference to your own.

Never seek to possess much; always choose the least.

Be respectful towards your Companion-Sisters; honor, in their persons, the image of God, the spouse of Christ, the temple of the Holy Ghost.

Speak to and treat with your Companion-Sisters as you would with Jesus and Mary, — in all charity, meekness and patience.

It would be false love, however, to defend and excuse the faults of your Companion-Sisters, concealing the

truth from superiors under the pretext of being unwilling to disturb peace.

For the love of God, love all your Companion-Sisters; but, as a pestilence, avoid every particular friendship and secret intimacy; in a word, avoid singularity.

Should difficulties and misunderstandings arise, do not delay to humbly and sincerely ask pardon, without considering whether you are the offender or the offended. Patiently bear with the frailties of your Companion-Sisters, even as you would wish them to show forbearance to you.; thus you will fulfill the law of God.

In the same measure in which you have the peace of God in your own heart, you will preserve peace and harmony with your Companion-Sisters. Arm yourself, therefore, with the weapons of prayer and penance, that you may vanquish the enemies of peace. The necessary means shall not be wanting, as you will presently see.



SECTION IV.

The Religious Vows.

The primitive congregation of Jerusalem, founded, promoted and directed by the Apostles, has ever been held up as a consummate model for the whole Church. Chosen souls have always considered this community the ideal whereby to regulate their interior and exterior life. Hence, from the time of the Apostles down to the present day, numerous societies of virgins, originating in the various congregations of the faithful, have gone forth from the bosom of the Church — a new apparition on earth, a new off-shoot of the Gospel — angels in the flesh, the solicitude, joy and crown of the Fathers of the Church and her bishops, the chief ornament of the mystic Body of Christ, by which she is signalized, and elevated above all the sects separated from her fold.

In every age, among all nations united with the Church of God and guided by His Holy Spirit, religious associations have been formed according to this model; yes, the more easily and securely to imitate the mode of life observed by the primitive Christians, they voluntarily devoted themselves to the pious exercises of the interior life and to works of mercy, taking upon themselves the obligation to persevere until death in the observance of the Evangelical Counsels; hence the vows of *Poverty, Chastity and Obedience*.

Thus binding themselves, they declared war against the concupiscence of the eyes by Poverty; against the concupiscence of the flesh, by Chastity; against the pride of life, by Obedience. Thus they renounced all they possessed: by Poverty, the goods of the earth; by Chas-

tity, even the lawful pleasures of the flesh ; by Obedience, their own will—self. In this manner they complied with all that Christ demands of His disciples in a stricter sense of the word : *If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple. . . . So likewise every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple.*” St. Luke XIV, 26, 27, 33. Thus they could, say with the Apostle : “*Behold we have left all things, and have followed thee : what, therefore, shall we have?*” St. Matt. XIX, 27. And with assurance they could claim all that Christ has promised such chosen souls : “*Amen, I say to you, that you who have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the seat of His majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name’s sake, shall receive a hundred fold, and shall possess life everlasting.*” Id. XIX, 28, 29.

Vows have superior value in the Church of God and exert great influence ; for, by them, religious communities are separated from the general mass of the faithful and placed, as it were “upon a candlestick” to shine, as brilliant lights, in a land of darkness. Such religious communities bear testimony to the truth of the Gospel in its stricter and higher requirements ; to the power of the Holy Ghost, who ever adorns the true Church, the Spouse of Christ, with His most precious gifts ; to the teachings of the Apostles, which in the true Church alone find friends and imitators of their mode of life. It is by vows,

moreover, that these Religious Communities are permanently established and sanctioned as ecclesiastical institutions consecrated to the service of God.

I cannot, therefore, refrain from making some special remarks on each of these vows.

The Vow of Poverty.

In what sense and to what extent the School Sisters, as a Religious Congregation, shall remain poor, has been considered in the first section. But every member shall also *remain poor individually*; poor in all things, not only in what is obvious to the eye of man, but *poor in spirit* which is manifest to God alone; poor, not because of want or by compulsion, but poor for the love of Jesus Christ, with joy of heart.

The Vow of Poverty obliges each member of this community to deprive herself of the right to possess or dispose of any property, and forbids the use of any article whatever, without the permission of superiors.

In what manner and to what extent holy Poverty is to be observed by each individual member, is minutely expressed in your Holy Rule.

Sisters, be on your guard! This is a dangerous cliff upon which many are wrecked.

The Vow of Chastity.

Virginal life, which Jesus Christ Himself transplanted from Heaven to earth, is found and preserved only where the holy Gospel is not perverted, corrupted, deformed, but preached as the Apostles themselves announced it to the world, that is, in the Catholic Church.

The world may continue to denounce celibacy as much as it pleases, but not one iota of all that Christ has taught and instituted shall be lost. Lilies will spring up and bloom even among the thorns of our times. The Holy Ghost, the power of the Most High, will continually overshadow the Church, generating in her virginal bosom, souls to whom it is given to understand the counsel of Perpetual Chastity and to renounce marriage for the *sake of the kingdom of Heaven*. Never can the Church dispense with these chosen souls. From the beginning, the chief instruments in the hands of God for propagating and promoting His kingdom upon earth, were the unmarried, or those who, in the married state, lived as if unmarried; for only those who have renounced all, that is every other care, occupation and connection, can devote themselves unreservedly — with undivided hearts and interests — to the cause of God and the salvation of souls. Such disciples and laborers, in the proper sense of the word, Christ demands. "*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*" *St. Luke XIV. 26*. To these He promises reward a hundredfold in this world and life everlasting in the next. Now, since Christ requires such disciples and laborers, we may confidently expect that, from time to time, He will call forth from the fruitful bosom of His Spouse, souls endowed with the special grace necessary to embrace a life of virginity in compliance with His counsel.

Would you, Poor School Sisters, conform to these designs and not fall short of the requirements of your Divine Spouse, who declares, "*They shall be as the angels of heaven,*" then carefully observe the following di-

rections and precautions: —

Let not pride arise in your hearts, and do not exalt yourselves above others; for "*Pride goeth before destruction: and the spirit is lifted up before a fall.*" *Prov. XVI. 18.*

Shun idleness and everything that savors of luxury and sensuality in words, attire, demeanor, as the use of mirrors, perfumes &c. The very name of Poor School Sisters excludes everything of the kind.

Be frugal at meals; for satiety, intemperance in food and drink, and an angry disposition are not compatible with chastity.

As you would flee from a pestilence, shun the parlor and all intimacy with the outer world in general; otherwise you will be infected.

Bar gate and door against Satan and the world, that is keep your senses in custody, especially your eyes—even in regard to your own person—and watch continually; for we carry a precious treasure in a fragile vessel.

Chastity being a gift of God, let me earnestly admonish you, "Pray without ceasing." In the time of temptation have immediate recourse to Jesus and Mary.

Always receive Holy Communion with the greatest devotion; then Jesus, the Good Shepherd, will not suffer you to fall a prey to the blood-thirsty wolf.

Once more, dear Sisters, "*watch and pray,*" and pray and watch, if you desire one day to be admitted to the nuptial feast — there, in the Heavenly Sion, to sing forever the new canticle of the happy choir of prudent virgins that follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and reign with Him forever.

The Vow of Obedience.

Obedience is the bond of the universe and its parts. Dissolve this bond, and each celestial body, forsaking its orbit, will fall to naught. Obedience is the foundation of the world's order—the vocation of all creation. There is but one God, one Creator, one Lord; hence all that is not God, all created things, visible and invisible, exist by the power and will of one Creator and Lord. Dependence, subjection, obedience, belong to the essence of every creature. It is by obedience alone that every creature fills its destiny and attains its end. A creature without obedience—asserting and executing its own will — is a chimera in the universe, carrying in itself contradiction, and hence the germ of hell.

Every human society forms a minor world in our one great universe. Must not, then, obedience be the element of every human society, especially of a religious Community?

Behold all created things, the elements, the suns and planets, all luminous worlds, that announce throughout the infinite space of the universe the might and praise of the Creator; all obey His will — the will of God. All observe the course appointed by the Creator; all move in the paths He has traced; all submit to His will. Angels in Heaven and men upon earth alone have made a sad exception in the great ranks of creatures. The angels rebelled against the supreme dominion of the Creator, and what was the result? Heaven expelled them, and amid the realms of creatures, there arose that of hell, peopled by reprobate angels — by devils. The chief among them, Lucifer, became the prince of darkness, without hope of

future redemption. Seduced by the prince of darkness, man on earth refused obedience to his benevolent Creator, opposing his own will to the Divine; and thence resulted sin, corruption and misery in the human race, yet not without hope of a future Redeemer. Behold, whither disobedience leads, and what fruit it brings!

Should man, however, be again reconciled with God, again led into the Kingdom of God, this can be effected only by the sacrifice of a most perfect obedience. By obedience, the sin of disobedience must be expiated, defects remedied, and between the two separated realms—darkness and light—the bridge must be restored. It was in this way that God's mercy reopened the gates of Heaven to fallen mankind. *“For if by one man's offence death reigned through one : much more they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift, and of justice, shall reign in life through one Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offence of one, unto all men to condemnation : so also by the justice of one unto all men to justification of life. For as by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners : so also by the obedience of one, many shall be made just.”* Rom. V. 17, 18, 19. From the doctrines of the holy Fathers, I add: “As by the disobedience of one woman, the way was opened to sin and reprobation; so also by the obedience of one woman, the path to grace and salvation.”

Hence the whole life of Jesus from the manger to the cross was pure subjection—obedience. The Apostle of the Gentiles comprehends the entire life of Jesus in these few words: *“For let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus : Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God : but emptied himself,*

taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men and in habit found as a man. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted him." Phil. II. 5—9.

Christ precedes; whosoever would follow, to participate in his glory, must walk in the same path, the path of humiliation and obedience. The entire Gospel of Jesus Christ tends to destroy human pride, bending it to the yoke of subjection. According to the Gospel, obedience is the basis, the firm staff, the secure lode-star and the only reliable characteristic of Christian life in general, and of evangelical perfection in particular.

"Do penance." With these words, Christ begins His Gospel of the Kingdom of God. — *"Do penance, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."* In order to comprehend this Kingdom of God, to receive it into one's self, and to become again incorporated with it, penance must necessarily precede from our side; penance, that is, transformation, regeneration of the whole interior. A new, interior creature must arise from the grave of the old man; pride must yield to humility, and disobedience, to obedience. Faith, therefore, has a claim upon the human intellect, subjecting its pride to the Word of God; obedience bridles the human will, making it subservient to the Will of God.

Faith is the continual penance of the intellect; obedience, the constant penance of the will. Whosoever believes, bears the name Christian; whosoever believes and obeys, is Christian in spirit and in truth, in word and in deed. Obedience comprises all virtues — all Christian perfection. A virgin who can truly say, in the presence of God and His holy angels: *"Behold the handmaid*

of the Lord ; be it done to me according to thy word," is another Mary.

Imagine not, that you, as member of a religious community, possess a single virtue, if you be wanting in obedience; for you deceive yourself. Without obedience, all that appears praiseworthy in you, is vain, deceptive show. Your virtue is not proof against trial; you are wanting in grace, which is only secured to the humble. Moreover, you have against you, God who resists the proud; ay, the whole universe, subservient to its Creator, is armed against you.

To the eye of man you may, indeed, appear a noble tree in the garden of God; but you are not sound; you are a tree that can only bear worm-eaten fruit, if any; because you are wanting in obedience — in humility of heart. Humility is never genuine, unless it bears the test of obedience. All forms of humility, without obedience, are only masks under which the spirit of pride is concealed.

Christian soul, would you know the state of your spiritual life, your perfection? Examine your obedience; for it will prove the unfailing standard by which to measure the length, breadth and depth of your evangelical perfection. It will enable you to ascertain accurately whether, and how far you have advanced into the kingdom of God — whether, and in what degree, you have become like unto Christ. This truth is as clear as the noon-day sun in a cloudless sky; for the kingdom of God only exists where He is the acknowledged Lord, to whom all homage is paid; where His will is the supreme and only law, to which all the faculties of body and soul—the intellect and the will of all rational creatures are subject. As long as your self-will manifests itself in any acts of dis-

obedience, or in obedience of servile nature; as long as your self-will asserts itself in opposition to the Divine Will, striving to obtain at least a share in the exercise of authority, think not that you have gained possession of the kingdom of God. In this heavenly realm there is only one Lord, one Will. All that belong to it *will* only what God wills, and thus they become holy and happy.— As the will of God is done in Heaven, so should it be done on earth. What we hope to do there for all eternity, we must learn to do here, making it our life-long practice; hence the petition that we make, according to the direction of Him who taught us how to pray and to live aright: “*Father, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*” *St. Matt. VI. 10.* This is what may be called striving for higher perfection—for conformity with Christ in disposition and mode of life; for He came upon earth, not to do His own will, but the will of Him who sent Him, which, indeed, He termed His food. He, the Son of the Most High, was subject to His parents, in their lowly dwelling, for thirty years. During the three years of His public life, He paid tribute and temple tithes, subjecting Himself to every law, yea, to the unjust judgment of His enemies, whose hatred condemned Him to death without any cause. He submitted, because power was given them from above, and, to accomplish the work of Redemption, He came down from heaven, exclaiming: “*Behold, I come to do thy will, O God!*” *Hebr. X. 9.* Finally, when His hour had come, He went forth, with entire submission, to suffer and to die, saying: “*O my Father, if this chalice may not pass away but I must drink it, thy will be done.*” *St. Matt. XXVI. 42.* “*He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross.*” *Phil. II. 8.*

Christian souls, brightly shines this type of obedience

from the Cross on the mountain, and with gentle voice it invites you, "*Come, follow me!*" St. Matt. XIX. 21. Woe unto you, if you hearken not.

Self-will is the radical wound of humanity, and obedience its radical cure. Not until self-will has yielded to obedience, so that even in the hour of suffering and anguish — even on the cross — no other cry escapes from the depth of your soul than the Savior's word of resignation, "Father, thy will be done!" — not until then can the "*old man*" of sin be destroyed in you; not until then can you "*put on the new man.*" Then only will Christ live in you and you in Him; then, and then only, will the "*kingdom of God come upon you*" and exist within you.

Would you, Poor School Sister, follow your Divine Lord and Spouse, step by step, in obedience, as well as in poverty and purity of heart? Would you pursue the direct and secure way to Heaven, preserving peace in your heart and rendering yourself pleasing to God, to the ever Blessed Virgin and the whole celestial court? Is it your earnest will to make yourself useful to your community, at the same time laboring for your own sanctification and laying up treasures in heaven? Then consider attentively in what manner you are to practice obedience.

As obedience is the most excellent of the three Vows of Religion, and the words of our Lord, "He that heareth you, heareth me," apply to your superiors, always regard in their persons Christ Himself. Bear in mind that by their word He speaks to you, and comply with their orders as humbly and devoutly as if He were visibly present, giving you command, prohibition or even reproof.

Since all that is done by a religious in holy obedi-

ence, prayer, work—in school or in the kitchen—as well as recreation and repose, is actual service rendered to God, and as God abhors and rejects the luke-warm, make it your earnest endeavor to render your obedience perfect.

There are four degrees in the attainment of this perfection: Promptness, Punctuality, Simplicity and Cheerfulness.

Obey *promptly*, without hesitation, without contradiction, without excuse; quickly, as if Jesus or Mary called you—whether by the voice of your superiors or by the given signal. Leave off with everything else and hasten to accomplish the will of the Lord, lest, being tardy, you might, like the foolish virgins, be excluded from the nuptial feast.

Obey *punctually*, with exactness, taking pains to do everything precisely in the time and manner prescribed by your superior and Holy Rule. God, who is everywhere present and sees all things, closely observes how you perform your tasks and acquit yourself of your duties in His holy service. "*He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful in that which is greater: and he that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is greater. St. Luke XVI. 10.* Furthermore, God declares by the Holy Ghost: "*Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth.*" *Apoc. III. 16.* And again, "*Cursed be he that doeth the works of God deceitfully.*" *Jer. XLVIII. 10.*


Obey *with simplicity*, like a little child, without reasoning or asking *why*. Trust not the old serpent, should he whisper to you as he did to Eve, "*Why hath God commanded you?*" *Gen. III. 1.* Answer, without hesitation, "I will do the will of God, as declared by my superiors," and proceed to obey.

Obey cheerfully. "God loveth a cheerful giver," says the holy Apostle Paul. Be guided by the beautiful rule, "Ask for nothing; refuse nothing." Forget not the words of our Lord: "*If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*" St. Matt. XIX. 17. Do all that God requires of you through your superiors and your Holy Rule.

In the observance of these vows, besides which Poor School Sisters take a fourth, namely, to educate female youth, I recommend, as a model, the primitive little cloister at Nazareth. Three members compose the community, Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Behold their *chastity, poverty* and *obedience*. How poor their abode, raiment and food! Industry procures what they need in their poverty. Labor alternates with prayer, while the day passes in God's holy service. Sleep and repose follow in turn, as God has ordained; but the time allotted exceeds not the limits of nature's demand. In this little cloister silence reigns — the strictest *Silentium*; for idle talk is incompatible with industry and devotion. Poor is this little cloister; but here peace and contentment, concord and felicity have taken up their abode — *the Kingdom of God has come*. Sheltered by the wings of poverty, industry and devotion, Chastity here reposes secure and unmolested. Contemplate this blessed abode; how chaste and pure its virginal inmates! Joseph, the chaste bridegroom; Mary, his immaculate spouse — purer than the angels; Jesus, the chaste Lover and the only Beloved of pure, virgin souls. O blissful little cloister of Nazareth, motherhouse, cradle and seat of Chastity! Within thy walls was first established the angelic life of virginal continence transplanted from heaven to earth. From thy

happy sphere was propagated all over the earth this mystical rose of the New Testament, this precious pearl among the bridal ornaments of Holy Church — the spouse of Jesus.

Poor School Sisters, often reflect upon the poverty of the little cloister at Nazareth; love poverty, cling to poverty and never let it escape from your convent. Frequently contemplate the pure, virginal life led by the holy inmates of Nazareth, and remain ever chaste and pure, ever holy in body and soul. But do not overlook *Obedience*, which so closely unites the inmates of this primitive little cloister, regulating and sanctifying all their exercises. God manifests His will to an angel; the angel, to St. Joseph; Joseph to the Virgin Mother; the Mother to her Son. The Son obeys His Mother; the Mother obeys her spouse, and he obeys the angel; the angel obeys God. All obey with perfect simplicity and cheerfulness. O holy obedience, chain uniting earth to Heaven — to God, the center, supporting all! Behold here the true ladder to heaven! Often fix your eyes upon the light at Nazareth, softly beaming, like a bright little star in the darkness of night. Blessed and happy shall you be, if your little convent prove a veritable copy of this divine-human original.



SECTION V.

Safeguard of the Vows.

Virtue in general, and virginal purity, more especially, is an exceedingly tender plant which cannot thrive in open air, without shelter and protection, warmth and care. Hence a cloistered community cannot dispense with certain auxiliary means by which the faithful observance of the religious vows is secured. The chief means of security are :

1. Enclosure ;
2. Prayer ;
3. Mortification ;
4. Silence ;
5. Attire.

I. Enclosure.

“You are dead : and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” Words of St. Paul to the Colossians that regard all Christians, in general, and religious, in particular. This hidden life the Holy Ghost seeks in His spouse, saying, *“My sister, my spouse is a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up.”* *Canticle of Canticles IV. 12.* Enclosure of heart and house shall, accordingly, be strictly observed by Poor School Sisters. If, however, branch-houses be established wherein you have no chapel nor service of your own, there will be no alternative but to cross your threshold, in order to attend divine service in the parish church. Love of religious modesty, that should everywhere accompany you, will then serve as a substitute for the enclosure. When Mary, the Queen of Virgins, went up on festival days, with Joseph to the temple of Jerusalem, must she not have observed the strictest enclosure? Daughters of this Most Blessed Virgin, proceeding from your homes on your way to the Temple, deport yourselves as Mary, your Mother did, and you will ob-

serve strict enclosure, even outside of your convent.

II. Prayer.

Prayer, the essential element of an interior, spiritual life, is an absolute necessity of our nature. Whosoever does not feel a yearning for prayer, has not yet begun to live spiritually in God; for where there is no breath there is no life — prayer is the breathing of the spirit.

The practice of *prayer in common* must be maintained in every religious order. The members of a body—a spiritual corporation, having but *one heart and one soul*, must pray with *one voice*. The first Christian Congregation in Jerusalem introduced prayer in common and unanimously persevered in this practice. From that time on, there has never been a religious community without prayer in common. Truly pious souls, knowing and feeling the efficacy of community prayer, have ever sought to unite themselves with such societies, in accordance with the words of our Lord: "*If two of you shall consent upon earth, concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in heaven. For where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*" *Matt. XVIII. 19, 20.* Ay, this divine promise urges them to seek for congenial souls with whom they can pray in common.

Not without reason was the enlightened Bishop Wittmann so great a friend of prayer in common; not without reason did he, with the irresistible power of his gentle eloquence, prevail upon religious communities, to maintain this practice of prayer in common. His happiest moments were those spent in prayer with some intimate friend. Who was ever known to enjoy his society

without hearing him lament the suppression of cloisters and the consequent hush of community prayer, especially at night. Who conversed with this saintly man and heard not from his lips these prophetic words: "Neither for Church nor State shall better times come, until communities will again be established, whose devout members, praying upon the mountain with uplifted hands, will struggle and contend with the invisible powers of darkness, while in the valley below, the children of Israel battle, with visible weapons, against visible foes."

The recitation, in choir, of the psalms and canticles of Holy Writ was a special concern of this holy Bishop. And he was right; for they are sacred in their *origin*. They are the word of God, the effusion of His Spirit; they proceeded from the lips of holy seers and psalmists, teaching men how to announce the praises of God upon earth. These psalms and canticles are, moreover, sanctified by devout *usage*; for from the time when they were written, down to the present day, the children of God — saints of the Old and the New Testament — have employed them in their prayers. When reciting the psalms, how sublime the thought, that in every age, thousands upon thousands of the children of God and saints on earth have prayed in the selfsame words, that thousands upon thousands, at the present hour, are repeating them with me, and — throughout the wide extent of the Latin Church — uttering them in the same language, even in the same tones. How glorious this choir of God's singers on earth!

Pray, therefore, Poor School Sisters; pray, pray in common, reciting the psalms and canticles from Holy Scripture. A regular choir of psalmody you will not, be able to establish in the beginning, as that would require

a greater number of voices than you could command; but you can recite the Office together.*

III. Mortification.

According to the words of our Lord, "*I came not to call the just, but sinners to penance.*" (St Luke V. 32.,) we must all, without exception, acknowledge ourselves sinners; hence the exhortation is addressed to each and every one of us: "*Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" St. Matt. IV. 17. Scarcely a day will pass on which, Poor School Sisters, in your noon and evening examen of conscience, you will not discover some imperfections, distractions, omissions of good works, sins of the tongue &c. Hasten, therefore, to approach the *Sacrament of Penance*, there to wash your sullied nuptial garment in the precious Blood of Jesus, and receive into your hearts, Him who alone can heal the wounds of your soul and preserve you pure in coming temptation. This privilege of receiving *Holy Communion*, you will enjoy on Sundays and Holydays, and also, with permission, several times during the week.

Besides *assisting at Holy Mass*, there is no exercise more pleasing to God or more salutary for the support and spread of your religious congregation than *the Adoration of Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament*. The Senior Sisters, after having borne "the burden of the day and the heats thereof" on their laborious Missions, might especially enjoy this consolation, spending the evening of life in their Motherhouse at the feet of Jesus.

Be zealous at *meditation*, and carefully execute the resolutions you make during this holy exercise.

The *duties of your vocation*, moreover, are of themselves, a great work of penance, most pleasing to God

* According to strict obligation of Rule.

and meritorious for eternal life, if you perform them in holy obedience, for His honor and glory.

As regards *fasting*, Poor School Sisters, God will be satisfied with you, if you content yourselves with the ordinary fare of the poor people in your locality. The holy season of Advent is your lesser, and the forty days of Lent, your greater fast.

An excellent penance, most pleasing to God, is furthermore, the *restraint of the tongue*. Be assiduous, therefore, in the observance of *silence*. "*In silence and in hope shall your strength be.*" Isaias XXX. 15.

On some day of the week, the Sisters will acknowledge their faults in Community Chapter, soliciting penance for the same. If the love of the Holy Ghost impel one or the other of the Sisters to other voluntary exercises of penance, let her discover this, with simplicity and humility, to her Mother Superior, who will prudently impose obedience, in which the Sister shall recognize the will of God.

If St. Paul, the Vessel of Election, says of himself: "*I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest, perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway,*" (I. Corinth. IX. 27.) then indeed, you, Poor School Sisters, living in similar circumstances, while engaged in the education of dear little ones, cannot and will not exempt yourselves from doing penance.

IV. Silence.

The Observance of Silence in your community, Poor School Sisters, will ever be an unmistakable sign that the spirit of penance and devotion, of true religious discipline prevails among you; that the Holy Ghost governs, directs and abides with you. "*The work of justice shall be*

peace, and the service of justice quietness and security forever. *Is. XXXII. 17.* "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his soul." *Prov. XIII. 3.* "Many have fallen by the edge of the sword, but not as many as have perished by their own tongue." *Ecclus. XXVIII. 22.* "In the multitude of words, there shall not want sin." *Prov. X. 19.* "But the tongue no man can tame : an unquiet evil, full of deadly poison." *St. James III. 8.* "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is placed among our members which defileth the whole body, and inflameth the wheel of our nativity, being set on fire by hell." *Id. III. 6.* "A man full of tongue shall not be established in the earth : evil shall catch the unjust man unto destruction." *Psalm CXXXIX. 12.*

Our Divine Savior, who came to fulfil the Law, declares: "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment." *St. Matt. XII. 36.* "But let your speech be yea, yea : no, no : and that which is over and above these, is of evil." *Id. V. 37.* There is, accordingly, "A time to keep silence and a time to speak." *Ecclesiastes, III. 7.* Silence, sanctified and properly regulated, is the mother of devotion, peace of mind and many other virtues. This holy *Silentium* shall be strictly observed throughout the whole house from evening prayer till after the recitation of "None" the next morning. It shall also be observed in the choir, refectory and dormitory (where you have these) at all hours. In case of real necessity, speak briefly and in an undertone.

During the time allowed for speaking, use your tongues, dear Sisters, as instruments consecrated to our Divine Spouse, to praise and glorify His name, and to edify your neighbor. In order to do this, heed the warn-

ing given in Eccclus. XXVIII. 29. “*Make a balance for your words,*” in order to weigh them well before utterance. Do this especially on receiving visits from externs. Scarcely ever will you return to your cell, on such occasions, without some remorse of conscience. Let your motto be : “*He that loveth father, or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.*” St. Matt. X. 37. “*No man putting his hand to the plow (the service of God) and looking back (to the concerns of the world) is fit for the kingdom of God.*” St. Luke IX. 62.

V. Attire.

Your attire also shall designate the Avocation and Rule you have chosen ; hence let it be *religious, poor, respectable*. If it please God so to extend your Sisterhood, that you cannot avoid intercourse with seculars, it will be well for you, if even your attire afford you some protection and advantage. Concerning your religious dress, there shall be no diversity, excepting stronger black material for the habits of Sisters in charge of domestic occupations, as also white veils. In branch-houses, where the Sisters are obliged to go out to the parish churches, to attend divine service, there may be some change in the covering of the head.



APPENDIX.

1st The Chapel of the Poor School Sisters at Neunburg vorm Wald shall be dedicated to the honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Michael the Archangel —

a) Because the whole Congregation of Poor School Sisters is placed under the protection of Mary, bearing her title, and because this holy Queen of Virgins is the Immaculate Mother of the Divine Friend of children;

b) Because St. Michael stands at the head of all good angels, fighting for the kingdom of God against the prince of darkness and his adherents; besides, he is recognized and venerated as guardian spirit of God's church in the Old and the New Testaments;

c) Because this name reminds us of that man of God — Michael Wittmann — to whom, after God, this new congregation owes its origin and existence. (This charge was faithfully executed.)

2nd Should God bless this undertaking, there may be a demand for such girls' schools elsewhere, thus giving rise to branch-houses; for Poor School Sisters seek neither temporal reward nor a life of comfort, but content themselves with bread and raiment like other poor people in such places.

If it please the Lord to bless and prosper the School and Community at Neunburg, I shall be content and forever praise the Lord. In peace shall I depart this life, if I have the consolation to know that, under the protection of God and His Blessed Mother, the girls' school of my native town, conducted by the Poor School Sisters, is thriving and producing good fruit. In time and eternity, I shall be mindful before God of this new Religious Institution, commending it to His paternal goodness. "Can a mother forget her infant? And if she could forget, yet will I not forget"* you, Poor School Sisters, nor forget your school.

Praised be Jesus and Mary forever and ever!

Schoenbrunn near Vienna,

Vigil B. V. M.

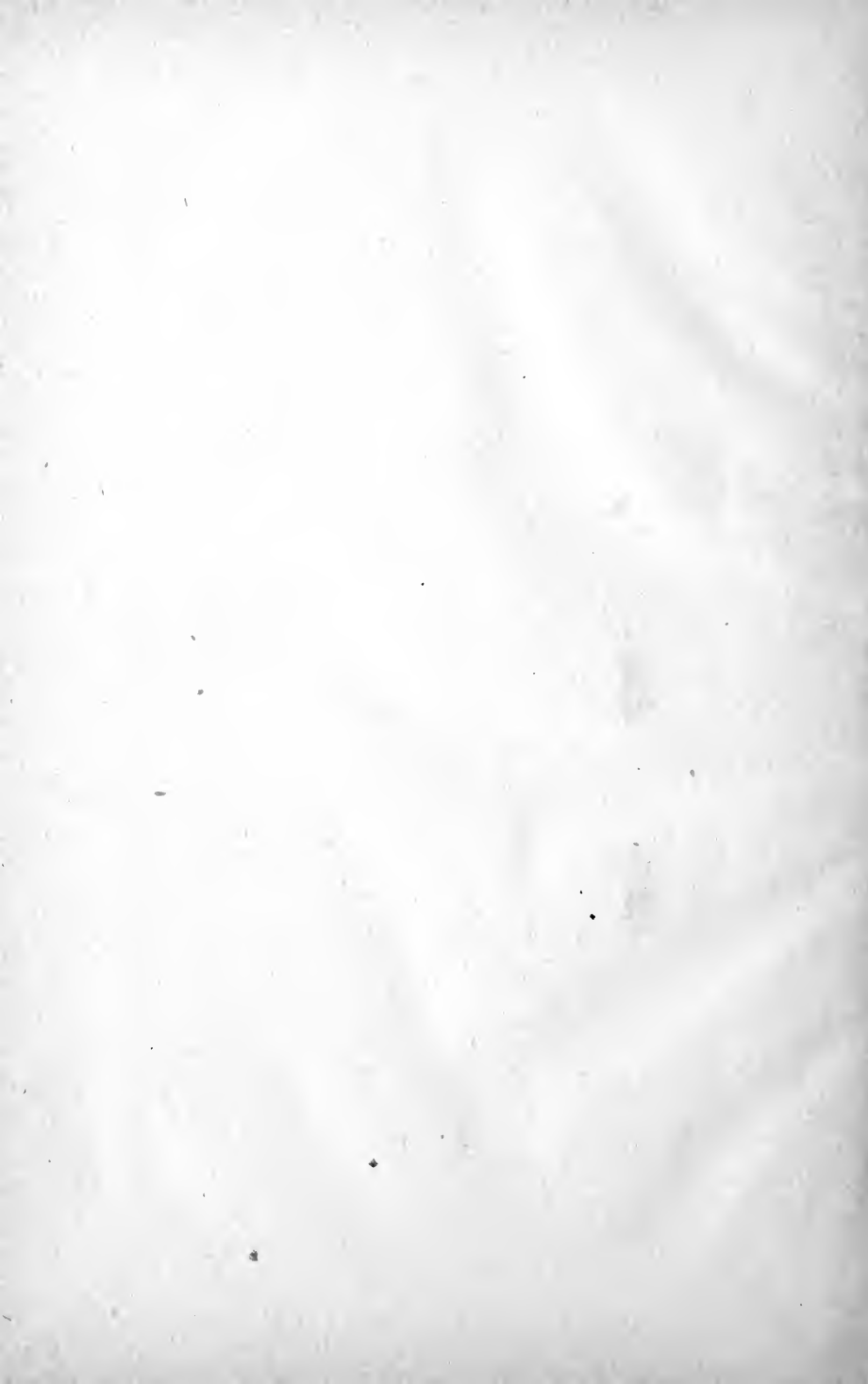
August, 1833.

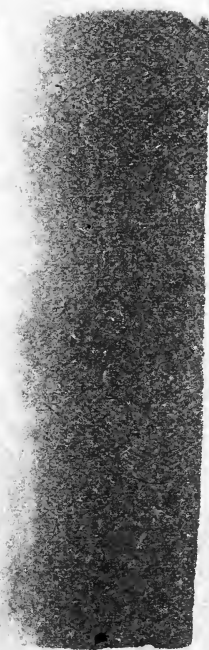
Francis Ser. Sebastian Job,
Chaplain Imperial Confessor
to Her Majesty, Empress of Austria.

* Is. V. 15.









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