

THE CAMALDOLESE CONGREGATION OF
THE ORDER OF SAINT BENEDICT

*The
Constitutions and
Declarations
to the
Rule of Saint Benedict*

Translator's Note

The English translation of the Camaldolese *Constitutions and Declarations* is based on the official Italian text approved by the Holy See. This legislative document of the Camaldolese Benedictine Congregation does not stand by itself; it is to be understood as a contemporary interpretation and application of the Rule of Saint Benedict (cf. *Constitutions*, article 241). Hence the final printed edition contains the complete text of the Benedictine Rule, followed by these constitutions and an index of themes and sources. For although the constitutions interpret the Rule, they cannot be understood apart from it or from the whole of Benedictine spirituality and history, including the experience of Saint Romuald (cf. *Introduction*). All of this is our heritage; it is by treasuring it and learning from it that we will be able to offer a credible monastic and Christian witness to the people of our time.

The Camaldolese legislation consists of two distinct and interwoven parts: the constitutions proper, which are approved by the Holy See and may be changed only with its consent, and the declarations to the constitutions, which may be modified by the general chapter of the congregation. In particular cases, however, every prior has the faculty to dispense *ad tempus* from disciplinary norms of the constitutions and declarations (cf. article 243). These texts are interwoven and are numbered consecutively. The declarations are printed in a different type-face to distinguish them from the constitutions — here, italic type was used.

Both these texts are important for our life and are binding on all the monks (article 244). It will be noted that, generally speaking, the constitutions have a predominantly juridical

character, while the declarations contain directives of a more “spiritual” nature. Nevertheless, the *entire* legislation is to be understood “spiritually,” that is, “as an interpretation of the demands of following Christ in the spirit of the Rule of Saint Benedict and of Saint Romuald’s example” (article 241). Thus understood, the constitutions and declarations are to be put into practice “in a spirit of faith, as seen in the light of the word of God, for this is what the monks’ profession of religious vows demands of them” (article 244).

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Abbreviations

AG	<i>Ad Gentes</i> , Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity of the Second Vatican Council
CJC	<i>Codex Juris Canonici</i> , The Code of Canon Law, 1983
DCD	Saint Augustine, <i>De civitate Dei</i> , On the City of God
DV	<i>Dei Verbum</i> , Vatican II Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation
GS	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i> , Vatican II Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i> , Vatican II Dogmatic Constitution on the Church
NA	<i>Nostra Aetate</i> , Vatican II Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions
Op. XI	Saint Peter Damian, <i>Dominus vobiscum</i> (Opusculum XI)

Op. XV	Saint Peter Damian, <i>Regula eremitica</i> (Opusculum XV)
Op. XXXII	Saint Peter Damian, <i>De quadragesima</i> (Opusculum XXXII)
PC	<i>Perfectae Caritatis</i>, Vatican II Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life
PO	<i>Presbyterorum Ordinis</i>, Vatican II Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests
RB	Rule of Saint Benedict
RE	<i>Regula eremitica</i>, Constitutions of the Holy Hermitage and Monastery of Camaldoli, early twelfth century
RVE	Paolo Giustiniani, <i>Regula vitae eremiticae</i>
SC	<i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i>, Vatican II Constitution
on	the Sacred Liturgy
UR	<i>Unitatis Redintegratio</i>, Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism
VF	Saint Bruno-Boniface of Querfurt, <i>Vita quinque</i> <i>fratrum</i>, The Life of the Five Brothers
VR	Saint Peter Damian, <i>Vita beati Romualdi</i>, The Life of Blessed Romuald

[N.B.: An English translation of both the VF and the VR has been published in *The Mystery of Romuald and the Five Brothers: Stories from the Benedictines & Camaldolese* (Big Sur: Hermitage Books, 1994).]

INTRODUCTION

Long before the coming of Christ, humanity's quest for the Absolute gave rise in various religious traditions to expressions of monastic life. The many different forms of monastic and ascetical life bear witness to the divine destiny of the human person and to the presence of the Spirit in the hearts of all who seek to know what is true and ultimately real.

In the early Church, ascetics and virgins followed the Spirit's call to a more intense Christian life. During the third and fourth centuries, with the exodus to the desert, Christian monasticism began to take on those forms — community life and solitude — which determined its later development.

Saint Benedict (+547), as author of the Rule for Monks, has always been considered the Western Church's lawgiver and master of monastic living. Saint Romuald (+1027) and his disciples also professed this Rule.

The Rule of Saint Benedict is a synthesis of Christian spirituality, fruit of the first centuries of monastic experience. Drawing on the directives, norms, and precepts found in the gospel, the Rule wisely blends them with the historical and cultural context of its time. Thus the Rule of Saint Benedict unites the purity of timeless teachings and the characteristics of the author's own holiness and prudence with spiritual and juridical elements that are linked to his time and so are subject to modification.

Saint Romuald lived and worked during the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. He fully realized in his own life the spirit of the Rule, and he wisely reinterpreted it, emphasizing the solitude of the hermitage (cf. RB prologue: **Ausculata, fili, praecepta magistri**). Saint Romuald wanted the hermitage to be characterized by simplicity and a more intense penitential and contemplative practice. Therefore he freely corrected and changed some juridical and material structures of the cenobitic and anchoritic life as they were lived before him, in

*order to respond to the spiritual needs of his contemporaries and to “the voice of the Holy Spirit, who presided over his conscience” (VR 53).**

The Camaldolese hermitage is a special fruit of Saint Romuald's broad and varied monastic experience as reformer and founder. The hermitage retains elements of cenobitic living, at the same time offering the possibility of greater solitude and freedom in the inner life, including the possibility of reclusion.

The Camaldolese Congregation takes its name from the Holy Hermitage of Camaldoli, founded by Saint Romuald. In the course of time a larger body was formed, with the founding or aggregation of other hermitages and monasteries.

Our congregation looks to Saint Romuald with filial devotion and regards our holy teacher's doctrine and spirit as perennially valid. Today as in the past, the Holy Hermitage of Camaldoli is considered to be head and mother of the congregation.

*These constitutions and declarations, drawn up according to the spirit of the Second Vatican Council and the norms of the new Code of Canon Law are intended as a contemporary interpretation of what Saint Romuald experienced and taught and of the fruits which his labor has borne in the course of these nearly one thousand years.***

NOTES

Saint Romuald “wished to leave his followers in the hermit life no other institution than his holy example and his frequent exhortations; at his death he gave them no other rule to observe than the Rule of Saint Benedict” (Constitutions of 1957, prologue to the Declarations). Saint Romuald’s witness has been transmitted to us chiefly through the writings of Saint Bruno-Boniface of Querfurt (+1009), author of **The Life of the Five Brothers; those of Saint Peter Damian (+1072), who composed **The Life of Blessed Romuald** and the **Consuetudines** of the Hermitage of Fonte Avellana; and those of Rudolf of Camaldoli, who drew up the first **Consuetudines** of the Holy Hermitage of Camaldoli (1089).*

***Hence the present constitutions must be understood in a way that is in harmony with what is contained in the Rule of Saint Benedict and in the entire body of Camaldolese tradition.*

CHAPTER ONE

THE SPIRITUAL NATURE AND JURIDICAL STRUCTURE OF THE CAMALDOLESE CONGREGATION

I

1. The Camaldolese Monks profess the Rule of Saint Benedict and their own constitutions and declarations.

Like all religious of the Roman Catholic Church, they are subject to the Roman Pontiff as to their highest superior and are bound to obey him in virtue of the vow of obedience (CJC 590,2). They are also subject to the local ordinary in accordance with canon law.

2. The name of the congregation is “THE CAMALDOLESE CONGREGATION OF THE ORDER OF SAINT BENEDICT”.

The congregation belongs to the Benedictine Confederation and preserves its autonomy in accordance with the *Lex Propria* [of the Confederation].

3. The Camaldolese Congregation consists of hermitages and monasteries. The Camaldolese tradition is characterized by the unity of the monastic family in the threefold good of *coenobium*, *solitudo*, and *evangelium paganorum* [community, solitude, evangelization].

“*Tripla commoda quaerentibus viam Domini, hoc est: noviter venientibus de saeculo desiderabile coenobium, maturis vero et Deum vivum sitiientibus aurea solitudo, cupientibus dissolvi et esse cum Christo evangelium paganorum*” (Saint Bruno-Boniface of Querfurt, VF2).

[“...A threefold advantage: the community life, which is what novices want; golden solitude, for those who are mature and thirst for the living God; and the preaching of the gospel to the pagans, for those who long to be freed from this life in

order to be with Christ” (chapter 4 in the English translation, page 95).]

This spiritual heritage imposes upon the priors and their communities the responsibility for showing attention to the real interior situation of persons, so that their outward form of life may be as consistent as possible with their inner reality.

4. In both hermitage and monastery the monks attend to the contemplative life above all else.*

Each monk, then, is to engage in the daily work which is his duty as a Christian and a monk (RB 48; GS 67). In his work, as in his practice of Christian mortification and ardent prayer, let him open his heart to the attentive hearing and meditating of God’s word, which is the support of faith, the food of the soul, the pure and unfailing source of life in the Spirit (cf. DV 21-26).

The monk must strive to grow in Christ and to live Christ’s paschal mystery day by day, through intimate union with Him in the Eucharist, source and summit of the Church’s worship and of Christian life as a whole (cf. SC 10 and 41; LG 11). “If we have been united to him through likeness to his death, so shall we be through a like resurrection” (Romans 6,5).

The more the monk realizes in himself this divine mystery, the greater and more authentic is his witness to it.

5. In the one monastic vocation “there are different gifts but the same Spirit” (I Corinthians 12,4) For this reason, the monk may be called to realize his vocation in either the hermitage or the monastery.

**We remind the reader that the expression “contemplative life” should be understood in the way that the great patristic and monastic tradition of the Churches of East and West understood it, especially during the first thousand years of Christian history. In the context of our monastic presence in India, the contemplative tradition is to be linked with the concept of “ashram,” as understood by the founders of Saccidananda Ashram, at Shantivanam in Tamil Nadu: Fathers Jules Monchanin, Henri Le Saux, and Bede Griffiths.*

6. In the monastery, the monk lives out his vocation day by day through union in charity with his brothers and through obedience to the Rule and the spirit of our tradition.

Life in the monastery should be one of simplicity, solitude, and austerity, so that the monks may not only progress in holiness but may be aided in their growth toward the life of the hermitage.

Hence, as our holy fathers teach, each professed monk must see in the hermitage an eminent degree of the life he has professed and must aspire to it. He may pass from a monastery to a hermitage in accordance with the constitutions.

7. The Camaldolese hermitage is situated between the cenobitic and anchoritic ways of life. It keeps the best elements of both and creates a wise balance of solitude and life in common (cf. RVE ch. i).

Although the hermit remains united to his brothers and subject to the yoke of obedience (cf. RE no. 41; Op. XV,18), he strives in solitary quiet to attain purity of heart and intimate union with God by means of greater mortification and more intense and assiduous prayer.

In the Camaldolese community there can also be monk "recluses". By enclosing himself within the narrow confines of a cell, the recluse imitates more closely the anchoritic life of the desert fathers. He represents a very high development of the monastic ideal, and in him the brothers find a model of life hidden with Christ in God.

It is the prior who grants reclusion for brief or longer period of time. When a monk requests it, let the prior use discernment in giving his answer; above all let him remember that this particular experience of solitude demands a high degree of maturity and spiritual, psychological, and physical health. As for the monk, *amore libertatis inclusus*, his life of willing obedience is to be the primary manifestation of his freedom in Christ.

II

8. The juridical structure of our congregation is founded upon the autonomous [*sui iuris*] house. The principle of subsidiarity governs the relations between the congregation's central authority and the individual house. The function of the central authority is to pursue a healthy balance, defending the community's autonomy, offering it help, and preserving unity of governance.

9. The monastic community is united in the name of the Lord. He dwells within it, and the community rejoices in His presence (cf. Matthew 18,20). Membership in the community unites the monk to the life of the local church, in which the mystery of the universal Church lives and is manifest (cf. LG 26).

By his profession the monk enters into a spiritual union with his brothers, so as to form with them one family, united by the bond of monastic stability.

10. The monk acquires stability with his simple profession. Stability creates a special bond between the monk and the community, and it also commits him to the ongoing practice of *conversatio monastica*.

In juridical terms, stability confers rights and duties upon the individual members and the entire community, in accordance with the constitutions.

11. With discernment let the prior encourage and guide the monk who, inspired by the Holy Spirit in a desire for greater perfection, shall request a transfer from monastery to hermitage. Such a transfer is not contrary to monastic stability but is rather its fulfillment, according to the teaching of the Holy Rule (cf. RB I and 73) and our tradition.

If such a transfer is temporary, it is regulated in accordance with article 12. If the monk is to be joined definitively to the hermitage community, the procedure is that given in article 15.

12. A monk belonging to an autonomous house may, for just motives of a spiritual or physical nature, ask his prior's permission to transfer temporarily to another house, with the consent of that house's prior. The prior general is to be informed of this transfer.

If the monk's request is not granted, he may appeal to the prior general.

13. For just motives the prior general may transfer a monk temporarily, having sought the advice of the monk's community of profession. If the monk is transferred to another autonomous house, this house's consultative vote is also required (article 56,q; 57).

14. If the conduct of a professed monk is detrimental to the community, the prior general, having carefully examined the case with the monk's own prior, may transfer him elsewhere, even against the monk's will. For such measures, the prior of the house to which the monk is transferred must also give his consent.

15. Upon request of the monk in question, the prior general may make the transfer definitive, with the consent of the community to which the monk has been transferred (article 56,q).

16. When the transfer is temporary, the monk retains all his rights in his house of profession. If it is seen that the monk will reside in the other house for more than one year, after three months there he participates in the chapter of obediences and, upon invitation by the prior, in other chapters of a consultative nature.

17. If those who are elected to offices of general concern for the congregation reside in a house which is not that of profession, they exercise chapter rights there in accordance with article 16.

At the end of their term of office, they return to their respective communities of profession.

III

Autonomous (*sui iuris*) Houses

18. The houses of the congregation which meet the requirements determined by the constitutions are autonomous or *sui iuris* houses governed by major superiors in accordance with canon law (CJC 613). They are hermitages or monasteries. Their establishment requires:

- a) at least six solemnly professed monks
- b) full regular observance
- c) economic independence
- d) the decree of erection, to be made by the general chapter after careful consideration of the state of the community.

19. It is the right of autonomous houses to have:

- a) professed for the community
- b) their own novitiate and studentate
- c) the election of the prior
- d) delegates to the general chapter in accordance with article 197,g
- e) their own customs in conformity with the spirit of the congregation and approved by the prior general with his council (cf. articles 56,o; 58,a)
- f) the faculty to open new houses with the consent of the general council (cf. article 56,p), written consent having previously been received from the bishop in whose diocese the house is to be established (CJC 609,1).

[Semidependent and Dependent Houses]

20. The houses which do not meet the requirements for autonomous houses are either semidependent or dependent. There are two kinds of each.

21. Semidependent Houses in a Phase of Growth. Of the dependent houses mentioned in article 20, those which have been founded by an autonomous house or by the general

council and are growing toward full autonomy, first pass through the phase of semidependent house under the following conditions:

1) For the establishment of a semidependent house it is required:

- a) that there be not less than three monks
- b) that the monks lead a true life of prayer and support themselves by their own labor
- c) that the house offer candidates the possibility of an adequate formation
- d) that there be grounds to hope for future candidates
- e) that there be a period of experimentation of six years
- f) that after careful consideration a decree of erection be given by the general chapter or by the consulta or, if the case is urgent, by the general council; in this latter case, the situation shall be verified definitively by the successive general chapter or consulta.

2) Conditions of life and rights:

a) the prior of the founding house, or the prior general in the case of semidependent houses subject to the general council, shall take part in defining the general life style of the community

b) the house is governed by a prior administrator appointed respectively by the prior of the founding house or by the prior general, with the consultative vote of the relative conventual chapter or general council; the term of office is normally three years (cf. article 46)

c) the prior administrator attends the general chapter and the consulta as a full voting member; the prior general, under conditions to be determined in each case by the general council, invites a member of the community to attend the general chapter or consulta without voting rights (cf. article 197,h)

d) the community has the right to receive novices and professions for the house and to form its own customs; for the admission of candidates to novitiate and profession presented by the semidependent house, the vote of the conventual chapter of the founding house or respectively of the general council is required (cf. article 56,g-2; 56, h-i; cf 58,c.1)

e) the monks who live in the semidependent house keep their *stabilitas* in the community of origin until such time as the house becomes autonomous; for transfers, the general norms laid down in articles 11-15 are observed.

22. Semidependent Houses in a Phase of Decline. Formerly autonomous houses which no longer fulfill all the requirements given in article 18 become semidependent houses. If a house falls short of one of the requirements during the interval between the general chapter and the consulta or vice versa, the community still participates in the chapter or consulta with full rights as an autonomous house.

For the house's participation in subsequent general assemblies, the following norms are observed.

It is ordinarily the general chapter which reduces a house from autonomous to semidependent status. Outside the time of the general chapter, the reduction is decreed by the prior general with his council (cf. article 174,a,9).

The semidependent house:

a) depends immediately from the prior general; his concern is to promote the house's complete recovery, if possible, and to this end he takes part in defining the general life style of the community

b) the house is governed by a prior administrator appointed by the prior general with his council, normally for a three-year term (cf. article 46)

c) the prior attends the general chapter as a full voting member

d) for the participation of community members in the general chapter, article 21,2,c,second paragraph is to be followed

e) the community has the right to receive novices and professions for the house and to have its own customs (cf. article 19)

f) to remain a semidependent house, it must have all the qualities listed in article 21,1,a.b.c.d.

Instead of leaving the semidependent house under the direct authority of the prior general, the general chapter may judge it opportune to join the house to another autonomous house, making it a dependent house of the latter.

In this case, and before proceeding, the members of both the autonomous house and the semidependent house are to express their will in the matter through a consultative vote.

The monks living in the now dependent house acquire *stabilitas* with all its rights in the autonomous house to which their house has been joined. In the case of a member who wishes to transfer temporarily or definitively to a house other than the one to which his house has been joined — or for other transfers in the future — the general norms laid down in articles 11 to 15 are observed.

If, after an adequate period of time, these semidependent or dependent houses do not give grounds to hope for their recovery, the general chapter shall carefully consider whether the common good might not require that they be closed.

23. Dependent Houses are:

1) houses founded by an autonomous house; these may be kept open, if there are well-founded hopes for their development

2) houses that depend from the congregation as a whole or from the general council; these are either houses that fulfill general functions in the congregation or houses founded by the general council.

24. Residences are part of an autonomous house under a simple delegate of the prior. To open or close them a vote of the conventual chapter and the consent of the general council are required, in accordance with the constitutions (article 56,p and 58,b); the diocesan bishop's previous consent in writing must also be obtained.

25. New Foundations are normally made by the autonomous houses (cf. article 19,f and 56,p).

If circumstances are such that this proves to be impossible or inopportune, the general council may open the foundation, with the consent of the general chapter or the consulta or of the majority of the priors.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MONASTIC COMMUNITY AND THE PRIOR

I

26. *The monastic community is an extension and a reflection of the mystery of the Church. Like the Church, it is “in Christ as a sacrament or sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of the entire human race” (LG I).*

The Spirit of the risen Christ animates the monastic community (cf. Romans 8,9-11). The Spirit awakens the community and opens it to God’s word, renews it in an ongoing process of conversion, and instructs and guides it in the discovery of the Father’s will. In this way God calls the community and its members to take up the cross of Christ every day, strong in the hope of sharing His glory (cf. Romans 8,17).

Nourished by the same word of God and by the one eucharistic Bread, the members of the monastic community grow toward perfection in their partaking of God’s life and in their union with one another (cf. LG 11).

27. *We believe that the prior “assumes the role of Christ in the monastery” (RB 2,2). According to Saint Benedict, the prior is called to be a father, teacher, and guide for the monks. He is to guarantee and favor their sincere openness to the voice of the Spirit, both as individuals and as a community.*

28. *Let the prior be fully aware that he is called to imitate Christ in the exercise of his office, and that he must render generous and humble service to the brothers entrusted to his pastoral care (RB 2,7). “Let the greater among you be as the junior, the leader as the servant. . . . I am in your midst as the one who serves you” (Luke 22,26b-27b).*

Let the prior, then, see his brothers in the light of the Spirit and

recognize their gifts, needs, and aspirations. Let him support and direct them as they grow in freedom, responsibility, and loving union with God and one another (RB 2,31-32).

The prior breaks the bread of God's word for his brothers (RB 64,9); he exhorts and corrects them as he guides them in the ways of God (RB 2,23-25). This requires that he have an adequate theological formation and sufficient personal experience in the spiritual life.

The holy Rule entrusts the prior with a twofold teaching (RB 2,11 - 12); in fact, the prior's office demands that he strive to present his own life as a model of the virtues which he is called to teach by his words (cf. I Peter 5,3), so that his teaching "should, like the leaven of divine justice, permeate the minds of his disciples" (RB 2,5; cf. RE 48; Op. XV,28.39).

Hence his office should make the prior eager to renew his own monastic life each day and to strive for perfect love through self-denial and contemplative prayer.

29. The prior must promote the sanctification of his brothers and their growth toward monastic perfection; let him consider this his chief task and the norm of all his actions.

At the same time, he is to provide the brothers with an adequate human and cultural formation, since he knows that the harmonious development of their personalities will help them in pursuing their sanctification and in contributing to the good of the community and of the whole Church (cf. PC 14; article 9).

"Let him open his heart and his mind to the brothers; let him seek to understand them with the sincerity of a father; let him respect and love them, so as to mirror the love with which God loves them" (PC 14).

30. The wise and efficient running of the community is an important condition for the monks' peace of mind and a valid help on their spiritual journey. Therefore, let the prior be solicitous in ordering all things according to the teaching of the Rule (cf. RB 2,33-34).

Let him make use of the active collaboration of his brothers (cf. RB 3). Together with them, he is to examine

possible programs of action according to the concrete demands of time and place. The prior must also see to it that the community's wholesome traditions are preserved and that its material development and spiritual growth are ensured.

31. The monks are to show that they recognize the prior's mission in a spirit of faith, by offering him full, conscientious, and responsible obedience as is fitting for those who enjoy the freedom of the children of God (cf. Romans 8,12-18).

Like the Lord who came to do the will of the Father (cf. John 4,34; 5,30), becoming obedient unto death (cf. Philippians 2,7-8), let the monks offer themselves to God by their obedience as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, their true spiritual worship (cf. Romans 12,1-2; RB 5 and 66).

By a life of fraternal dialogue which reflects on earth the communion of the three divine Persons, let the monks "make every effort to preserve the unity which has the Spirit as its origin and peace as its binding force," until they "form that perfect man who is Christ come to full stature" (Ephesians 4,3.13).

32. *Let the prior remember that his mission is to shepherd and guide his brothers, especially those who are weakest and most in need of help. In relating to them, let him keep in mind what Saint Benedict teaches, in accordance with the gospel: that the prior must be a loving father and a wise physician (cf. RB 2; 27; 64).*

If it happens that a brother, on account of human frailty, fails to remain faithful to the monastic life he has professed, the prior is to follow the precept of the apostle: "correcting, reproofing, appealing, constantly teaching and never losing patience" (I Timothy 4,26).

33. *With the light that God gives him, let the prior make every effort to understand the reasons why a brother may find himself in a difficult situation, and while correcting and appealing to him, offer him loving support and encouragement.*

When a brother is at fault, let the prior correct him fraternally and in private, in accordance with the gospel. If this approach meets with no success, and the common good requires it, the prior may also

try public correction (cf. **Matthew 18,15-17**), but with care, like a wise physician, applying to every fault the appropriate medicine (cf. **RB 24**).

*For their part, the brothers should be ready to recognize their failings, trusting in the Lord who came to heal the sick and call sinners to His kingdom (cf. **Luke 5,31-32**). Let them ask forgiveness of the community and the prior, and humbly receive correction.*

*Let each monk patiently endure the weaknesses of his brother in a spirit of genuine love, and let them forgive one another (cf. **RB 4 passim; 70-72**).*

34. In the case of more serious faults that require remedies of a juridical nature, the norms of canon law are to be observed (CJC 1341-1353). Even in such cases, let the prior and the community be aware of their own frailty and that of their brother. Let them remember that mercy must accompany their judgment and meekness their severity; let them not cease to pray to the Lord for their weaker brother, and to offer him their loving help (cf. **RB 23-27**).

35. The prior is to visit the sick and the elderly often; let him make sure that all their physical and spiritual needs are attended to (cf. **RB 37**).

He is to ensure them the possibility of sharing in the eucharistic celebration every day and of receiving the other sacraments as often as they wish and whenever their condition renders it advisable.

Let all the brothers feel particularly close to the sick in the bonds of charity; let them be eager to visit them and to offer them every service that brotherly love demands.

36. It is greatly to be desired that the brother in charge of the sick have, besides the qualities indicated by Saint Benedict, an adequate professional training.

Let the infirmarian see Christ in the suffering brothers and use great charity and diligence in their regard. Let him also be concerned for their spiritual needs.

All charity must be shown to those who are ill. They should be given whatever medical care they need, in line with

monastic poverty and with the legislative norms and forms of health insurance available in each country.

The infirmary is to be located in a healthy place and supplied with everything necessary for the care of the most common illnesses; it is to be maintained according to the strictest rules of hygiene.

II

37. Superiors of autonomous houses are called priors. They are major superiors in accordance with canon law (CJC 620). They exercise ordinary jurisdiction over their brothers, in both the internal and external forum.

38. A candidate for the office of prior must have been solemnly professed in our congregation for at least five years; he must be a priest. These same prerequisites are required of those who are elected or appointed prior administrators or vicepriors (cf. CJC 523).

If a monk is called to govern the community of a hermitage, it is appropriate that he have an adequate theoretical and practical knowledge of the eremitical life.

A community may elect as its prior a professed monk of another community.

39. A community elects its prior for an indefinite period of time; however, he may not continue in office if the community, in the chapter celebrated for this purpose every six years, does not confirm him.

After the election of the prior and his acceptance, he makes his profession of faith (CJC 883,8).

What is stated in article 174,b-7 is also to be taken into consideration.

40. At the end of the six-year period, the prior, with the agreement of the community, sets a date for the chapter at which he will be confirmed or a new prior will be elected.

For serious reasons the chapter may be postponed, but not for more than two months.

41. The chapter for the election of the prior is celebrated according to the procedure given in articles 203, 209, 213-215, 219, 222-225.

42. In the chapter of confirmation, the procedure is as follows:

1) The prior gives his report on the state of the community; discussion follows.

2) Then the prior asks to be absolved of his office by the prior general or his delegate, who is presiding at the chapter.

3) After the prior leaves the room, the chapter members discuss the question of his confirmation. The prior then returns, and the chair notifies him of any observations or criticisms expressed in his absence. The prior may, if he wishes, respond to them, after which the chapter members, except the prior, vote whether or not to confirm him. This is done by secret ballot, whose outcome is immediately announced.

4) If the prior is not confirmed, the chapter proceeds to elect a new one.

43. The election or confirmation of the prior is subject to confirmation by the prior general with his council.

44. Each prior in his own house precedes all other priors. When several priors are together, they rank according to the precedence of their respective houses. After the priors come the vicepriors.

45. Priors who are guests have precedence over vicepriors but not jurisdiction. The same holds true in the case of the general assistants outside the regular visitation.

It is the ceremonial which determines the acts of precedence and jurisdiction.

46. If the office of prior is vacant, in accordance with article 39 or in the case provided for in article 189, and on account of serious internal difficulties the community is not able to proceed

to the election of a new prior, the prior general is to examine the situation carefully with his assistants. Then, having sought the advice of the community and the opinion of his council, he appoints a prior administrator for a determined period of time, in expectation of new circumstances which will render a new election possible (cf. article 174,b-2).

During his term of office, the prior administrator is equal in all things to the prior of an autonomous community.

47. If the office of prior is vacant for reasons other than those given above and it is not possible to proceed immediately to the election of a new prior, the prior general asks the advice of the community and his council, and appoints a viceprior administrator.

The viceprior administrator remains in office until the election of a new prior has been confirmed. The chapter of election is not to be postponed more than two months, except for a serious reason. During this time the viceprior is superior with limited vicarious power for the ordinary administration of the life of the community. Any important act, if it is not urgent, is deferred to the new prior.

48. The superiors of semidependent houses are called prior administrators; they are true superiors with ordinary but vicarious power, which they exercise in accordance with the constitutions.

They are appointed in accordance with what is laid down in article 21,2,b; they take part in the general chapter and the consulta, as indicated in the same article.

III

49. Superiors of dependent houses are called vicepriors. They are true superiors with ordinary but vicarious power, which they exercise in accordance with the constitutions.

They are appointed by the prior for a period of three years. Before proceeding to the appointment, the prior asks the advice of his own community and of the monks residing in the dependent house.

If the house is a dependency of the general council, the prior general asks the advice of the monks residing there.

When the viceprior is absent or impeded, he is substituted by a monk designated by him, or if there has been no such designation, by the first in dignity or order of profession. The authority of the substitute lasts until the viceprior's return or until the viceprior appoints another to take his place.

50. Newly founded houses, as long as they are dependent houses, are governed by a viceprior elected for a period of three years by a consultative vote of the conventual chapter of the founding hermitage or monastery; the monks resident in the foundation also take part in this election, either in person or by absentee ballot.

If the foundation is a dependency of the general council, the prior general with his council appoints the viceprior, having sought the advice of the community. When the viceprior is absent or impeded, the procedure is that laid down in article 49.

51. When the new foundation is recognized as a semidependent house, it is governed in accordance with article 21,2.

52. In autonomous houses the prior may, if necessary, appoint a viceprior, having asked the advice of the community. The viceprior has ordinary but vicarious jurisdiction, in both spiritual and temporal matters, and the monks are bound to obey him as they do the prior himself.

IV

53. The professed monks of our communities are all brothers without distinction and to the same degree (cf. Matthew 23,8; PC 15). They enjoy equal rights and obligations, with the exception of those rights and obligations deriving from sacred Orders.

All the monks must know that they are called, according to their abilities and the grace God has granted them, to offer in obedience to the prior their responsible collaboration in the orderly running and development of their community.

The brothers' relations among themselves are to be inspired by gospel simplicity and charity; however, the order of precedence in community is given according to the seniority of the first profession.

Regular oblates may also be admitted to our communities. They live according to the rule of life established for them and are united to the community in virtue of a simple promise.

With regard to the work they do, the social laws of the country are to be observed.

V

54. The prior must know how to discern the action of the Holy Spirit in his brothers; hence, as Saint Benedict teaches (RB 3), let him take into consideration the advice of all the monks.

Shared responsibility and fraternal collaboration find their ordinary and fullest expression in the conventual chapter.

The legitimate members of chapter are the solemnly professed monks not juridically impeded.

In accordance with articles 12-13, solemnly professed monks transferred from another community take part in the chapter of obediences and, upon invitation by the prior, in other chapters of a consultative nature.

55. *When there is something to be discussed in chapter, the prior is to inform the chapter members as far in advance as the occasion demands. If a monk, for some reasonable cause, cannot be present, let*

him submit his reasons in advance to the prior's judgment. In chapter the prior is to present clearly the matter for discussion; when each monk has expressed his opinion and all have carefully considered the matter, the monks are to manifest their decision by a secret vote. If the vote is tied, another vote is taken; then the prior is to decide.

When expressing their opinion, let the monks keep well in mind the teaching of the Rule (**RB 3**). Let them be brief and serious, avoiding every word that might offend charity and peace. Let their sole aim be the glory of God and the good of the community.

56. Without prejudice to articles 57-58 and whatever else is to be observed *de iure*, the matters to be set before the conventual chapter are the following:

a) for autonomous houses, the election or confirmation of the prior in accordance with the constitutions

b) for recently founded houses, semidependent houses, and dependent houses, the appointment of the viceprior

c) the annual chapter of obediences; this chapter elects or confirms the brothers who serve the community in offices of a certain importance, for example, the master of novices, the master of students (junior professed), the cellarer (*oeconomus*, *economus*), the sacristan; if an office becomes vacant during the year, the chapter shall elect another brother to fill it

d) the designation of the two members of the domestic council which the community is entitled to elect

e) the election of the delegate(s) to the general chapter [or the consulta]

f) the definitive acceptance into the community of a monk from another monastic congregation in the Benedictine Confederation, in accordance with the *Lex Propria* no. 71 (cf. article 148)

g) postulants and novices: 1) the report on candidates for the postulancy and their acceptance into the community (cf. article 133). 2) the admission of postulants to the novitiate (cf. article 135). 3) the novice master's regular report on postulants and novices (cf. article 133). 4) the granting of permission for a novice to be absent from community, in accordance with articles 140-141

h) the admission of novices to the profession of temporary vows, and the postponement of profession

i) the admission of simply professed monks to solemn profession; for their admission, the consent of the prior general is also required

l)* the readmission, without obliging him to remake the novitiate: of a novice *expleto novitiatu*; or of a simply professed or solemnly professed monk who has legitimately left the community

m) promotion to the ministries of lector and acolyte, and to the Order of deacon and priest

n) the acceptance of regular oblates

o) introducing or changing local customs

p) the founding of new houses, *servatis de iure servandis*, and the opening and closing of residences

q) the temporary or definitive transfer of a monk from his community of profession to another, in accordance with article 13 or article 15

r) the publishing of books or articles about the community

s) initiatives which involve the community in commitments to persons or institutions outside the community

t) accepting or declining large inheritances or donations

u) alienating, exchanging, or renting (for more than one year) real and movable property and precious objects; in these matters, what canon law prescribes must always be observed (CJC 638,3)

v) constructing new buildings or making extensive repairs in existing ones; a building is considered new not only when it is built up from the foundations, but even when an existing building is added to or otherwise modified, except for reinforcements necessary to shore up old or damaged structures

x)* setting the limits and the conditions of the monastic enclosure, as indicated in canon law, CJC 667,1

z) the annual budget; expenses, money loans, or debts which exceed the limit set by the general chapter or the consulta; the designation of two auditors to prepare the financial report which the prior will present to the general chapter

*[Note: there is no “j”, “k”, “w”, or “y” in the Italian alphabet]

57. In the cases listed above in article 56, the vote of the conventual chapter is:

- collegial in paragraphs a, d, and e;
- only consultative in paragraphs b and c; in numbers 1, 3, and 4 of paragraph g; and in paragraphs h, m, q (*re* article 13), r, and s;
- deliberative in all other cases [paragraphs f, g-2, i, l, n, o, p, t, u, v, x, and z].

58. In addition to the vote of the conventual chapter, *servatis de iure servandis*, the approval of the prior general with the consent of his council is required for:

- a) introducing or changing local customs, as in paragraph “o” of article 56
- b) the definitive transfer of a monk from his house of profession to another, as in paragraph “q” of article 56
- c) the readmission to the community, without obliging him to remake the novitiate, of a simply or solemnly professed member of a semidependent house subject to the general council (cf. article 158)
- d) founding new houses and opening or closing residences, as in paragraph “p” of article 56
- e) alienating or exchanging anything of considerable artistic, historical, or economic value, as in paragraph “u” of article 56
- f) constructing new buildings, when this would affect the future financial possibilities of the community or the physical environment of the house
- g) extraordinary expenses, loans, or debts which exceed the limits set by the general chapter; in addition, the validity of the act requires the written permission of the Holy See in those cases mentioned in CJC 638,3
- h) setting the limits and the conditions of the monastic enclosure, as in paragraph “x” of article 56

59. All chapter members are strictly obliged to observe secrecy with nonmembers of chapter and especially with nonmembers of the community.

Transgressors are to be punished according to the gravity of their fault as the prior judges it.

60. The acts of chapter are to be recorded in the minutes by the chapter scribe; the minutes are to be signed by the prior and the scribe, and the scribe is to keep them with all care.

61. It is appropriate that the prior call occasional community meetings that include all the monks, even those not solemnly professed, in order to discuss matters of general interest, even when such matters do not require the convocation of the conventual chapter.

62. The prior is also to have his domestic council, with whom he can discuss the questions that ordinarily arise in his governing of the community, and those which by their nature require circumspection. The council is made up of the viceprior and two members elected by the community in the chapter of obediences. Occasionally another member of the community may be asked to participate, when the council discusses a matter of his particular competence. The following questions may be placed before the council:

1) granting permission for a simply professed monk to be absent from community for vocational reasons, as in article 156

2) granting permission for a monk to be temporarily absent from community, for the length of time and under the conditions given in CJC 665,1

3) the exclusion of a simply professed monk from the renewing of his vows (cf. article 160)

4) the removal from office of the novice master, should that be necessary (cf. article 139)

5) members of the domestic council are the viceprior and two members which the community shall elect in the chapter of obediences; when a question arises that regards the office of one of the monks, he shall be invited to that meeting.

In cases 1) and 2), the deliberative vote of the domestic council is required; in cases 3) and 4), the vote is consultative.

63. Each prior is to keep his seal in his own possession; he is to have an archive under lock and key, where he keeps documents, contracts, rescripts of the Holy See, and whatever else is appropriate; the archivist shall compile an orderly and detailed catalogue of all this.

The prior's archives are also to contain:

a) the acts of the general chapter which have reference to his community and to the common observance

b) the minutes of the conventual chapter

c) the list of the professed monks, including general information about each one

d) the necrology, giving the date of death and the suffrages celebrated, as well as a biographical sketch of each departed monk

e) a secret register, in which the prior is to record the dispositions received from the general chapter or from the general assistants in the act of visitation

f) the chronicle of the house.

CHAPTER THREE

PRAYER

64. *God the Father has chosen us in His Son and has predestined us to be His adopted children. For with the Son we have died and have been raised up in baptism, so that we might receive ‘a spirit of adoption through which we cry out, ‘Abba!’ (that is, ‘Father’)” (Romans 8,15). It is God’s Spirit who makes us persevere in steadfastness of faith and who inwardly strengthens us, so that in Christ we may stand with confidence before God, in whom we trust, knowing that we “are strangers and aliens no longer, [but] fellow citizens of the saints and members of the household of God” (Ephesians 2,19).*

Nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ and transformed into Christ, we live in the hope that God our Father will fulfill His loving plan for us.

Consecrated by the Holy Spirit, who forms us into a spiritual temple and a holy priesthood, we are called to offer our lives to God as a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God through Christ (cf. I Peter 2,5; Romans 12, 1-2). Thus we become true worshipers, such as the Father seeks (cf. John 4,23), and we exercise fully our priestly role, united in the Church’s sacraments to Christ’s own offering of His life to the Father.

65. *As sincere seekers of God (cf. RB 58,7), monks approach Him as sons. They center their lives on the encounter with God, which finds expression in forms of prayer handed down in the monastic and patristic tradition. When a monk is inspired to seek greater intimacy with God in the hermitage, his aim is to reach the full maturity of monastic life in a prayerful dialogue with the Father, and to make this dialogue ever more constant and intense.*

66. *Saint Benedict wants “nothing to be preferred to the Work of God” (RB 4;3,3). Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Benedictine communities have learned to recognize the primacy of the various*

liturgical forms of celebrating Christ's mystery. In fact, Christ exercises His priesthood in the liturgy every day and associates His bride the Church with Himself in this priestly work (cf. SC 5-7). Thus "the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fountain from which all her power flows" (SC 10).

A) The Eucharistic Celebration

67. The paschal mystery of Christ is made present and effective for our salvation in the celebration of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the center of the life of the community, because from it the Church is born, lives, and continues to grow until she is ready to meet her bridegroom Christ as He comes in glory.

The sharing in God's life and the unity of His people are in fact given fitting expression and a mysterious realization in the Eucharist, in which the Church, made one with the sacrifice of Christ, offers herself to the Father (cf. LG 11; UR 2; DCD book 10, chapter 6). In the Eucharist, the Church receives an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and enjoys a foretaste of the perfect communion with the Blessed Trinity which will be hers in the age to come.

68. Each monk and the community as a whole are to orient their life in such a way that it is a preparation for, and an extension of, the eucharistic action:

The Eucharist must be celebrated in faithful adherence to the spirit of the liturgy, so that each individual participant, and the community as such, may share in it "fully, consciously, and actively" (cf. SC 11 and 14), according to the nature of the worshiping assembly and the intrinsic demands of the celebration. Thus, by God's gift, the worshipers may attain that total inner openness to God's action which the spiritual masters have called mystical experience or contemplation, and which our monastic fathers have taught by the example of their lives (cf. for example Cassian, *Conferences IX and X*; VR 31 and 50).

69. There is to be one daily celebration of the Eucharist for all the members of the community (conventual Mass), in order to express more fully the unity of Christ's sacrifice and priesthood, and to strengthen the bonds of charity that unite the brothers. For this reason the Mass of the community is ordinarily concelebrated, without prejudice to what is indicated in CJC 902 regarding a priest's right to celebrate individually.

When the prior presides at Mass, the communion among the brothers is more directly expressed; therefore it is quite fitting that he be the chief celebrant on all the great feasts of the Church year and on other important occasions in the life of the community.

"The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated into a spiritual house and a holy priesthood" (LG 10). Thus they are able, in all their activity as Christians, to offer spiritual sacrifices pleasing to God. In virtue of their royal priesthood, they also concur in offering the Eucharist. Therefore, when members of the faithful are present at the Mass of the community, their active and conscious participation in the divine mysteries is to be favored in the most opportune way and with all charity (cf. LG 10; RB 53).

It is the prior who grants the monks the faculty to preach in his own church or oratory.

B) Liturgy of the Hours

70. In line with the unanimous tradition to which the Rule of Saint Benedict gives voice, monks have always considered the celebration of the praise of God to be a fundamental element of their life, and the same is true for us today (cf. RB 19; 43,3; 58,7).

The monastic community comes together in the name of Christ; it lifts up its voice in praise to the Father and experiences Christ's mysterious presence (cf. Matthew 18,20). Like the Church itself, the monastic community is a pilgrim on earth; waiting with watchful heart for the Lord's coming in glory, it unites its voice with the unceasing song of the Jerusalem on high (cf. RB 19; SC 8; LG 50).

71. *In the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, the Church offers her sacrifice of praise to the Father, and she thanks Him for the salvation that comes to her in Christ. In the Hours, as in the Eucharist, Christ is acting out His priestly role and, bringing to completion the covenant of love that unites the bride to her bridegroom (cf. SC 84). In the Church at prayer, the mystery of salvation which the Scriptures proclaim finds its fulfillment (cf. Conferences X, 11; Gregory the Great, On Ezekiel X,1,16).*

72. According to Christian tradition, the purpose of the Liturgy of the Hours is the sanctification of the entire day. Hence it is necessary that the celebration of the various Hours — which is incumbent on each monk and the community as a whole, also in virtue of canon law, CJC 663 and 1174 — correspond as closely as possible to their proper time of day, although due regard should be given to the changed circumstances of contemporary life (cf. SC 84;88;94).

In celebrating the traditional monastic Office, special importance should be given to Lauds and Vespers, the principal moments of the Liturgy of the Hours (cf. SC 89,a).

73. The daily schedule should be arranged in such a way that it will be possible, insofar as circumstances permit, for all the members of the community to be present, because the community's spiritual life, whose food is charity, also needs the nourishment and self-expression which it finds in common prayer.

The form of the celebration should be dignified and sober, so as to favor an attitude of sincere prayer in all the participants (cf. RB 19). Each element of the Office — the reading of Scripture, the chanting of Psalms and hymns, the moments of silence — is to have its proper place in the celebration, as required by liturgical criteria.

However, all who take part in the Office should realize that, for their participation to be personal and fruitful, they not only need a basic spirit of prayer but also an adequate biblical and liturgical formation. Priors and novice masters must see to it that this formation is available to all (cf. SC 90).

74. Regarding the participation of guests and others in the community's celebration of the Divine Office, see article 69.

C) "Lectio Divina"

75. *The experience of God in the liturgical celebration has its necessary preparation and its natural unfolding in a life of consistent Christian commitment and in the constant encounter with the Father in silence and in the reading of His word (cf. SC 10; 12), "the food of the soul, the pure and perennial source of spiritual life" (DV 21).*

76. *When a monk hears the word, welcomes it, and treasures it faithfully in his heart (cf. Luke 2,51; 11,28), he is brought into the mystery of salvation which the word proclaims and communicates.*

For a monk to receive the word humbly and to assimilate it, he must cultivate a permanent attitude of conversion, so that "the word of the Lord may make progress and be hailed by many others" (II Thessalonians 3,1; cf. DV 26; Conferences X,11; Gregory the Great, On Ezekiel 1,7,8; VR 31; 50).

77. *Monastic tradition considers the encounter with God's word to be fundamental in the life of the monk; this is *lectio divina*, "meditative reading" in the fullest sense of the term. *Lectio divina* embraces, first of all, Holy Scripture, then the fathers, the sources of sacred tradition, and the living theological reflection of the Church. Whatever a monk reads, it is intended to lead him into an ever deeper understanding of the word and an ever more active fulfilling of the Father's saving will (cf. RB 73; DV 23).*

*Although *lectio divina* makes use of the tools provided by scientific, theological, and cultural scholarship, it always goes beyond these, since *lectio* is essentially an experience of God in faith and love.*

78. *In order to fulfill its purpose, *lectio divina* demands an adequate preparation, as well as those concrete conditions which will enable the monks to read diligently, calmly, and*

prayerfully, so as to make their *lectio* a dialogue of faithful responsiveness to the Father (cf. DV 25).

Hence each community, according to its circumstances, is to create the most favorable conditions for this spiritual experience. The community must ensure for every monk a balanced rhythm of prayer and work, and indicate in its daily schedule an appropriate period of time — at least one hour — for *lectio divina*.

It is quite fitting for the community to organize periodically simple forms of common reading of Scripture, in which the brothers can freely and humbly examine their lives in the light of God's word. It is also useful to set aside a special period of time each year in which the community can give itself to reflection and prayer (cf. CJC 663,5).

D) “Oratio Privata” [Interior Prayer]

79. A monk's personal participation in the liturgy and his regular practice of *lectio divina* are reflected in his interior prayer, flowing up from the depths of his soul under the impulse of the Holy Spirit. This secret prayer, the fruit of compunction and purity of heart, is taught by the gospel and recommended by Saint Benedict (cf. Matthew 6,6; RB 4,57; 20,4; 49,4-5; 52,2-5).

The atmosphere of silence, in which God speaks, is indispensable for the practice of interior prayer. Silence permeates it and nourishes it, and when a monk is faithful to this prayer, it becomes a constant reality in his filial relationship with God.

80. *Let the monks be attentive and open to the voice of the Spirit, knowing that prayer is the Spirit's gift. Let them continually ask for this grace, and as they long to take part in the Church's mystical marriage with her spouse the Lamb, let them allow the Spirit to draw them into the silent state of the soul called **quies** or **hesychia**, there to experience their own mystical union with God.*

81. *Let them model their prayer and their whole spiritual life on the mystery of Christ, following the Church on her journey through the*

annual liturgical cycle. They should find the best ways of celebrating more intensely as a community the principal seasons of the Christian year — Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter (cf. RB 49; SC 102; 108-110).

82. *Sunday, the Church's weekly celebration of the Lord's passover, should be for all the monks a time filled with the spirit of prayer, joy, and brotherly love, as they wait for His coming in glory; thus Sunday will be for them truly "the day of the Lord" (cf. SC 106).*

83. With special love the Church venerates Mary the holy Mother of God and contemplates her inseparable union with the saving work of her Son (cf. SC 103). The Church recognizes in her the highest example of faith and love (cf. LG 53).

Monks too, in union with the Church, venerate Mary with the devotion of sons, as their fathers did before them.

There are many good devotional practices, like the rosary for example, which can increase a monk's love for God and nourish his prayer. In the use of these practices, the celebration of the mystery of Christ must be the guiding principle, so that they will be in harmony with the liturgy, find inspiration in it, and lead up to it (cf. SC 13).

84. *Animated by the faith and charity that unite all the members of Christ's body, let the monks learn to share in the joy and the anguish of their brothers and sisters at all times, but especially when they pray; and let them ask the Father of all to transform the whole human race into a single sacrificial offering in Christ (cf. GS I).*

85. Charity requires our thoughtful concern for all who are united with us in monastic profession, both those who suffer and those who have gone before us in Christ, in the hope of rising again.

The community shall perform suffrages for departed members of our order with the holy sacrifice of the Mass and the Divine Office, but it is fitting that the community's faith in eternal life be expressed also through some gesture of service to the needy. Each individual monk is also encouraged to offer prayers and other good works in suffrage for the departed.

Every priest of the congregation shall offer Mass for each of the departed, even those belonging to another community.

The funeral shall be conducted according to the monastic ritual, with adaptations appropriate to each nation.

The prior shall take care to inform the other communities when a monk has died, so that all the members of the congregation may unite in the offering of prayers and charitable deeds.

In addition to the anniversaries indicated in the liturgical calendar, all our departed monastics, relatives, and benefactors shall be commemorated daily, in whatever way liturgical criteria and local custom may suggest.

86. It is the local customary which gives precise norms for the concrete application of these directives in each community.

CHAPTER FOUR

MONASTIC ASCETICISM

87. *The Church shares in the mystery of Christ her head, which is a mystery of death and resurrection. Sealed by the Spirit, “the pledge of our inheritance” (Ephesians 1,14), the Church longs for the fulfillment of God’s kingdom (cf. LG 5 and 48), as she awaits “our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2,13).*

The Holy Spirit leads some of the faithful, among them the monks, to seek ways of living out their whole existence as pilgrims in this world (cf. LG 43-44). Always ready to heed God’s voice calling them to repent and renew themselves inwardly (cf. LG 8), their lives are a response to the word of the Lord: “This is the time of fulfillment. The reign of God is at hand! Reform your lives and believe in the gospel!” (Mark 1,15).

Knowing that every worthwhile gift, every genuine benefit comes down from above, from the Father of lights, monks humbly welcome the word that has taken root in them, with its power to save, and they strive to be doers of the word, not hearers only (cf. James 1,17.21-22).

Intent on following the Lord, they strive to become more and more like Him, so as to “fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of His body, the Church” (Colossians 1,24). By the practice of chastity, poverty, and obedience, they bear witness to, and proclaim, the passover mystery of the Lord and the expectation of His glorious kingdom in heaven (cf. LG 44; PC 5).

88. *Because monks desire to have the same attitude which Christ had (cf. Philippians 2,5), they have, from earliest times, chosen to live in total poverty of spirit before the Father, through a life of virginity, obedience, poverty, and humility.*

They nurture and manifest this attitude, which gives meaning to their whole existence, also by appropriate ascetical practices, both as individuals and as a community (cf. SC 110). Thus “through

patience” they “share in the sufferings of Christ,” so as to “deserve also to share in His kingdom” (**RB prologue 50**; cf. **Philippians 3,10-11**).

For monks, “the love of Christ must come before all else” (**RB 4,21**). Sustained by God’s grace, they seek purity of heart and wage constant war on sin. They continually carry about in their bodies the dying of Jesus, so that in their bodies the life of Jesus may also be revealed (cf. **II Corinthians 4,10-11**).

89. Let the brothers nourish their spirit of repentance by using, in appropriate ways, the penitential rites and seasons which the Church’s liturgy offers.

Where local circumstances and the condition of persons permit it, the monks are to organize community penitential services in whatever forms seem opportune, so as to strengthen their common spirit of conversion and fraternal charity. In this context, let them give new life to the traditional forms of the chapter of faults and the general absolution.

Let the brothers keep in mind above all that the will and the grace of conversion to God, in the communion of the Church, have in the sacrament of Penance their constant source and the seal of their fullness (cf. **LG 11**). Therefore let them make frequent use of this sacrament (cf. **PO 18**).

Superiors are to allow all members of the monastic family due liberty with regard to the sacrament of Penance and spiritual direction (cf. **PC 14**; **CJC 630,2**; **664**).

90. Our monastic fathers, in the spirit of Christian tradition, have handed down to us certain typical expressions of conversion to God, such as the cell, silence, and fasting; they recommended these practices as ways of opening our hearts to God in inner freedom (cf. **Rudolf of Camaldoli, Consuetudo Eremiti: “Regulam ieiunandi atque silendi et in cellis permanendi eis tribuit”**; **Op. XV,5**).

Monastic solitude and silence entail a relative material separation from others; these practices are at the service of the monk’s inner work as he meditates on the word of God. Thus with the exercise of self-denial and prayer, the monk remains in loving dialogue with God (cf. **RB 6**).

Fasting shows how the whole person, soul and body, is called to participate in the death and resurrection of Christ, since we bear within us still the conflict between two laws, that of the Spirit and that of the "flesh" (cf. **Galatians 5, 16-25; Romans 7,21-23**). Hence it is always necessary to seek, in addition to fasting, new means that correspond to changing circumstances, in order to give adequate expression to interior asceticism.

91. Strengthened by God's grace, let the brothers be intent on silence of heart and the practice of virtue. By love of quiet and the cell (cf. **VF 32; RVE 36**), let them learn that "meditation and silence, spiritually united, are for the soul great tranquility and the perfect exercise of contemplation, while silence without meditation is death, and meditation without silence bears no fruit" (**RVE 44**).

Hence each community is to establish times and places which safeguard that climate of silence which is the natural basis for an authentic life of listening, prayer, and communion with God and neighbor.

The monks should realize that monastic solitude does not separate them from the Church community, to which they are united by the bonds of charity and their journey toward the kingdom of God (cf. **Op. XI, 15**).

92. In organizing the life of the community, careful consideration is to be given both to the spiritual and practical requirements of hermitage and monastery and to the legitimate personal needs of individuals.

The kinds of pastoral service which monks may offer to the Church community shall be determined in accordance with what is indicated in these constitutions (see **chapter 6**).

93. In order that the monks may live their life in the most authentic way, it is necessary, even for those who spend their time habitually or always in solitude, that they have an adequate cultural and spiritual preparation, as is required for the complete maturity of the person. After the ordinary cycle of formation, this personal growth can appropriately be favored by regular community meetings.

If there are several communities near to one another, they should examine the possibility of organizing these meetings jointly, so as to make good use of the available persons and means.

94. *Christian monks, in line with the Church's constant tradition, have always used the seasons of Advent and Lent as special times for intensifying their prayer and ascetical practice, in order to enter more fully into the spirit of the liturgy (RB 49; VR 67; Op. XV,6; RVE 12;15).*

Whatever the individual monks or the community may add to their spiritual and ascetical practice during these times, it must serve to lead them more deeply into the mystery of God's Word made flesh in human history, of Christ crucified and risen, so that they may all "look forward to holy Easter with joy and spiritual longing" (RB 49,7).

Monastic tradition recommends a number of different ways of living these liturgical seasons more intensely, one of which is a period of greater solitude. This may be considered quite appropriate for our own times as well.

95. *The community's daily schedule should also allow for suitable moments of relaxation, in order to foster charity and each person's psychological and physical well-being.*

On liturgical feasts, the mystery which is celebrated gives the day a special quality of joy and peace; the community's manner of celebrating the feast should reflect this quality, so that the whole person may enter into the joy of the Lord.

Community meals shall customarily be accompanied by readings suited to the occasion and to the edification and instruction of the brothers. Charity and other considerations will guide the prior in applying this norm.

According to local circumstances, suitable times are to be found for the public reading of the holy Rule and these constitutions.

96. *Our houses are to be established in appropriately secluded locations, so as to provide the community with the necessary climate of solitude and silence.*

97. To safeguard the community's privacy, part of the monastic dwelling is to be reserved for the brothers by canonical enclosure.

Each community is to determine the limits and conditions of its own enclosure by a deliberative vote of the conventual chapter; this vote shall then be submitted for approval to the general council (cf. article 56, x).

When guests are received in the hermitage or the monastery, they should be charitably asked to respect the community's way of life. Hence let there always be a brother in charge of receiving guests and seeing to their needs.

98. For reasons of charity, work, apostolate, or health, superiors may grant the monks permission for temporary absences from the monastery or hermitage.

In the special cases provided for in canon law, the prior general and the priors are to observe what is laid down in CJC 665,1.

99. When monks ask permission to be absent, let them be guided by a lively sense of responsibility. Let them fulfill their mission with the awareness that even outside the community they must be witnesses to their condition as monks.

100. The means of social communication (printed media, radio, television, etc.) may be used as aids for the appropriate cultural and spiritual formation and information of the monks, due consideration being given to the particular requirements of discretion and prudence proper to the monastic vocation (cf. CJC 666).

In overseeing the right use of such means, superiors are to aim at educating the brothers' sense of responsibility and maturity, counting on this rather than on specific prohibitions.

The same criteria must also govern the monks' correspondence.

101. *Brotherly love and the respect due the community demand that the monks be charitable and discreet in dealing with outsiders and even with guests. They are to avoid any contact that might involve them in matters not pertinent to monastic life or that might harm the necessary reservedness about the community life, or that might disturb its quiet.*

If particular circumstances require that a monk invite or receive a guest, he is to ask the superior's permission beforehand.

A monks family members who come to visit him are to be received with all kindness and charity.

102. *Fasting, in the teaching of Jesus, is an attitude of joyful expectation of the Bridegroom (cf. **Matthew 9,14-17; 6,16-18**). He also taught that the union of fasting with prayer is the condition for overcoming a certain kind of demon (cf. **Matthew 17,21**).*

Hence within Christian life, fasting is a means of making us open to the coming of God's kingdom and ready to bear witness to it.

103. *Seeing fasting in this light, monks throughout the ages have disciplined the taking of food. They chose this discipline as a means of self-denial and as an expression of their constant seeking of God's kingdom (cf. **RB 4,13; 39; 40; 41; VR 6; 8; 9; RVE 41; Op. XV,5**). Monks' commitment to the practice of fasting reflects their attention to the example of numberless ascetics and virgins, especially among the anchorites, hermits, and recluses. From the dawn of Christianity in both East and West, these men and women have left us a lofty example of abstinence and fasting for the love of Christ.*

104. *Guided by the teaching and example of the Church, our monastic communities are to open their hearts in understanding and love toward the needy. The monks are to share with those in need both their goods and the fruits of their renunciation. Let them never forget the cry of the poor and the oppressed which rises to God from all the ends of the earth (**Martin III of Camaldoli, Constitutiones, 1253**).*

Let the brothers learn by personal initiative how to practice the divine precept of penance; let them use appropriate forms of penance suggested by modern conditions of life, so that their hearts may be freer in the search for God and in prayer.

Let those who feel themselves called to greater abstinence strive to follow the prodding of the Spirit, in harmony with the monastic life. And let them not judge their brother, because "greater than all else is love" (cf. I Corinthians 13,13).

105. Camaldolese tradition has held in honor and fostered that particular kind of anchoritic life that our fathers called "reclusion" (VR 52).

Those drawn by God's grace to "reclusion" are to be wisely encouraged in their intention, because reclusion is an eminent form of monastic life and an excellent witness to the search for God in full freedom and communion, according to the saying of Camaldolese tradition. "*amore supernae libertatis inclusus*" (Saint Peter Damian, Op. XI, *prooemium* [PL 145,231b-232b]).

By the unity of faith and charity, the recluse remains in communion with his fellow monks and with all: "The Church is at the same time one in all and all in each; simple in plurality by the unity of faith, multiple by the bond of charity and the variety of gifts; because from the One come all" (Op. XI,15).

Some monks may be called temporarily or permanently to forms of greater solitude other than reclusion, and this is in harmony with the ancient Camaldolese tradition.

It is the prior who has the authority to grant permission for reclusion or other forms of solitary life, having heard the opinion of the community. The prior is to prudently ascertain whether the monk who requests this permission has the necessary human, psychological, and spiritual maturity. The experience of reclusion shall be granted at first for determined, brief periods of time; however, the reclusion can be suspended when the recluse or the prior finds that there are legitimate motives for doing so.

The prior shall show fatherly concern for the recluse by assisting him with frequent personal visits and guaranteeing him the necessary quiet. For his part, the recluse must know that he remains always united to the father of the community by obedience.

106. It is the local customary which shall further determine precise practical norms in these matters, in accordance with the character and conditions of the individual community.

CHAPTER FIVE

POVERTY AND WORK

107. *The monk, in virtue of his calling and his freedom as a son of God, commits himself to the practice of poverty. Monastic poverty, conceived in accordance with the teachings of Holy Scripture, means that we place all our trust in the God who alone saves us (cf. Psalm 35,5-11; Matthew 11,28-30); it means that we seek His kingdom (cf. Matthew 5,3; Luke 12,22-34), respond to His word, and imitate Christ, who “made himself poor though he was rich” (II Corinthians 8,9b).*

Just as Christ accomplished our redemption by becoming poor and suffering persecution, “so the Church is called to follow the same path if she is to communicate the fruits of salvation to all” (LG 8).

When a monk chooses and practices interior poverty with greater and greater awareness, he is drawn to live it and to express it in a visible way; this outward poverty then frees his heart to respond to the demands of God’s kingdom. To practice poverty means to renounce the possession of goods and money. It also means that a monk uses these things not according to his private judgment but in accordance with the teaching of the Rule, the norms that arise from the life of the community, and the directives of the prior; he accepts these as his guide in using goods and money in a way that is faithful to the spirit of the gospel.

108. *A conscience sensitive to the value of poverty is essential to monastic life. Lest it be reduced to a mere sham, the virtue of poverty must be practiced consistently; the entire life of the community and of each monk must be poor in a way that all can see.*

It is normally by its own labor that a monastic community lives. Saint Benedict wants his monks to be occupied in daily work (RB 48); the most authentic tradition that derives from his teaching shows us how work, as a fundamental element of monastic living, is wisely and carefully balanced with the spiritual activity of contemplation.

*In the encyclical **Laborem Exercens**, John Paul II states:*

“Work is a good of the person; it is a good of the person’s human nature, because by work, men and women not only transform nature and adapt it to their own needs, but they realize themselves as human beings and even, in a certain sense, become more human” (Laborem Exercens 9).

Like all Christians, monks accept their share of work (PC 13); they thereby develop their human faculties, continue the work of the Creator, and contribute to the fulfillment of the plan of Divine Providence. As they accept, in a spirit of faith and charity, the suffering that work sometimes entails (cf. Genesis 3,17-19), they participate in the redemption of humanity through the mystery of the cross.

The brothers must engage in their various occupations in such a way that together they may contribute to the self-sufficiency of the monastery, even though there will always be some in the community — whether infirm or engaged in other activities — who cannot perform productive work. However, the apostle’s admonition remains valid for all “whoever would not work should not eat” (II Thessalonians 3,10b)

109. In our day, the effective practice of evangelical poverty on the part of both the individual and the community is one of the most fruitful ways of bearing witness to Christ — that kind of witness which the world expects from His followers (cf. PC 13; LG 44-46).

Monastic communities must strive to meet the demands of gospel witness which the Spirit is kindling in the heart of the Church and in all human hearts. To do so in a way consistent with their commitment to seek God (cf. RB 58) and to be a sign of Christian hope, monasteries must avoid the possession and accumulation of properties and capital over and above their real needs.

Let the monks seek to make this community witness bear fruit by taking into account the social conditions of the place (cf. PC 13) and by making the whole tenor of their life and even the monastery buildings reflect a spirit of simplicity. In addition, they are to willingly set aside some part of their goods for the needs of the Church and for the sustenance of the poor; indeed, they are to love the poor with the tender affection of Christ,

even to the extent of making sacrifices for them (cf. Matthew 25,40; James 2,15-16; I John 3,17; GS 69).

The better endowed communities are to willingly offer fraternal aid to those less well furnished with material goods, as well as aid for the needs of the congregation, as prescribed by the general chapter or the general council in accordance with article 174,b,9 (cf. PC 13).

110. *The following disciplinary directives are necessary for the correct practice of poverty and for the organization of work in the monastery; but they are in no way a substitute for the virtue which arises from the responsibility of each monk and from the conscience of the community.*

111. *The prior shall take particular care to organize the work in the monastery, including both manual labor and cultural and spiritual activities, in close collaboration with his immediate assistants. As circumstances require, he is to provide for the appropriate professional training of the individual monks and for the technical and cultural instruments their work requires, so that they may perform their tasks with dedication, regularity, and professional competence.*

A well arranged and easy-to-use library is to be maintained, on account of its importance for the monks' formation and for their cultural and spiritual life.

112. *In establishing the community's daily schedule, a balance must be maintained between work periods and other times, during which the monks may serenely and calmly attend to study, lectio divina, and prayer; prudent consideration should also be given to the needs of each individual. Appropriate moments during the day and during the year should be set aside for rest and for the physical and psychological relaxation which the brothers need.*

In the monastery, about seven hours each day should be dedicated to work. In the hermitage, the period is shorter and the work is preferably done alone, but if circumstances require it, common work may be assigned, provided it does not disturb the atmosphere of silence.

Regarding the quality and price of goods the monks may sell, whether produced by themselves or by others: the community must

always have in view, in these and all similar matters, the edification of God's people.

113. The administration of the community's movable and immovable goods is entrusted to the cellarer (*oekonomus, economo*) by the prior with the advice of the community. The cellarer is appointed in accordance with article 56, c. He must conduct his administration as directed by the prior and the community, as a service to the common good, and in accordance with universal and particular law.

The spiritual doctrine and practical directives of Saint Benedict (RB 31) are to be the constant source of inspiration and guidance for the cellarer, so that the performance of his office may be an authentic service to prior and brothers. Let him remember that the serene progress of the community's life depends to a considerable extent on how well he performs his task.

114. It is the cellarer who shall provide what is necessary for the ordinary life of the brothers, and in doing so he is to follow modern criteria of economy and administration. All administrative affairs in the community are habitually under the control of the cellarer and the prior.

On the one hand, the cellarer shall take care that the goods of the monastic family suffer no detriment, while on the other, he shall keep well in mind the demands of monastic poverty and charity.

In the event that hired laborers work for the community, the cellarer shall take particular care to see that they are treated justly in all things, according to the social laws of the country.

115. If necessary, one or more assistants may be appointed to help the cellarer keep and distribute the things ordinarily used in the house, as well as to aid him in directing the various work activities. Whatever necessary initiatives the assistants undertake must be done with the agreement of the cellarer, who is to remain in charge of the overall administration of the community.

While the cellarer and his assistants are making every effort to be of service to their brothers, let them be careful not to neglect other spiritual obligations of their monastic profession.

116. The cellarer must keep the community's financial records in good order, and his assistants must do the same for their respective areas of responsibility.

The cellarer shall present the annual financial report and budget to the community, including the projected expenses, loans, and debts in excess of the amounts set by the general chapter or the consulta (cf. article 56,u.z). It is the prior who shall sign and transmit the annual financial report to the general council.

117. Bank accounts are to be in the name of the community. Bank operations are to be signed jointly by cellarer and prior, in the case of autonomous or semidependent communities, or by cellarer and one of the major superiors, in the case of dependent houses.

118. *All the brothers are to take great care of whatever belongs to the house, even the most ordinary things they use every day, and especially what is given them for their personal use; they are to treat these things with deep respect (cf. RB 31) and thankfulness to God, and use them with a spirit of poverty. Although the care of the things of the house is a special duty of those who hold particular offices in the community, fraternal solidarity and the common monastic profession demand that all the monks share in this task.*

Furthermore, charity demands that each member of the community share gladly in those chores which need to be done in any household, so that the monks may be of service to one another, without having recourse to outside help except in exceptional cases.

Those responsible for the various offices shall complete an inventory of all things assigned to their keeping a month before leaving office; at the end of each year they shall inform the community about their charge.

119. According to the teaching of the holy Rule (cf. RB 34), each monk is to receive what is necessary according to his true needs. The prior and the others who serve the community are to make every effort to lead the brothers by their example in the practice of poverty. While showing concern for the needs of all, especially the weaker members, let them avoid any personal preferences that may offend charity.

For their part, let the brothers realize that it is their responsibility to manifest the poverty and simplicity of monastic life, especially in their use of money, in the honesty of their financial records, in the furnishings of their cells, and in the clothes they wear. Therefore, let them not accept — much less solicit — from family or friends any personal gifts which are not in harmony with the requirements of monastic poverty. Let the monks ask the prior's permission for anything they receive. They must know, however, that being subject to the prior in the use of material things is not enough, without the practice of real interior and external poverty (cf. PC 13).

120. Monks transferred from one community to another in accordance with articles 11-15 are to ask the prior's permission to take anything other than personal effects with them.

121. Local customs may establish further norms with regard to the practice of monastic poverty.

CHAPTER SIX

MONASTIC PRESENCE

122. The Spirit, who is one, distributes the variety of God's gifts for the utility of the Church (cf. I Corinthians 12,1-14). The outpouring of the Spirit's love moves all who have become members of Christ's body through Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist to cooperate in the growth of the body, until it reaches the manifestation of its fullness (cf. Ephesians 4,13; LG 7; AG 36).

The monastic community effectively fulfills this mission by its very presence. The charity that unites the brothers in one family, the mystery of Christ celebrated and consistently made manifest in their lives, the word of God to which they listen and on which they meditate every day, the prayerful dialogue that unites them to the Father in ascetical practice and in the joy of the Spirit, makes the monastic community a proclamation of Christ's presence in the Church and of the Church's waiting in hope for the kingdom of God (cf. PC 7; AG 40).

Hence by living the monastic ideal and by sharing in the life and work of the community, each according to his special task and the gifts the Spirit has given him, monks participate in the apostolic work of the Church (cf. AG 36-37; PC 9).

Finally, there are some brothers, especially hermits, who work in the Lord's vineyard by living a life of total dedication to God in solitude, continual prayer, and severe penance, united to the body of Christ by the bonds of a mysterious apostolic fruitfulness (cf. VR 52; PC 7).

123. In line with the example and teaching of Saint Romuald, our monastic tradition has always kept alive this apostolic consciousness (cf. VR 35; 37; 43; RVE 38; Op. XXXII,6; VF). At the heart of this tradition is a love for the Church which has expressed itself in various ways, according to the grace of the Spirit and the conditions of different times and places.

124. The community may legitimately take on certain apostolic tasks, when these also have the effect of sustaining and manifesting those basic spiritual values by which monks live and to which they witness in Christ's Church, according to the call they have received from God. The monastic witness to these values is the criterion for determining the concrete ways in which the apostolate of the community and of the individual monks can develop in harmony with their vocation.

The most traditional form of monastic presence is hospitality. According to the Rule, hospitality does not only mean offering material refreshment and accommodations to those who visit the community; it also means giving them spiritual nourishment in the fellowship of charity and in the encounter with God's word (cf. RB 53).

The zeal of charity will make the monks eager to understand the spiritual needs of our guests; it will also make them attentive and ready to respond with humility and in a way that is mutually edifying, to what the Church and the world demand of those consecrated to monastic life.

Hospitality may assume many appropriate forms according to each community's circumstances and location. One form which is especially suited to our monasteries is that of organized retreats and spiritual conferences for priests and lay people. In hermitages, these retreats should be conducted on an individual or small-group basis.

The monk (porter or guest-master) who is in charge of receiving guests should be a "God-fearing brother" (RB 53,21) for whom all guests "are to be welcomed as Christ" (RB 53,1). Let him work at creating a climate of spiritual serenity and communion in prayer, so that the guests will know that they have been welcomed into the house of the Lord.

125. The whole world is aware of a new ecumenical climate which is creating or enhancing the conditions for dialogue among believers of the great living faiths. Catholics, Christians of other confessions, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and all persons of good will are seeking new ways of growing in the truth and in communion.

The Church recognizes that “God shows no partiality; rather, the person of any nation who fears God and acts uprightly is acceptable to him” (Acts 10,34-35). In the Second Vatican Council, the Church has assumed an attitude of “religious attentiveness” to the Spirit’s voice resounding in every human heart (UR; LG; GS; [NA]).

The monastic community, adhering to the tradition of our fathers of ages past and to their spiritual freedom, is ready to welcome all with sincere affection and to recognize the “seeds of the Word” mysteriously present in all who seek the face of God.

If a believer of another faith asks to spend a longer period of time in the community, the prior shall carefully consider the request with the conventual chapter; let the monks remember that ecumenism is today an especially monastic way of responding to the Lord’s call to preach the gospel (cf. Mark 16,15; VF 2).

When taking part in the ecumenical dialogue and establishing long-term relations with individuals and groups, the community is to follow the guidelines established by the Holy See (cf. CJC 755).

126. Monks may engage in communicating the word of God, the doctrine of the liturgy, and the wisdom of the fathers, both by speaking and by writing, since this apostolate is consistent with the monastic life and reflects its very nature. This is a service which the people of God will always need and to which the Church today earnestly desires monks to make their contribution.

Concrete forms of this apostolate can be, for example: writing books and articles, in accordance with canon law (cf. CJC 831-832); giving conferences or retreats in the guest-houses of our communities, as mentioned above, or, provided there is no conflict with the monk’s living habitually in community and observing its rules, in other places to which he might be invited for such a purpose; collaborating with fellow monks and other competent persons in promoting the knowledge of the Church’s spiritual tradition.

Let each one who is called upon to communicate the word of God to others realize that this service presupposes that he will remain faithful to his monastic vocation and live in a way that is consistent with it.

127. In animating this sector of the community's life, the prior is to bear in mind the fundamental demands of monastic living as outlined in our constitutions (cf. PC 9), and he should see to it that the work of the individual monks is in harmony with our life. Let him responsibly evaluate the motives for which the brothers request some period of time away from the community.

For their part, the brothers must submit to the prior ahead of time any requests addressed to them for this type of work.

128. It is the local customs which shall establish other norms and guidelines in these matters.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MONASTIC FORMATION

129. *The whole life of the monk, with his commitment to **conversio morum**, is a state of never-ending discipleship: “Therefore we intend to establish a school for the Lord’s service” (RB prologue 45). When a man welcomes God’s gift with a willing heart and desires to realize his discipleship through the monastic life, he must receive an adequate, constant, and gradual formation, since this is an indispensable condition for living the divine call in an authentic way.*

130. The initiation of candidates to the monastic life embraces: a period of preparation for the novitiate, called postulancy; the novitiate itself; and the years following the profession of temporary vows. The period of formation is aimed at leading the candidate into the quest for an ever-deeper union with God by making available to him the elements that constitute the monastic spiritual experience (cf. articles 4-7).

I. Postulancy

131. The purpose of postulancy is to aid young men in gradually adapting their psychological and spiritual life to their new situation, so that, in a climate of serenity under the expert guidance of their master, they may fully examine their calling.

This trial period should permit the community to assess the candidate’s attitudes and his vocation, as well as to see what degree of cultural and spiritual formation he has attained.

The postulancy shall be the occasion for ascertaining in particular whether the candidate has the requisite human and emotional maturity and whether there is reason to hope that he will be able to assume the responsibility of his initial monastic commitments and to grow toward a more complete maturity.

If, in more difficult cases, it seems necessary to seek the advice of an expert psychologist, the candidate must freely consent to these tests, and the norms established by ecclesiastical authority (CJC 642) must be observed.

132. The length of the postulancy varies from a minimum of about one year to a maximum ordinarily not greater than two years. Within these limits, the exact length may be changed by the prior and the master, according to the condition of the candidates.

Because of the particular spiritual form of the monastic community, the basic element of which is fraternal communion, it is desirable that the period of postulancy be observed within the community; however, if it seems advisable under the circumstances, it may be observed in another community of the congregation, in another monastic or religious family, or even outside.

During this trial period, even when it is spent outside the community, the candidate shall be entrusted to the guidance of an expert monk, who may also be the master of novices. If he is not, he must collaborate very closely with the novice master, in order to ensure the homogeneity and continuity of the formation program.

If the candidate is spending most of his postulancy outside the community, he should be given the opportunity for periodic contacts with the community and with the monk who is directing the formation of postulants.

To be accepted as a postulant, the candidate must be at least of legal age.

133. It is the prior and the master who shall decide on the acceptance of candidates as postulants and shall inform the community. During this period the master shall also inform the community on the candidate's progress.

In addition to the necessary human and spiritual qualities, the following are required for admission to the postulancy: certificates of baptism and confirmation, documents attesting to the candidates freedom from all obligations under civil and criminal law, and his medical records. In addition, he shall undergo a medical examination by a physician of the community's choice.

134. *During the period of postulancy, the master is to take great care in helping the candidate to grow in a broader and deeper vision of the Christian life and of the basic qualities of the monastic vocation, such as, for instance, prayer, listening to the word of God, celebration of the mystery of Christ, obedience, detachment, fraternal communion, etc., as these qualities are expressed concretely by the community. To this end, it is useful for the candidate to experience a certain participation in the community life, but this experience should be gradual and be offered to the candidate in a way that respects his individual situation.*

In hermitages, let the postulancy be organized in such a way that, while it tends to introduce the postulant to the life of solitude, it will also guarantee him a sufficient experience of community life, in order that he may know himself better and that from his current level of human and spiritual maturity, he may be properly aided in developing his capacity for meeting the special challenges of the eremitical life.

The program of formation during the postulancy may be suitably adapted to the age and other conditions of the postulant.

II. Novitiate

135. **The chief purpose of the novitiate is to help the candidate to know and experience what monastic living requires of him, so that when he professes this life, he may do so as a response to the personal call of God, who has summoned him to live his baptism as a monk.**

The novitiate may begin only when the candidate has become aware of this call and has reached a level of maturity that permits him to answer it with a sufficiently free and responsible choice.

For the admission of a postulant to the novitiate, the deliberative vote of the conventual chapter is required (cf. article 56,g,2; 57), in addition to what canon law stipulates as necessary for the novitiate's validity and liceity (cf. CJC 643-645).

The community must be careful to admit only those candidates who have the necessary prerequisites and who show signs of their ability to begin living the monastic life as

it is lived in the community and to grow in their capacity to meet all the demands of the life.

In fact, it is the purpose of the novitiate and subsequent years of formation to help the novice to grow in his journey on the path he has chosen and to become ever more conscious of his own vocation and what it entails.

136. To this end it is necessary that, in addition to the customary spiritual conferences given in community, a regular series of classes be set up for the novices, so as to initiate them into the sources of monastic wisdom, the meditative reading of Holy Scripture, the vital understanding of the liturgy, the spiritual and historical tradition of monasticism and especially our Camaldolese tradition, the knowledge and understanding of what religious vows mean and of what consecration to God in monastic life entails.

If younger candidates need preliminary instruction in other subjects, they shall be given classes in these also, so that their monastic formation may proceed more efficiently.

The brothers who are called to take part in teaching the various subjects must do so in harmony with the directives of the prior and the master.

137. The monastic community plays a very important role in the formation of novices. The community forms new members, and continues to form all its members, through the experience of the monastic life itself. It conveys to them the values and the convictions on which it bases its own way of life, thus exercising an important influence on their personal development.

All the brothers, then, are to be fully aware of the serious responsibility that is theirs on account of the communion that unites them in one family.

Relations between members of the community and novices must be characterized by great fraternal charity, family spirit, and the necessary reserve that is the novices' due in this delicate phase of seeking and examining their vocation. Further determination of these relations can best be given by local custom.

138. Harmony of aims and charity must always reign among the prior, the community, and the master, so as to guarantee the novices the necessary climate of serenity and unity of formation.

The novice master is appointed for a three-year term in accordance with article 56,c. He must be solemnly professed in the congregation (CJC 651,1), have an adequate experience of the Camaldolese life, and be at least thirty years of age.

The choice of a monk as novice master must be made on the basis of the witness of his life above all, as well as of his spiritual and cultural preparation and his abilities as a teacher, since the guidance of the novices is especially entrusted to him. By his example and teaching he will form them in the constant search for God (cf. RB 43), in a deeper understanding of the values that they discover by learning about, and experiencing, the monastic life, and in an ever clearer discernment of how deeply united they are with the whole Church, however much their vocation as monks sets them apart.

Let the master's way of relating to the novices be one of simplicity and friendliness, together with goodness and respect for their personalities. Thus he will create a climate of trust and interior openness, thanks to which, especially on a one-to-one basis, he will be able to channel their generous impulses towards the complete gift of themselves to God in the monastic life, and to help them gradually to discover the challenges inherent in an obedience which is authentic, humble, and active.

His action shall be aimed at helping the novices to form themselves as human persons and as men of God; in doing so, let him keep in mind the laws of human growth and follow the criteria of modern scientific pedagogy.

139. Each autonomous house has a right to its own novitiate; it is to be preferred that the novice receive his formation in the house he is joining (cf. article 19,b). However, for the sake of a better formation, it may be useful for several communities to have a common novitiate, located in that house which is most able to offer what is necessary for the formation of novices.

It is first of all the priors who are responsible for resolving this problem; with great care and commitment let them assume their responsibility. For his part, the prior general, with the consent of his council, may take suitable initiatives in this matter, having sought the advice of the priors.

If a candidate is making his novitiate in a community other than the one for which he will be professed, it is appropriate that he spend some time in his own community while he is a novice. Furthermore, the master will take care to inform the other communities regularly about the progress of their respective novices.

When the novitiate is organized in common, the novice master is appointed by the prior of the house where the novitiate takes place; before doing so, the prior is to consult the priors of the participating communities as well as the members of his own.

If it should become necessary to remove the novice master, the prior shall ask the advice of his domestic council (cf. article 62) and of the other priors, as was the case when the master was appointed.

140. In order for the novitiate to be made in a canonically valid form, it must last twelve months.

Absences from the novitiate house, whether discontinuous or continuous, render the novitiate invalid if they total more than three months. An absence of more than fifteen days must be made up.

141. If particular circumstances recommend it, the prior may, with the advice of the community, add to the time of the novitiate a formative period outside the community. The entire length of this extended novitiate may not be greater than two years.

142. At least every six months during the novitiate, the novice master and the community shall together examine the progress of each novice, in order to arrive at the most objective evaluation possible. This evaluation, if the prior judges it opportune, may even be expressed by secret vote (cf. article 56,g,3).

If a novice is also undergoing a formative period outside the community, his progress shall be examined at the most appropriate times.

143. At the conclusion of the novitiate, the master shall report on the readiness of the novice for profession. The prior of the community to which the candidate belongs shall then propose, for the consultative vote of the conventual chapter, his admission to first profession as soon as the canonical requirements have been fulfilled (CJC 656). The same procedure shall later be followed for the solemn profession (CJC 658).

For a just cause, the prior may permit the novice to anticipate his first profession, but not by more than fifteen days; likewise, for equally just motives, he may allow the profession to be made in a house other than that of the novitiate.

144. During the novitiate, the candidates continue to wear lay clothes, unless local customs determine otherwise; they wear a choir robe during liturgical celebrations. On the day of profession they also receive the monastic habit, made according to its traditional Camaldolese form, which they wear from then on. The prior general may make other dispositions for special motives and for as long as these motives prevail (CJC 669,1).

145. Before making temporary profession, the novice cedes the administration of all his goods, retaining ownership of them and freely disposing of their use and enjoyment in accordance with CJC 668,1. A period of more intense spiritual preparation shall precede his taking of vows.

146. If at the conclusion of his novitiate the novice is judged to be sufficiently mature to embrace the commitments of religious vows, he makes temporary simple profession for a period of three years; this profession may be renewed for another three years.

If particular circumstances render it advisable, the prior may prolong the time of simple profession up to a maximum of nine years (CJC 657,2).

147. Through baptism the monk has already been consecrated to God; by monastic vows, he gathers even greater fruits from the grace of his baptism. He gives himself totally to God, whom he loves above all things, by means of a public vow made through the ministry of the Church (CJC 654); this vow constitutes a special consecration. With his monastic profession, he is henceforth committed to freeing himself daily from whatever might turn him away from fervent charity and total self-giving to God. Let him remember that his consecration will approach perfection to the degree that the ties of monastic profession that bind him to the Lord — like the unbreakable bond of union that exists between Christ and His bride the Church — are solid and stable (cf. LG 44).

It is the novice master's duty to direct the candidates' attention to what the commitments of monastic profession entail. He must remind them that the vow of chastity involves the practice of perfect continence in the celibate state; that poverty means limitation and dependence in the use and possession of goods, in accordance with the constitutions (articles 145 and 162); and that by the vow of obedience the monk submits himself to his legitimate superiors, who are representatives of God when they exercise authority in accordance with the Rule and the constitutions (CJC 599; 600; 601).

The profession of temporary vows is to be received by the prior or his delegate. The formula is as follows:

In Dei nomine. Amen. Anno Domini ... die ... mensis ... Ego NN promitto ad triennium stabilitatem meam, conversionem morum meorum, paupertatem, castitatem, et oboedientiam secundum Regulam sancti patris Benedicti et Constitutiones Camaldulensis Ordinis in Congregatione Camaldulensi Ordinis Sancti Benedicti, et nominatim in communitate ... coram Deo et Sanctis eius, in praesentia Reverendi Patris NN huius eremi [vel coenobii] N Prioris et aliorum fratrum.

Here follow the signatures of the newly professed, of the one who has received the profession, and of two witnesses. The document of profession is to be kept in the archives.

The following is an English translation:

“In the name of God. Amen. In the year of the Lord ... on the day of the month of ..., I NN promise for three years my stability, the reformation of my life, poverty, chastity, and obedience according to the Rule of our holy father Benedict and the Constitutions of the Camaldolese Order in the Camaldolese Congregation of the Order of Saint Benedict, and namely in the community of ..., before God and His saints, in the presence of the Reverend Father NN, prior of this hermitage [monastery], and in the presence of the brothers.”

148. Monks belonging to another monastic congregation in the Benedictine Confederation do not make the novitiate but are received in accordance with number 71 of the *Lex Propria*. After a trial period of three years, they are definitively united to the community by a deliberative vote of the conventual chapter; a two-thirds majority is required.

149. If a perpetually professed member of a non-monastic religious institute asks to join the community, what is prescribed in CJC 684,2 is to be observed.

After a trial period of at least five years under the responsibility of the novice master, he may be admitted to solemn profession.

III. Basic Monastic Formation

150. After the novitiate it is absolutely necessary that all the newly professed enter upon a long-term and in-depth program of formation. This is essential for effective progress in the monastic life, even though monastic perfection is a life-long task (cf. PC 18).

Like the novitiate, this new phase of the program should be aimed at forming the whole person of the candidate, from the human, cultural, and spiritual standpoints, with due respect for his uniqueness as a person. Thus the purpose of this phase is to aid him in growing in a harmonious and wholesome way as he responds freely to the call he has received from God and

prepares for definitive incorporation into the community (cf. PC 18).

151. All the junior professed are entrusted to the guidance of a master until they make their solemn perpetual profession or, if they are candidates for the priesthood, until they are ordained; regarding the latter, the master is to see above all that they are adequately prepared for the exercise of the priestly ministry.

This master, either appointed or elected in accordance with articles 138 and 139, must possess the spiritual and canonical qualifications required of the novice master.

152. The first cycle of post-novitiate training consists of basic subjects and is common to all the professed. In accordance with a separate *ratio studiorum*, this three-year cycle shall broaden and deepen the candidates' knowledge of the subjects they have begun to study during the novitiate.

It is highly appropriate that, if their own community offers the necessary conditions for doing so, the junior professed complete this period of study there, since the environment of their own community naturally favors not only the theoretical knowledge but also the concrete experience of monastic life.

This program of study shall take into consideration the natural capacity and previous education of each monk, as well as the direction his subsequent training is likely to take, and the life of the community in which he is receiving his formation.

153. Each autonomous community has the right to its own studentate. However, in order to ensure a more adequate program of formation, it may prove useful to send the students to another community or to the general studentate. In defining this question, what is laid down in article 138 concerning the novitiate is to be observed.

If they are studying elsewhere, the junior professed are to be given the opportunity to return to their community as much as is reasonably possible, especially during vacations.

The master of students shall make it his concern to keep the priors informed about the progress of each of their respective monks.

154. The years following the first cycle of studies shall be directed toward helping the monks to unite their own activity more effectively with the life of the community. To this end they will follow a more varied program within the framework of the *ratio studiorum*.

In guiding each monk and in view of achieving a balance of prayer, study, and manual labor, consideration shall be given both to the talents of the individual and to the concrete circumstances of the community's life.

155. Another period of studies, lasting at least three years, is to be organized for the junior professed, in which they will continue their program of monastic studies according to a schedule that is in harmony with their participation in the life of the community. Hence, if it seems opportune, let them be encouraged to acquire professional skills in some field of work; if necessary, they may attend an outside school for this training.

If a junior professed is capable of advanced work in theology and related subjects, in view of making these the principal means for both his personal development and his future contribution to the community, let him be encouraged to pursue these studies. After the first three-year cycle, he shall be sent to the general studentate or, if the circumstances suggest it, to some other serious house of studies.

156. In particular cases it may become apparent that a temporary absence from the community would be opportune for a simply professed monk who has not yet reached a sufficiently clear insight into the authenticity of his own vocation. In such cases, the prior, with the consent of his domestic council, may grant a time away from the community no greater than one year (cf. CJC 665).

Let the superiors keep in mind their responsibility toward the monk and not put off a decision regarding his future. In the event that they decide that he should return to the lay state, let them use great charity in helping him to become settled in his new condition.

157. At the end of his period of temporary profession, if a monk wishes to leave the community, he may freely do so.

If, for very weighty reasons, a monk asks to leave the community during the time of simple profession, he may obtain the appropriate indult from the prior general with the consent of the general council.

158. If a simply or solemnly professed monk who has legitimately left the community asks to be readmitted, the prior may, with the consent of the conventual chapter expressed by a deliberative vote, readmit him without obliging him to remake the novitiate.

The prior general has the same faculty, with the consent of his council, with regard to a professed who once belonged to a house dependent from the general council (semidependent and dependent houses).

The monk who has made such a request shall, upon his return to the community, submit to a trial period of at least one year, at the end of which he will be admitted to simple and, later, solemn vows, in accordance with universal law (CJC 655; 657; 690) and the constitutions.

159. The candidate who is at least twenty one years of age and three years professed of simple vows, and who is considered spiritually qualified to commit himself definitively to monastic life, is admitted to solemn profession.

In the case of a long-term absence from the community of profession, on account of studies or work, the candidate is required to spend at least one year settling into the community before he makes his solemn profession.

The candidate shall make his request for solemn profession in writing, and upon hearing a report from the master, the community shall cast a deliberative vote. A two-thirds majority is required for admission to solemn vows, and it is also necessary to have the consent of the prior general, in accordance with articles 56,i and 173,7,a.

160. Upon expiration of his temporary vows, a monk may for just causes be excluded from renewing his profession by the prior with the advice of his domestic council.

If a monk succumbs to a physical or psychological infirmity, even after his profession, and according to expert professional opinion, his infirmity renders him unfit for the life of the community, this fact constitutes a reason for not admitting him to the renewal of temporary vows or to solemn profession, unless the infirmity was due to negligence on the part of the community or to injuries sustained while working in the community.

If, however, a monk becomes insane during the period of temporary

vows, he may not be dismissed from the community, even though unable to make a new profession (CJC 689).

161. Solemn profession confirms the monk's definitive consecration to God and unites him fully to the communion of his brothers. From the juridical standpoint, solemn vows confer upon the monk his full rights and duties in accordance with the constitutions (cf. articles 9-10).

The solemn profession is to be received by the prior or his delegate. The Latin formula is as follows:

In Dei nomine. Amen. Anno Domini ... die ... mensis... Ego NN promitto stabilitatem meam et conversionem morum meorum et oboedientiam secundum Regulam sancti patris Benedicti et Constitutiones Camaldulensis Ordinis in Congregatione Camaldulensi Ordinis Sancti Benedicti coram Deo et Sanctis eius, in praesentia Reverendi Patris NN, huius eremi [vel coenobii] Prioris et aliorum fratrum.

Here follow the signatures of the professed, of the one who has received the profession, and of two witnesses. The document of profession is to be kept in the archives.

The following is an English translation:

“In the name of God. Amen. In the year of the Lord ... on the day of the month of ... , I NN promise my stability, the reformation of my life, and obedience according to the Rule of our holy father Benedict and the Constitutions of the Camaldolese Order in the Camaldolese Congregation of the Order of Saint Benedict, before God and His saints, in the presence of the Reverend Father NN, prior of this hermitage [monastery], and in the presence of the brothers.”

162. The renunciation of his goods is to be made by the candidate before his solemn profession, and in this matter CJC 668,4-5 is to be observed.

Whatever goods a monk may receive after solemn profession become the property of the community.

Furthermore, let it be known that whatever a simply or solemnly professed monk acquires by his own activity or on account of the community, is acquired by the community. Whatever he may receive by way of pension, wage, or insurance, in whatever capacity, is received by the community.

163. If for the gravest of reasons, weighed before the Lord, a solemnly professed monk decides to ask for an indult to leave the community, let him present his request to the prior general, who shall send it on to the Apostolic See together with his vote and that of his council (cf. CJC 691,1).

164. With the consent of his council, the prior general may for a grave reason grant an indult of exclaustation to a solemnly professed monk for a period not exceeding three years. In those cases dealt with in CJC 686,3, he may request that the exclaustation be imposed by the Holy See. In all such cases, the procedure mentioned in CJC 686-687 is to be followed.

165. If for the grave reasons mentioned in canon law there is cause to proceed to the dismissal of a solemnly or simply

professed monk, what is prescribed in CJC 694-704 is to be observed.

Let it be made particularly clear to those who legitimately leave the community or are legitimately dismissed from it, that they can make no claims against the community for any work done during the time they belonged to it. For its part, the community must show fairness and gospel charity toward the brother who leaves (cf. CJC 702).

166. The charism of the priest, as a special sharing in Christ's priesthood and in the ministry of the bishop (cf., for example, PO 2), is distinct from the charism of the monk.

The priesthood is a gift, and the recognition and acceptance of this gift is ratified by ordination. A monk shall be granted ordination not only because he asks for it, but because the competent authority, through the judgment of his prior and community, recognizes that he possesses the qualifications necessary for a priest (cf. article 56,m).

167. In order that the candidate be able to integrate his monastic and priestly vocations, his formation must give priority to the basic demands of his condition as a monk. However, he must also acquire the doctrinal, pastoral, theoretical, and practical knowledge which is indispensable for the exercise of priestly ministry. Thus he must complete the course of studies required in his country by the authority of the Church (cf. CJC 242,1).

The monk may begin these studies after the first three-year cycle of post-novitiate formation, or if particular circumstances recommend it, after two years. If his community can guarantee him adequate training, he may do his priestly studies there; otherwise, he shall do them in another suitable house of studies or in the general studentate.

The monk may receive ordination to the diaconate or the priesthood only after he has made solemn profession.

168. Because of the delicacy of the task entrusted to the masters in the formation of candidates, it is indispensable that the

superiors not only take great care in choosing them, but also see that they receive a solid spiritual and cultural preparation, including specific training in pedagogical disciplines (PC 18). Likewise, the superiors shall make it their concern to provide scholarly training for the monks who will be teaching the various subjects (cf. PC 18).

169. Let the brothers be constantly aware of their duty to diligently pursue their human, doctrinal, and spiritual growth throughout their entire lives.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CONGREGATION

Part I - Section I

The Prior General and the General Council

170. The Camaldolese Congregation is a clerical institute in accordance with CJC 588,2. The general superior is called prior general. His function is to oversee and promote the spiritual and temporal good of the congregation. He performs this function by exhorting and instructing through the spoken and written word, and by governing according to the powers conferred upon him by general law and the constitutions.

In carrying out the duties of his office, let him be guided by the holy Rule (chapters 2 and 64) and by the declarations concerning the prior.

171. The prior general is elected by the general chapter in accordance with the constitutions (articles 221-225), *servatis de iure servandis*. In more important matters he is aided by three assistants and by two visitators in accordance with the constitutions.

The prior general and the three assistants together constitute the ordinary general council; the habitual residence of the council is the Holy Hermitage and Monastery of Camaldoli.

In those cases for which this provision is made in the constitutions, the prior general convokes the two visitators to form with himself and his assistants the extraordinary general council.

The prior general may, if he considers it opportune, delegate one of the assistants or another monk to represent the general council in relations with the Holy See.

172. In all places and at all times, the prior general holds first place among the superiors of the congregation.

173. The prior general has, *in virtue of his Office*, the power and the duty:

1) to visit the houses and the members of the congregation in person or through his delegate

2) to see that the decrees of the general chapter and of the general council are observed

3) to correct, to punish, to reserve to himself the right to judge the cases of any of the monks, to cancel or commute the punishments inflicted by superiors

4) to absolve from censures and from the irregularities reserved to the prior general by law or by apostolic privilege; the assistants can also do this in the act of visitation

5) to summon the general chapter and the consulta at the appropriate times; to convoke, whenever he deems it opportune, the general council or a meeting of superiors

6) to send to the Holy See a written report on the state of the congregation, drawn up in the manner and at the time indicated by the Holy See, and signed by himself and his three assistants (cf. CJC 592)

7) a. to grant his consent to the admission of a candidate to solemn profession

b. to dismiss a simply or solemnly professed monk from the congregation in accordance with CJC 694-704; in order to deal in a collegial manner with the case mentioned in CJC 699,1, the prior general convokes the extraordinary general council

8) to give dimissorial letters for the reception of holy Orders.

174. Furthermore, it is the prior general who:

a) **with the consent** of the assistants:

1) anticipates or postpones, but not for more than three months and for grave reasons, the general chapter

2) appoints and deposes the superiors of houses that depend from the general council

3) grants to a monk of a house that depends from the general council the permission to be absent from the community for no more than one year; if this permission is given for motives of health, study, or of work to be performed in the name of the community, the absence may be for as long as is necessary (CJC 665,1)

4) grants dispensation from vows to a simply professed monk (CJC 688,2)

5) grants to a solemnly professed monk, for grave reasons, the indult of exlaustration for a maximum of three years

6) requests that the Holy See impose exlaustration under the circumstances dealt with in CJC 686,3

7) readmits to a community that depends from the general council (a dependent or semidependent house), upon request of the community (cf. article 56,1), a simply or solemnly professed monk who has legitimately left the community, without obliging him to remake the novitiate (CJC 690,1)

8) founds new houses, *servatis de jure servandis*; for this purpose the prior general has the faculty to request the necessary monks from the various houses of the congregation, in accordance with articles 13 and 50

8.1) gives his consent to the decision of the conventual chapter of an autonomous community to close a house or residence (cf. articles 56,p; 58,d)

9) decrees, outside the time of the general chapter, the reduction of an autonomous house to the status of semidependent house (cf. article 22)

10) appoints the technical consultant for financial matters

11) defines the questions dealt with in article 58,d.e.f.g

12) grants admission to the novitiate or to simple or solemn profession to candidates belonging to semidependent or dependent houses subject to the general council (articles 21,2-d; 25; 58,c.1).

b) with the advice of the assistants:

1) sends on to the Holy See the request for dispensation from vows presented by a solemnly professed monk and the request for the indult of separation from the congregation

presented by a solemnly professed monk who is also a priest (CJC 691)

2) appoints the prior administrator in accordance with articles 21,2,b and 46; appoints the viceprior administrator in accordance with article 47

3) inflicts grave penalties and suspension upon superiors of whatever rank

4) clarifies doubts of greater moment regarding the Rule, the constitutions, or other statutes, and establishes practical norms

for the observance of the same

5) i) transfers a monk temporarily, in accordance with articles 13 and 14; ii) renders this transfer definitive in accordance with article 15

6) approves local customs and confirms changes in them

7) confirms the election of the priors of autonomous communities

8) decides where the general chapter is to take place

9) imposes taxes on each house for the general and particular needs of the congregation

10) grants to deserving individuals the participation in the spiritual goods of the congregation

11) approves what each community determines to be the limits and conditions of its monastic enclosure.

175. Decisions and decrees of the general council are made by secret vote and absolute majority. They become obligatory as soon as they are officially promulgated by the chancellor.

176. The general council is to call upon a technical consultant for advice in financial matters. It is his duty:

1) to review the financial reports of each of the houses and to offer the general council appropriate suggestions regarding them;

2) to prepare the technical report on the budgets of each of the houses and of the general council, and to make this information available to the general chapter

177. The prior general is to keep in his possession the seal of the congregation. This seal must be applied to all acts of the general chapter and the general council. Likewise the priors and the general assistants are all to have the seal of their respective offices.

178. The prior general is to keep in the archives of the general council all the decrees of the general chapter; as well as other important documents.

179. The prior general is to refrain from giving orders regarding the day-to-day government of the houses; let him not intervene in matters that, according to the constitutions, pertain to the priors. Nor should the assistants do so, in the act of visitation, lest conflicts arise in the community and the prior's authority be undermined.

180. If for any motive the office of prior general is vacant, the government of the congregation passes to the first of the assistants, who holds the office of vicar general. However, he may not make any important decision without the consent of the other assistant and the two visitators.

Within three months he convokes the general chapter for the election of the prior general.

Part I - Section II

The Prior General's Assistants and the Visitators

181. The three assistants aid the prior general in more important matters, in accordance with the constitutions. They are elected by the general chapter.

Let them fulfill the duties of their office with prudence and a sense of responsibility, in a spirit of service toward the prior general and the congregation.

182. The assistants have precedence over the priors in all places, except in a prior's residence; they do have precedence there,

however, on the occasion of a visitation, a chapter, or any act which they perform conjointly with the prior general.

Among the assistants precedence is determined by the order in which they were elected.

183. One of the assistants shall have the office of chancellor of the general council. It is he who draws up the acts and decrees of the council, transcribes them in the register, and renders them public according to the directives of the prior general. He is also in charge of the secret archives of the general council.

184. In addition to the assistants, the prior general also has the help of the two visitators in those extraordinary cases for which such provision is made by the constitutions. The visitators are elected by the general chapter for the regular visitation of the communities of Camaldoli and Saint Gregory on the Coelian Hill in Rome (cf. article 187). They are called to take part in the extraordinary general council in accordance with articles 173,7; 180; 232; 231.

185. In addition to what has been said in article 182, the principal duty of the assistants is to make the regular visitation of the houses of the congregation.

186. The purpose of the regular visitation is to promote the good of each community and of the congregation. It offers all the members the opportunity to review the life of the community with the help of the visitators. If in treating of the problems of the community and the congregation it is necessary to call certain faults to the superiors' attention, let this be done according to the gospel teaching which requires that fraternal correction be addressed first to the individual who is at fault (cf. Matthew 18,15-17; RB 23). All the members of the community, therefore, are to have personal access to the visitators.

In order for the regular visitation to fulfill its purpose, each monk and the whole community must prepare for it, with prayer and reflection in a spirit of charity.

187. The regular visitation is of two kinds: ordinary and extraordinary.

The ordinary visitation is made by the assistants every three years, normally during the two months preceding the general chapter or the consulta. The assistants visit every house of the congregation, except the communities of Camaldoli (the Holy Hermitage and the Monastery) and of San Gregorio al Celio; in these the visitation is made by two visitators resident in other communities and elected by the general chapter. In the act of visitation, they have the same authority as the assistants.

The extraordinary visitation is made as often as the prior general judges it opportune. It may be general or partial, and made by the prior general with his assistants, or by the assistants alone, or by one of them.

188. In the act of visitation, the assistants, as true vicars of the prior general, share his authority. This authority, however, is common to both and indivisible; thus one assistant may not exercise it without the others, except in particular cases when the prior general and the other assistants are in agreement and charge him to do so.

189. Let those making the visitation give special attention to the interpersonal relationships in the community. With charity and kindness let them promote unity and mutual understanding among the brothers.

If they encounter serious difficulties, let them inform the prior general, who shall examine the problem with the assistants and look for an adequate solution.

If the circumstances recommend it, the prior general may ask the prior to tender his resignation. If he refuses, he is removed from office in accordance with the procedure given in article 232,3.

190. The superior of the house is to be informed of the ordinary visitation of his community at least one month ahead of time. The superior must then make ready the acts of the conventual

chapter, the financial records, signed by the auditors as prescribed, the register of Masses said, also signed by the auditors, etc.

191. The regular visitation is to be made in accordance with the constitutions. At the end of the visitation, having conferred with the superior, the visitators put into writing the orders they consider it opportune to give. These take effect immediately and are in force until higher authority intervenes.

192. The acts and orders of the visitation are kept in a special file by the superior of the house. However, the visitators are to keep one copy, signed and sealed by them, which they are to take to the general chapter or the prior general, and thereafter deposit in the archives of the general council.

193. Within three months after the visitation, the superior of the house shall inform the general council of the execution of the orders given by the visitators.

Part II - Capitular Assemblies

Section I - The General Chapter

A) Functions and Members of the General Chapter

194. The supreme authority and power in the congregation are vested in its legislative body, the general chapter. The general chapter is the expression of each community's and each member's solicitude for the common good of the congregation.

195. The chief task of the general chapter is to ensure that the congregation remains faithful to the spirit of its origins, while fostering a healthy adaptation to the changed conditions of our times (cf. PC 2) and promoting the spiritual vitality of the congregation. The chapter shall also make laws and give directives for achieving these ends.

196. The prior general with his council shall convoke the general chapter every six years at the time and in the place which they shall designate.

197. The general chapter is composed of:

- a) the prior general
- b) the three general assistants
- c) the priors *sui iuris* and the prior administrators
- d) the two visitators (cf. article 187)
- e) the vicepriors of the Holy Hermitage and Monastery of Camaldoli and the Monastery of San Gregorio al Celio in Rome

f) the master of the general studentate (*chiericato*).

g) Every autonomous house has the right to send a delegate for the first six solemnly professed members, and another for every six, up to eighteen members. If the last unit of six reaches one half [i.e. a total of fifteen], it is counted as a whole unit.. Over eighteen members, a delegate is sent every twelve, and the last half-unit is counted as a whole.

If the number of delegates thus elected is inferior to the number of those who have the right to attend the general chapter in accordance with the constitutions, then there is to be elected from the members of the congregation a number sufficient to total the half plus one of the capitular assembly.

The at-large delegates are elected by universal suffrage from among all the solemnly professed who have both active and passive voice. In this election, special attention should be given to the brothers in those houses which have not been guaranteed the presence of one of their members in the general chapter.

The election procedure is determined by the prior general with his council.

h) The prior general has the faculty to invite other persons to join, without voting rights, in all or part of the general chapter; in extending this invitation, he should take into special account the competence of these persons, as well as the fact that some semidependent and dependent houses may not have delegates.

198. Through their delegates, the members of the autonomous communities contribute to, and actively take part in, the general chapter; it is for this reason that the delegates are elected by the conventual chapter.

The prior is under obligation to make it possible for the legitimately absent members to cast their vote in the election of the delegates. When the ballot is sent through the mail, every precaution must be taken to ensure that the vote remains secret and certain.

In accordance with article 54, it is the solemnly professed who have passive voice. The one who receives the largest number of votes is elected.

In case of a tie, lots are cast for the candidates who have received an equal number of votes; the one on whose name the lot falls is to be considered canonically elected (cf. Acts 1,23-26).

199. The prior general is the *de iure* president of the general chapter; the other chapter members hold precedence according to their office and the seniority of their profession. All enjoy collegial suffrage with equal authority and rights, in both the discussions and the elections.

200. Chapter members may not absent themselves without a legitimate cause, subject to the judgment of the chapter.

201. If it should happen that, a short time before the general chapter, an office whose holder is a chapter member becomes vacant, and if there is no urgent necessity to call an election, the one who legitimately succeeds to the vacant office shall take part in the chapter.

202. The priors must bring with them a summary of the administration of their respective houses, signed by the auditors designated by the conventual chapter, and clearly showing the financial balance of the preceding six years.

203. All the chapter members must be present at the beginning of the general chapter. However, the chapter is celebrated validly if no more than a third of the members are absent.

204. No one but chapter members may enter the chapter, unless summoned by the prior general, the assistants, the visitators, or by the chapter itself, or unless bound to do so by grave necessity, subject to the judgment of the chapter.

B) The Order of the Questions to be Discussed in Chapter

205. First of all, the chapter members proceed to elect the officers of the chapter.

a) The capitular scribe, a member of the chapter, who as soon as he is elected assumes the authority and office of notary public concerning the acts of the chapter. It is he who transcribes the minutes of the chapter's discussions and decisions, who takes note of, and answers, the letters addressed to the chapter, and who executes the official proclamation of the acts. If he needs one, the chapter may appoint him an assistant.

b) Three scrutineers, from among the chapter members (CJC 173).

c) The vicar capitular, not a member of chapter, who holds the office of prior in the community where the chapter is being held.

d) Three auditors from among the chapter members, whose task it is to audit the financial statements of each prior and of the general council and to present their audit to the chapter, making use of the report of the technical consultant (cf. article 176).

e) A committee of three members charged with examining the letters addressed to the general chapter and with determining the best way of communicating them to the assembly, after having informed the president.

f) The doorkeeper.

206. Upon the arrival of the chapter members at the venue of the chapter, sessions are held having the character of a general assembly, to which the prior general may invite all our solemnly and simply professed monks, the Camaldolese nuns, regular oblates, novices, and postulants (cf. article 197,h). He shall see to providing full documentation of the proceedings to those unable to attend.

The prior general addresses the general assembly on the state of the Camaldolese family, outlining the general situation in each of our houses. The assembly then splits up into study groups, to discuss the issues presented in the prior general's address. These discussions are summarized in the form of observations, questions, and proposals for submission to the chapter. The prior general then replies to the assembly.

The agenda of the chapter sessions is as follows:

- 1) execution of formal acts required of the chapter
- 2) completion of the opening address of the prior general, and the reports of the priors and the master of the general studentate; these reports in written form shall be in the hands of the chapter members
- 3) reading of the letters addressed to the chapter and of the observations, questions, and proposals submitted by the general assembly
- 4) reading of the decisions of the preceding general chapter and of the consulta, to see whether they have been put into effect and, if necessary, to confirm, modify, or repeal them
- 5) reading of the reports of the regular visitation made by the visitors, who may add oral explanations where they are needed
- 6) examination of the financial reports
- 7) discussion of proposals presented by the president or by one of the chapter members
- 8) election or confirmation of the prior general, election of the general assistants, of the two visitors (cf. article 187), and of the master of the general studentate.

207. When the reports of the visitations are read, the prior to whose community the report refers may offer his own explanations and justifications during the discussion which

follows the reading. If there is a particular reason for doing so (cf. article 205,e), the president may invite the prior to leave the room. If a question arises which demands an explanation, the president or another will inform the prior, so that he may express his own mind in the matter. The same procedure is followed when the discussion concerns one of the chapter members, even the president; in this case the first in order of dignity assumes the functions of president.

208. At the end of each session, the president summarizes the questions of greater importance or difficulty and proposes the agenda for the next session. During the discussions, the president is to set forth the questions one by one, seek the opinion of each of the chapter members, and lastly express his own opinion. All decisions, however, are to be made by secret ballot; the majority of the votes decides. If there is a tie, the president reopens the discussion and another vote is taken; if it is still a tie, the president decides. For elections, the procedure is that prescribed by article 223.

If the number of ballots is greater than the number of those voting, the vote is null (CJC 173,3).

209. Each chapter member shall have one vote, even if he holds two offices, each of which confers the right to take part in the general chapter (CJC 168). If someone is legitimately impeded from participating in the chapter, he may, by means of a letter addressed to the president, delegate another chapter member to vote in his stead.

210. Chapter members should express their opinion in few and sober words, avoiding anything that might offend charity or peace. Let them have in view only truth and justice, the glory of God and the good of the congregation.

211. Each member should take care not to reveal his vote. Furthermore, it is forbidden to reveal anything that could give rise to discord or scandal.

212. The “chapter decrees” have force of law as soon as they are promulgated.

C) Elections

213. Every election must be by secret ballot.

214. The votes are to be free, secret, certain, absolute, and determinate (CJC 172,1). If there are any canonically invalid votes, provided they are less than a third of the votes cast, this irregularity does not invalidate the election.

215. Whoever solicits favors or votes, directly or through others, in order to obtain an office, shall be punished by the chapter itself or, if the guilty party becomes known after the chapter, by the prior general.

216. In order to be elected to the office of prior general, one must have been solemnly professed in our congregation for ten years and be a priest (CJC 150; 623).

217. In choosing the prior general and the other general officers, the chapter is to consider not only the qualifications required by canon law, but also the candidates' special knowledge, both theoretical and practical, of the spirit of our congregation. Since it will be their duty to foster both the cenobitical and the eremitical life, it is fitting above all that they have a praiseworthy experience of the latter (cf. article 3).

218. Before proceeding with the elections, the president, in the name of the chapter, shall declare expired the terms of office of the general assistants, the two visitators (cf. article 187), and the master of the general studentate, whether those concerned are present or absent. He shall then ask to be absolved of his own office.

219. In electing the prior general and the other general officers, only chapter members have active voice; passive voice is

enjoyed by all members of the congregation capable of the offices and not legitimately impeded.

220. The order of elections is given in these constitutions (cf. Article 206).

221. The prior general is elected for an indeterminate period of time; however, he shall not continue in office if he is not confirmed by the general chapter at the end of every six years. The vote for or against confirmation is made by secret ballot; the absolute majority of the votes is required. If he is not confirmed, the chapter proceeds to elect a new prior general in accordance with article 223. The procedures during this session follow those given in article 42,3.

222. The scrutineers are to take an oath that they will fulfill their office faithfully and not reveal anything that is said or done during the scrutiny of the ballots. Then they shall proceed to their assigned place and count the votes.

223. The voting procedure is as follows: on the first two ballots a two-thirds majority is required for election. If no one is elected on the second ballot, a third vote is taken, in which an absolute majority is sufficient. If there is still no one elected, a fourth vote is taken, in which passive voice is had only by the two candidates who, on the previous ballot, had the largest number of votes. In the case of a tie, lots are drawn.

224. If, for motives of conscience, the one elected chooses not to accept the office, the chapter members shall not insist on his doing so.

225. After the election and the acceptance on the part of the one elected, the president is to make the following proclamation in his own name and that of the other chapter members:

“I NN, in my own name and in the name of the other members of chapter, declare canonically elected Father/Brother NN as”

The same shall be done for the other elections.

The first of the members of chapter is to proclaim the confirmation or new election of the prior general) who, if newly elected, then makes his profession of faith (CJC 833,8).

226. At the end of the chapter, the acts are to be reviewed. The scribe reads them in the presence of all the chapter members, noting in particular whatever must remain secret. Then he transcribes the acts in the register; the scribe shall write them himself, or if another does so, he is to sign them. On the appointed day the president promulgates the acts according to the rite and form prescribed by the ceremonial.

227. After the promulgation of the acts, the prior general declares the chapter concluded and orders the chapter members to return to their communities. The priors, or if one is absent, a delegate, are to take with them a copy, signed by the scribe, of the acts and decrees of the chapter. After the prior has made them known to his community, he is to place them in the proper file.

Part II - Section II

The Consulta

228. The task of the consulta is to examine the state of the congregation, to discuss current problems, and, if necessary, to make appropriate decisions which shall have effect until the next general chapter. The general chapter shall confirm, modify, or abrogate them.

229. The consulta meets three years after the general chapter in the place appointed by the prior general with his council. The agenda is the same as that of the general chapter, excluding the elections.

230. Participants are those who attend the general chapter by right of office and the delegates, elected as prescribed for the general chapter.

Part II - Section III

Election of General Superiors and Officers Outside the General Chapter

231. If for any reason an office whose incumbent is elected by the general chapter becomes vacant during the six years following the chapter, the procedure is as follows:

1) For the election of the prior general, article 180 and what is prescribed in article 232,6 are observed.

2) For the election of the assistants, the prior general convokes the visitators and the priors of the autonomous houses.

3) For the election of the visitators (article 187), the prior general convokes the three assistants and the first two priors in order of dignity.

4) For the election of the master of the general studentate, the prior general convokes the assistants and the visitators. [the extraordinary general council].

5) In the above elections, the procedure is in accordance with articles 216-217; 223.

Part II - Section IV

Removal of General Superiors and Officers Outside the General Chapter

232. Outside the general chapter, superiors may be removed by administrative process, for the following motives:

1) Grave and external violation of divine and ecclesiastical precepts, of the Rule and of the constitutions, formal disobedience, grave and contumacious disregard for discipline, scandal and peril of souls, or the manifest inability to exercise one's office.

Having diligently examined the matter, the electors decide by secret ballot and an absolute majority of the votes.

2) For the removal of an assistant, the prior general convokes the other assistant, the two visitators, and the first

prior in order of dignity. If it is a question of both assistants, he convokes the visitators and the first two priors in order of dignity.

3) For the removal of the prior of an autonomous house, as in article

189, the prior general convokes the three assistants and the two visitators [the extraordinary general council].

4) For the removal of a visitator, the prior general convokes the assistants, the other visitator, and the first prior in order of dignity. If it is a question of both visitators, he convokes the assistants and the first two priors in order of dignity.

5) For the removal of the master of the general studentate, the prior general convokes the extraordinary general council.

6) If it is necessary to remove the prior general: the assistants meet with the visitators and the first prior in order of dignity; if one of the above is missing, he is substituted by the next in order of office or seniority. At their meeting they diligently gather information on the charges against the prior general and the reasons for which it seems necessary to remove him from office. Having pondered this well, they compose a letter to the Holy See, which they all sign and send together with the pertinent documentation. When the reply comes, if it is in favor of removal, the first assistant convokes the general chapter within three months, in accordance with article 180, for the election of the new prior general.

Appendix

The Juridical Ordering of the Holy Hermitage, the Monastery of Camaldoli, and the Monastery of San Gregorio al Celio, Rome

233. The prior general is also the local prior of the Holy Hermitage, the Monastery of Camaldoli, and the Monastery of San Gregorio al Celio, which together form one community both juridically and spiritually.

For this reason, the members who live in the Monastery of Camaldoli and the Monastery of San Gregorio al Celio have a special bond with the Holy Hermitage; hence it is fitting that they spend periods of time there with the prior general's permission, or that they transfer there indefinitely.

The prior general is to see that all three houses strictly observe the monastic spirit and that the brothers in each house practice fraternal charity toward those in the others.

234. In choosing to dwell in one of the three houses, a brother must be motivated by authentic interior openness. Permanent residence is to be decided by personal responsibility with the agreement of the prior.

In order to safeguard the quiet of the Holy Hermitage, the Monastery of Camaldoli, and the Monastery of San Gregorio al Celio, the brothers should avoid going back and forth among the houses, unless obedience requires that they do so.

235. For the practical exercise of his office, the prior general is assisted by three vicepriors. These are elected by a collegial vote of the monks who reside, respectively, in the Holy Hermitage, the Monastery of Camaldoli, or the Monastery of San Gregorio al Celio. Their elections are confirmed by the prior general.

If a solemnly professed monk foresees that he will be absent from the community for more than three years, he is invited to consider whether it is appropriate for him not to take part in the election of the viceprior.

The vicepriors remain in office as long as the prior general exercises his mandate, without prejudice to article 39.

236. It is the vicepriors who organize and promote the internal life of their communities, in agreement with the prior general. In consideration of their office, they take part in the general chapter (cf. article 197,e).

237. For the conventual chapters regarding ordinary questions respectively of the Holy Hermitage, the Monastery of

Camaldoli, and the Monastery of San Gregorio al Celio, the prior general or the viceprior as his delegate convokes the chapter members resident in the house.

For ordinary questions regarding all three houses and for extraordinary questions regarding one of the houses, the prior general convokes the chapter members of the entire community.

238. The monastic initiation of candidates shall make opportune use of the one or the other house as the prior general may see fit, having consulted his formation team. In every case, attention shall be given to providing the candidate sufficient time to become better acquainted with the Holy Hermitage and the Monastery of Camaldoli, which are the source and origin of the whole family of Camaldoli, as well as of the Camaldolese Congregation.

239. If the community of Camaldoli has the right to send several delegates to the general chapter — in accordance with article 197,g — these are elected by all the solemnly professed. One of them, however, is to be (chosen from among the monks resident at the Holy Hermitage and another among those resident in the Monastery of Camaldoli. If there are more delegates, the third is to be elected from the members of the community of Camaldoli resident in the Monastery of San Gregorio al Celio or in semidependent and dependent houses, and the others from among all the members of the community.

240. The Holy Hermitage of Camaldoli, head and mother of the whole congregation, holds first place among all the houses; after Camaldoli come the other hermitages and monasteries, in the order of their age or the date of their foundation.

CHAPTER NINE

THE NORMATIVE VALUE OF THE CONSTITUTIONS AND THE DECLARATIONS

241. These constitutions, approved by the Apostolic See, and the declarations, which refer to the text of the constitutions, are intended as an interpretation of the demands of following Christ in the spirit of the Rule of Saint Benedict and of the example of Saint Romuald.

242. The text of the constitutions may be modified only with the consent of the Apostolic See, following a two-thirds vote of the general chapter.

The Apostolic See is the authentic interpreter of the constitutions.

243. It is the general chapter which modifies the text of the declarations. The prior has the faculty, in particular cases and *ad tempus*, to dispense from disciplinary norms of the constitutions.

244. The Camaldolese monks are committed to observing the constitutions and the declarations in a spirit of faith, as seen in the light of the word of God, for this is what their profession of religious vows demands of them.

