

# Scripture Rule / A Way of Life

The Brothers and Sisters of Charity



At Little Portion Hermitage

Little Portion Hermitage  
350 CR 248 Berryville, AR 72616



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## **Brothers and Sisters of Charity - History**

- 1971 Original Vision
- 1977 John Michael Talbot moves to Alverna,  
Indiana
- 1978 Charity Rule
- 1978 John Michael Talbot joins Secular Franciscan  
Order
- 1978 John Michael Talbot's hermitage
- 1979 Charity Ministry
- 1979 Little Portion Rule
- 1980 Secular Franciscan Order Approval
- 1983 Little Portion Hermitage blessed by Bishop  
Andrew McDonald of Little Rock and Bishop  
Bernard Law of Springfield at Eureka Springs
- 1985 First Little Portion Associates Conference at  
Alverna
- 1985 Little Portion Hermitage Rule
- 1987-88 Reform, Return to Charity in Name and to  
the Original Integrated Vision
- 1987 Associate Program Dissolves
- 1988 Domestic Expression Begins
- 1988 First Monastic Novices
- 1989 Establishment of Domestic Regional Ministers
- 1989 First Domestic Novices

- 1989 First Monastic Professions
- 1989 Submission of Brothers & Sisters of Charity  
Constitution
- 1990 First Domestic Leadership Conference
- 1990 Establishment of Cell Groups
- 1990 First Domestic Professions
- 1990 Approval of General Constitution of the  
Brothers & Sisters of Charity as a Private  
Association of the Faithful
- 1992 Establishment of Troubadour For The Lord
- 1992 First Monastic Permanent Professions
- 1993 First Domestic Permanent Professions
- 1996 Confirmation of Establishment as a Public  
Association of the Faithful
- 1996 Establishment of Nicaraguan Mission
- 1996 Establishment of the Catholic Association of  
Musicians
- 2002 Blessing of the Renovated Portiuncula Chapel
- 2008 Little Portion Fire (April 29)
- 2010 Dedication of New Chapel & Common Center  
(April 10)

**A SCRIPTURE RULE  
FOR THE  
BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF CHARITY  
AT  
LITTLE PORTION HERMITAGE**

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Little Portion Hermitage  
350 C R 248  
Berryville, AR 72616  
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## **I The Rule**

Gal. 6:14-15

The Rule of the brothers and sisters is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. We should be troubled about nothing except this all encompassing rule. All that matters is that one be created anew.

## **II The Call**

Mt. 19:21

If you seek perfection, go sell all your possessions, and give to the poor. You will then have treasure in heaven. After that come back and follow Jesus.

Lk. 9:23

Whoever wishes to be His follower must deny his very self, take up his cross each day, and follow in Jesus' footsteps.

Mt. 19:29

Moreover, everyone who has given up home, brothers or sisters, father or mother, wife or children or property for my sake will receive many times as much and inherit everlasting life.

Lk. 5:8-11

With Peter, we might well be sinful men, but do not be afraid. From now on you will be fishers of men. Let us leave everything and become His followers.

## **III The Life**

Lk. 9:1-6

Jesus calls us together and sends us forth to proclaim the reign of God and to heal the afflicted. Take nothing for your journey, neither walking staff nor traveling bag; no bread, no money. No one is to have two coats. Stay in whatever house you enter and proceed from there. When people will not receive you, leave that town and shake its dust from your feet as a testimony against them. Set out from village to village, spreading the good news everywhere and curing diseases.

## **IV The Community**

- Lk. 8:21                      My brothers are those who hear the word of God and act upon it ...
- Lk. 14:21                    Go out quickly to the highways and byways of the town and bring in the poor and the crippled, the lame and the blind ...
- 1 Cor. 1:26                   Not many of you are wise, as men account wisdom; not many are influential; and surely not many are well born.
- Mk. 10:29-30                I give you my word, there is no one who has given up home, brothers or sisters, mother or father, children or property for me and for the Gospel who will not receive in this present age a hundred times as many homes, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, children and property - and persecution besides - and in the age to come, everlasting life.

## **V Communal Life**

- Acts 4:32                    Let the community be of one heart and one mind. Never claim anything as your own, rather, hold everything in common.
- Acts 2:42-47                We devote ourselves to the apostles' instruction and the communal life, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Let a reverent fear overtake us all, for many signs and wonders are performed in our midst. We share all things in common, selling our property and goods, and dividing everything on the basis of each one's need. We go to the temple area together every day, while in our homes we break bread. With exultant and sincere hearts we take our meals in common, praising God and winning the approval of all the people. Day by day the Lord adds to our number those who are being saved.
- 1 Cor. 12:4-7                There are different gifts but the same Spirit. There are different ministries but the same Lord. There are different works but the same



God who accomplishes all of them in everyone. To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

I Cor. 12:12

The body is one and has many members. But all the members, many though they are, are one body. And so it is with Christ.

I Cor. 12:27-31

You, then are the body of Christ. Everyone of you is a member of it. Furthermore, God has set up in the community first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracle workers, healers, assistants, administrators, and those who speak in tongues. Set your hearts on the greater gifts.

I Cor. 13:1-13

If I speak with human tongues and angelic as well, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and, with full knowledge, comprehend all mysteries; if I have faith great enough to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give everything I have to feed the poor and hand over my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. Love is not jealous, it does not put on airs, it is not snobbish. Love is never rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not prone to anger, neither does it brood over injuries. Love does not rejoice in what is wrong, but rejoices with the truth. There is no limit to love's forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure. Love never fails. Prophecies will cease, tongues will be silent, knowledge will pass away ... There are in the end three things that last: faith, hope and love. And the greatest of these is love.

Rom. 12:9-21

Your love must be sincere. Detest what is evil. Cling to what is good. Love one another with the affection of brothers. Anticipate each other in showing respect. Do not grow slack but be fervent in spirit. He whom you serve is the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient under trial, persevere in prayer. Look on the needs of the saints as your own. Be generous in

offering hospitality. Bless your persecutors, bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Have the same attitude towards all. Put away ambitious thoughts and associate with those who are lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. Never repay injury with injury. See that your conduct is honorable in the eyes of all. If possible, live peaceably with everyone. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves. Leave that to God's wrath. If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good.

Col. 3:12-17

Because you are God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another. Forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you. Over all these virtues put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect. Christ's peace must reign in your hearts, since as members of the one body you have been called to that peace. Dedicate yourselves to thankfulness. Let the word of Christ, rich as it is, dwell in you. In wisdom made perfect instruct and admonish one another. Sing gratefully to God from your hearts in psalms, hymns and inspired songs. Whatever you do, whether in speech or in action, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. Give thanks to God the Father through Him.

Phil. 2:1-4

In the name of the encouragement you owe me in Christ, in the name of the solace that love can give, of fellowship in spirit, compassion and pity, I beg you, make my joy complete in your unanimity possessing the one love, united in spirit and ideals. Never act out of rivalry or conceit. Rather, let all parties think humbly of others as superior to themselves, each of you looking to other's interests rather than to his own.

Eph. 4:1-6

I plead with you, then, as a prisoner for the

Lord, to live a life worthy of the calling you have received, with perfect humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another lovingly. Make every effort to preserve the unity which has the Spirit as its origin, and peace as its binding force. There is but one body and one Spirit, just as there is but one hope given all of you by your call. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is over all, and works through all, and is in all.

## **VI Prayer**

- Mt. 6:5-9                      Whenever you pray, go to your room, close your door, and pray to your Father in private. In your prayer, do not rattle on like pagans. This is how you are to pray: "Our Father ..."
- Mt. 7:7                         Ask, and you will receive. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you.
- Mk 11:24                      If you are ready to believe that you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer, it shall be done for you.
- Mk. 11:25                      When you stand to pray, forgive anyone against whom you have a grievance so that your heavenly Father may in turn forgive you.
- Mt. 5:23-24                    If you bring your gift to the altar and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift at the altar, go first to be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.
- Mk 1:35                         Very early in the morning, while it is still dark, get up, leave the house and go to a solitary place and pray...
- Mk. 6:47                        When evening comes, be alone...
- Lk. 6:12                        Go out into the hills to pray, and spend the night praying to God...
- Lk. 5:16                        Often withdraw to lonely places and pray.

Lk. 22:41	When you pray, stand, kneel, or fall with your faces to the ground.
1 Tim 2:8	In every place let us all offer prayers with blameless hands held aloft.
1 Thes. 5:16-20	Rejoice always, never cease praying, render constant thanks. Do not stifle the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies.
1 Cor. 14:39-40	Do not forbid those who speak in tongues.
Eph. 6:18	Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.
Rom. 8:26-27	We do not know what we ought to pray for. But the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings that cannot be expressed with words.
Lk. 11:13	The heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask.
Mt. 18:19-20	If two of you join your voices on earth to pray for anything whatsoever, it shall be granted you by my Father in Heaven. Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in your midst.
Acts 1:14	Join together to devote yourselves to constant prayer...
Jas. 2:1-4	Sit as equals in the assembly...
Acts 2:1	Gather together in one place... Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Express yourselves in tongues and make bold proclamations as the Spirit prompts you.
Eph. 5:18-20	Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms, hymns and inspired songs. Sing praise to the Lord with all your hearts. Give thanks to God the Father always and for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
1 Cor. 11:20-31	When you assemble is it not to eat the Lord's

Supper? I received from the Lord what I handed on to you, namely, that the Lord Jesus, on the night in which he was betrayed, took bread and after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way after the supper he took the cup saying, "This is the new covenant in my blood. Whenever you drink of this cup, do it in remembrance of me." Every time that you eat this bread and drink of this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes! This means that whoever eats the bread or drinks of the cup of the Lord unworthily sins against the body and blood of the Lord. A man should examine himself first. Only then should he eat of this bread and drink of this cup. He who eats and drinks without recognizing the body eats and drinks a judgment of himself. This is why many among you are sick and infirm, and why so many are dying. If we were to examine ourselves, we would not be falling under judgment in this way.

Jas. 5:14-16

Ask for the leaders of the community. They in turn are to pray over those who are ill, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. This prayer uttered in faith will reclaim the one who is ill, and the Lord will restore him to health. If he has committed any sins, forgiveness will be his. Hence, declare your sins to one another, and pray for one another that you may find healing.

Heb. 10:25

We should not absent ourselves from the assembly, as some do, but encourage one another, and this all the more because you see that The Day draws near.

## **VII Study**

Lk. 24:27, 44-46

Beginning then with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus interprets for us every passage of scripture which refers to Him. Recall the words Jesus spoke when he was on this earth. Everything written about him in the law of Moses and prophets and psalms

had to be fulfilled. He opens our minds to the understanding of scripture. It was written that the Messiah must suffer and rise from the dead on the third day.

Jn. 14:16-17

Jesus will ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete to be with you always, the Spirit of truth.

Jn. 16:13-14

When he comes, he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but will speak only what he hears, and will announce to you the things to come. In doing this, he will give glory to Jesus, because he will have received from Jesus what he will announce to you.

Acts 2:42

We devote ourselves to the apostle's instruction.

Mt. 28:19-20

We are sent to make disciples of all the nations, teaching them to carry out everything Jesus commanded.

2 Tim. 3:10-17

We must follow closely the teaching and conduct of the apostles. We must remain faithful to what we have learned and believed, because we know who our teachers were. Likewise, we should know the sacred scriptures, the source of the wisdom which through faith in Jesus Christ leads to salvation. All scripture is inspired of God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction and training in holiness so that the man of God may be fully competent and equipped for every good work.

Heb 4:12

God's word is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword. It penetrates and divides soul and spirit, joint and marrow. It judges the reflections of the heart.

2 Pt. 1:20-21

There is no prophecy contained in scripture which is a personal interpretation. Prophecy has never been put forward by man's willing it. It is rather that men impelled by the Holy Spirit have spoken under God's influence.

Rom. 1:19-20 Likewise, since the creation of the world, invisible realities, God's eternal power and divinity have become visible, recognized through the things he has made. Whatever can be known about God is clear to us. He himself has made it so.

Heb. 12: 1-2 Let us consider the faith of the saints. Since we for our part are surrounded by this cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every encumbrance of sin which clings to us and persevere in running the race which lies ahead. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who inspires and perfects our faith.

2 Tim. 2:15 Let us study to show ourselves approved.

Ps. 1:2 Let us meditate on the law of the Lord day and night.

### **VIII Penance**

Mt. 4:17 Reform your lives! The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Mt. 5:22-24 Everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; and any man who uses abusive language toward his brother shall be answerable to the council, and if he holds him in contempt, he risks the fires of Gehenna. Be reconciled to your brother.

Mt. 5:28-30 Anyone who looks lustfully at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his thoughts. If your right eye is your trouble, gouge it out and throw it away! If your right hand is your trouble, cut it off and throw it away! Better to lose part of your body than to have it all cast into Gehenna.

Mt. 5:34-37 Do not swear at all. Say yes when you mean yes and no when you mean no. Anything beyond that is from the evil one.

Mt. 5:39-48 Offer no resistance to injury. When a person strikes you on the right cheek, turn and offer the other. If anyone wants to go to law over

- your shirt, hand him your coat as well. Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him two miles.
- Lk. 6:30-31      Give to the man who begs from you. When a man takes what is yours, do not demand it back.
- Mt. 5:44      Love your enemies, pray for your persecutors.
- Lk. 6:35-38      Love your enemy and do good for him. Lend without expecting repayment. Be compassionate as your heavenly Father is compassionate. Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn and you will not be condemned. Pardon, and you shall be pardoned. Give, and it will be given to you.
- Lk. 7:36-50      We are like the woman known to be a sinner, who went to Jesus while he was dining in a Pharisee's home. We should bring in a vase of perfumed oil and kneel behind him at his feet. We should wipe them with our hair, kissing them and perfuming them with oil. That is why our many sins are forgiven, because of our great love. Little is forgiven whose love is small.
- Jn. 8:1-11      Even though we are caught in adultery, Jesus says, "I do not condemn you. Go and sin no more."
- Lk. 18:9-14      Let us go to the temple to pray as the tax collector, rather than the Pharisee. The tax collector kept his distance, not even daring to raise his eyes to heaven. All he did was beat his breast and say, "Oh God, be merciful to me, a sinner." This man went home justified. For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, while he who humbles himself shall be exalted.
- Lk. 5:8-11      If we cry out only "Leave me, Lord. For I am a sinful man", Jesus will say to us, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will be fishers of men." With that we must bring the boats of our secular lifestyle to land, leaving



everything to become his followers.

Rom. 12:1-2

And now, brothers, I beg you, through the mercy of God to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may judge what is God's will, what is good, pleasing and perfect.

Rom. 13:11-14

It is now the hour for you to wake from sleep, for our salvation is closer than when we first accepted the faith. The night is far spent. The day draws near. Let us cast off the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us live honorable as in daylight, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual excess and lust, not in quarreling and jealousy. Rather, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.

2 Tim. 1:6

Fan into a full flame the gift you have received.

I Cor. 3:10-13

Fire will test the quality of each man's work. Everyone must be careful how he builds. If different ones build with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay or straw, the work of each will be made clear.

1 Pt. 2:1-5

So strip away everything vicious, everything deceitful; pretenses, jealousies and disparaging remarks of any kind. Come to him, a living stone, rejected by men, but approved nonetheless, and precious in God's eyes. You too are living stones, built as an edifice of spirit into a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Col. 3:1-10

Since you have been raised up in company with Jesus Christ, set your heart on what pertains to higher realms where Christ is seated at God's right hand. Be intent on things above, rather than on things of earth. After all, you have died! Your life is hidden

now with Christ in God. Put to death whatever in your nature is rooted in earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desires and that lust which is idolatry. These are sins which provoke God's wrath. You must put all that aside now; all anger and quick temper, malice and insults, foul language. Stop lying to one another. What you have done is put aside your old self with its past deeds, and put on the new man, one who grows in knowledge as he is formed anew in the image of his Creator.

Eph. 4:22-31

You must lay aside your former way of life and the old self which deteriorates through illusion and desire, and acquire a fresh, spiritual way of thinking. You must put on the new man created in God's image, whose justice and holiness are born of truth. Put an end to lying, let everyone speak the truth to his neighbor, for we are members of one another. If you are angry, let it be without sin. The sun must not go down on your wrath. Do not give the devil a chance to work on you. The man who has been stealing must steal no longer; rather, let him work with his hands at honest labor so that he will have something to share with those in need. Never let evil talk pass your lips. Say only the good things men need to hear, things that will really help them. Do nothing to sadden the Holy Spirit. Get rid of all bitterness, all passion and anger, harsh words, slander and malice of every kind.

Eph. 5:3-7

As for lewd conduct or promiscuousness or lust of any sort, let them not even be mentioned among you. Your holiness forbids this. Nor should there be any obscene, silly or suggestive talk. All that is out of place. Instead, give thanks! Make no mistake about this: no fornicator, no unclean or lustful person - in effect, an idolater - has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with worthless arguments. These are sins which bring down God's wrath on the disobedient. Therefore have nothing to do with them.

Eph. 5:15-18                      Keep careful watch over your conduct. Do not act like fools, but like thoughtful men. Make the most of the present opportunity, for these are evil days. Do not continue in ignorance but try to discern the will of the Lord. Avoid getting drunk on wine that leads to debauchery. Be filled with the Holy Spirit.

1 Jn. 2:1-2                        My little ones, I am writing this to keep you from sin. But if anyone should sin, we have in the presence of the Father, Jesus Christ, an intercessor who is just. He is an offering for our sins.

1 Jn. 1:9                         If we acknowledge our sins, he who is just can be trusted to forgive our sins.

Jas. 5:16                         Hence, confess your sins to one another.

Lk. 15:7                         There will be more joy in heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need to repent.

### **IX Poverty**

Lk. 18:28-30                      We have left all we own to become Jesus' followers. There is no one who has left home or wife or brothers and sisters, parents or family for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive a plentiful return in this age and life everlasting in the age to come.

I Cor. 7:29-31                    I tell you solemnly, the time is short. From now on, those with wives should live as though they had none. Those who weep should live as though they were not weeping; and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing. Buyers should conduct themselves as though they owned nothing, and those who make use of the world as though they were not using it, for the world as we know it is passing away.

2 Cor. 8:9-15                    You are well acquainted with the favor shown you by our Lord Jesus Christ, how for your sake he made himself poor though he was

rich, so that you might become rich by his poverty. I am about to give you some advice on this matter of rich and poor: the relief of others ought not to impoverish you; there should be a certain equality. Your plenty at the present time should supply their need, so that their surplus may one day supply your need, with equality as the result. It is written, "He who gathered much had no excess, and he who gathered little had no lack."

- Lk. 14:27                      Anyone who does not take up his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.
- Lk. 14:33                      None of you can be my disciple if he does not renounce all his possessions.
- Lk. 16:13                      You cannot give yourselves to God and to money.
- Lk. 12:22-31                      I warn you then, do not worry about your livelihood, what you are to eat or drink or use for clothing. Look at the birds of the air. They do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. As for clothes, why be concerned? Learn a lesson from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work, they do not spin. Yet I assure you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was arrayed like one of these. Stop worrying then over questions like, what are we to eat or what are we to drink or what are we to wear? The unbelievers are always running after these things. Your heavenly Father knows all that you need. Seek first His kingship over you, His way of holiness.
- Phil. 3:7-8                      Those things I used to consider as gain I have now reappraised as loss in the light of Christ. For his sake I have forfeited everything. I have accounted all else as rubbish so that Christ may be my wealth.
- I Cor. 4:9, 13                      God has put us at the end of the line. We have become the world's refuse, the scum of all; that is the present state of affairs.

Acts 4:32, 34-35

None of us can claim anything as our own, rather, everything is held in common. Nor is there anyone needy among us, for all who own houses or property sell them and donate the proceeds and lay them at the feet of the apostles to be distributed to everyone according to each one's need.

### **X Chastity**

Mt. 5:27-28

You have heard the commandment, you shall not commit adultery. What I say to you is: anyone who looks lustfully at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his thought.

Mt. 19:12, 29

Some men have freely renounced sex for the sake of God's reign. Let him accept this teaching who can. Everyone who has given up home, wife or children or property for my sake will receive many times as much and inherit everlasting life.

Mt. 20:16

Many who are first shall come last, and the last shall come first.

I Cor. 7:17-27

Each one of you should lead the life the Lord has assigned him, continuing as he was when the Lord called him. Are you bound to a wife? Then do not seek your freedom. Are you free of a wife? Then do not go in search of one.

1 Cor. 7:32-35

I should like you to be free of all worries. The unmarried man is busy with the Lord's affairs, concerned with pleasing the Lord. But the married man is busy with this world's demands and occupied with pleasing his wife. This means he is divided. I am going into this for your own good. I have no desire to place restrictions on you. To sum up: the man who marries acts fittingly; the one who does not will do better.

Heb. 13:4

Let marriage be honored in every way and the marriage bed be kept undefiled, for God will judge fornicators and adulterers.

## **XI Obedience**

- 1 Sam. 15:22 Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice.
- Mt. 12:50 Jesus says, "If anyone loves me he will obey my teaching. Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is brother and sister and mother to me.
- Jn. 15:10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love."
- Heb. 5:8-9 Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered, and when perfected, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.
- 1 Pt. 5:5 You younger men must be obedient to your elders.
- Rm. 13:1-5 Let everyone obey the authorities that are over him, for there is no authority except from God, and all authority that exists is established by God. As a consequence, the man who opposes authority rebels against the ordinance of God. You must obey them not only to escape punishment, but also for conscience's sake.
- Heb. 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over you as men who must render an account. So act so that they may fulfill their task with joy, not with sorrow, for that would be harmful to you.
- Mt. 23:1-3 Even in the case where a leader is a scribe or a Pharisee, Jesus says, "The scribes and the Pharisees have succeeded Moses as teachers. Therefore, do everything and observe everything they tell you, but do not follow their example."

## **XII The Leader**

- Lk. 14:8-11 When you have been invited, go and sit in the

lowest place, so that when Jesus approaches, he will say, "My friend, come up higher." This will win you esteem from your brothers. For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted.

Mt. 18:3-5

Unless you change and become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of God. Whoever makes himself lowly, becoming like a child, is of greatest importance in the community.

Mt. 10:1

Jesus summons his apostles and gives them authority.

Acts 1:21

It is entirely fitting that one who was of our company from the beginning be named... Oh Lord, make known to us which of those you choose for apostolic ministry.

Mt. 20:25-26

Earthly kings lord it over their people. It cannot be that way with you. Let the greater among you be as the junior, the leader as the servant.

Acts 14:23

In each community, those with apostolic authority install elders and, with prayer and fasting, commend them to the Lord in whom they put their faith.

Eph. 4:11-12

It is he who gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers in roles of service for the faithful to build up the body of Christ.

1 Pt. 5:1-4

To the elders: God's flock is in your midst. Give it a shepherd's care. Watch over it willingly as God would have you do, not under constraints, and not for shameful profit either, but generously. Be examples to the flock, not lording it over those assigned to you, so that when the chief shepherd appears, you will win for yourselves the unfading crown of glory.

1 Tim. 3:2-7

An elder must be irreproachable, of even temper, self-controlled, modest and

hospitable. He should be a good teacher. He must not be addicted to drink. He ought not be contentious, but rather, gentle, a man of peace. Nor can he be someone who loves money. He must be a good manager of his own affairs, for if a man does not know how to manage his own affairs, how can he take care of the family of God? He should not be a new convert, lest he become conceited and thus incur the punishment once meted out to the devil. He must also be well thought of outside the community, to ensure that he does not fall into disgrace and the devil's trap.

### **XIII Correction**

- Mt. 18:15-17      If your brother should commit some wrong against you, go and point out his fault, but keep it between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. If he does not listen, summon another, so that every case may stand on the word of two or three witnesses. If he ignores even the community, then treat him as you would an outsider.
- Lk. 17:3-4        If your brother does wrong, correct him. If he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times a day, and seven times turns back and says "I am sorry," forgive him.
- 1 Cor. 5:11-13    But do not associate with anyone who bears the title 'brother' if he is immoral, covetous, an idolater, an abusive person, a drunkard or a thief. Is it not those inside the community you must judge? God will judge others. Expel the wicked man from your midst.
- 2 Cor. 2:6-8      Yet, the punishment inflicted by the majority on such a one is enough. You should later relent and support him so that he may not be crushed by too great a weight of sorrow. Reaffirm your love for him.
- Titus 3:10        Warn a heretic or a derisive member once and then a second time; after that, have nothing to do with him.



#### **XIV Candidates**

- Jn. 1:35-39                      When Jesus noticed the first disciples following him, he asked them, "What are you looking for?" They said, "Teacher, where do you stay?" "Come and see," he answered. So they went to see where he was lodged, and stayed with him that day.
- Jn. 6:60-70                      After hearing his words, many of his disciples remarked, "This sort of talk is hard to endure! How can anyone take it seriously?" From this time on, many of his disciples broke away and would not remain in his company any longer. Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to leave me, too?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Jesus replied, "Did I not choose the twelve of you myself? Yet one of you is a devil."
- Mt. 22:9-14                      You must go out into the byroads and invite to the wedding anyone you come upon. Yet the invited are many, the elect are few. Many are called, few are chosen.
- 1 Tim. 3:8-10                      Candidates must be serious, straightforward and truthful. They may not overindulge in drink or give in to greed. They must hold fast to the divinely revealed faith with a clear conscience. They should be put on probation first. Then, if there is nothing against them, they may be accepted as members.

#### **XV Commitment**

- Jn. 3:22                          Jesus and his disciples came into Judean territory, and he spent time with them baptizing.
- Jn. 4:1-2                          (In fact, however, it was not Jesus himself who baptized, but his disciples.)
- Acts 2:41                          Those who accepted the disciples' message were baptized.
- Acts 10:47                          What can stop these people who have

received the Holy Spirit from being baptized?

Rom. 6:3-4, 8-11

All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have clothed ourselves with him. Are you not aware that we who were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death? Through baptism into his death, we were buried with him, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life. If we have died with Christ, we believe that we are also to live with him. In the same way, you must consider yourselves dead to sin, but alive for God in Christ Jesus.

Col. 3:1-3

Set your heart on what pertains to higher realms. Be intent on things above rather than on things of earth. After all, you have died!

Phil. 1:21

For us, life means Christ.

2 Cor. 5:6-9

We know that while we dwell in the body we are away from the Lord. We would much rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. This being so, we make it our aim to please him whether we are with him or away from him.

2 Cor. 5:17

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old order has passed away. Now, all is new!

Lk. 1:15-17, 31-32

Like John the Baptist and Jesus, we have been set apart to be filled with the Spirit from our mother's womb.

1 Sam. 1:22

With Samuel we will appear before the Lord to remain in the Lord's service forever. We are offered with a perpetual vow.

### **XVI Food**

Lk. 10:7-9

Stay in a house eating and drinking what they have, for the laborer is worth his wage. Eat whatever they set before you and cure the sick there.

Acts 10:9-15

Peter went up to the roof to pray. He became

hungry and asked for some food, and while it was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw the sky open and an object come down that looked like a big canvas. Inside it were all the earth's four-legged creatures and reptiles and birds of the sky. A voice said to him, "Get up, Peter! Slaughter, then eat." He answered, "Sir, it is unthinkable! I have never eaten anything unclean or impure in my life." The voice was heard a second time, "What God has purified you are not to call unclean."

Rom. 14:14-19

I know with certainty on the authority of the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself. It is only when a man thinks something unclean that it becomes so for him. You must not let the food you eat bring to ruin him for whom Christ died. The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating or drinking, but of justice, peace and the joy given by the Holy Spirit. Let us then, make it our aim to work for peace and to strengthen one another.

1 Cor. 9:19-22

Although we are not bound to anyone, we make ourselves the slaves of all so as to win as many as possible. We become a Jew to the Jews in order to win the Jews. To those bound to the law we become like those who are bound, that we might win those bound by the law. We have made ourselves all things to all men in order to save at least some of them.

1 Tim. 4:4-5

Everything God created is good. Nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by God's word and prayer.

Lk. 5:33-35

The disciples do not seem to fast. On the contrary, they eat and drink freely. Can you make guests of the groom fast while the groom is still with them? But when the days come that the groom is removed from their midst, they will surely fast in those days.

Mt. 6:16-18

When you fast, see to it that you groom your hair and wash your face. In that way no one can see that you are fasting, but your Father,

who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.

Mt. 4:1-2

We should be led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. During that time we fast for forty days and forty nights.

### **XVII Clothing**

Mk. 6:8-9

Take nothing for your journey but a walking stick - no food, no traveling bag, not a coin in the purses in your belts. You are, however, to wear sandals. Do not bring a second tunic.

Lk. 22:35

When I sent you on a mission without purse or traveling bag or sandals, were you in need of anything? "Not a thing," they replied.

Lk. 12:27-28

Learn from the lilies. They do not spin, they do not weave. But I tell you, Solomon in all his splendor was not arrayed like any one of these. If God clothes in such splendor the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown on the fire tomorrow, how much more will he provide for you, oh weak in faith!

1 Pt. 3:3-4

The affections of an elaborate hairdress, the wearing of golden jewelry or the donning of rich robes is not for you. Your adornment is rather the hidden character of the heart, expressed in the unfading beauty of a calm and gentle disposition. This is precious in God's eyes.

Mt. 23:2-6

Beware of the scribes who like to parade around in their robes, and love marks of respect in public, front seats in synagogues and places of honor at banquets. Everything they do is to attract attention. They widen their garments and wear huge tassels. Yet as penitents we should clothe ourselves in sackcloth.

2 Kngs. 1:8

As prophets we wear "a hairy garment with a leather belt." As those vowed to the Lord's service, we separate ourselves from the world for the sake of the world.

1 Cor. 4:11                      So, up to this hour we go hungry and thirsty, poorly clad, roughly treated, wandering about homeless.

Heb. 11:37-38                 We go about garbed in the skins of sheep or goats, needy and afflicted. We wander about in deserts and on mountains. We dwell in caves and in holes of the earth.

Mt. 3:4                            Like John, we are clothed in a garment of camel's hair, and wear a leather belt around our waist.

1 Tim. 6:7-8                    We brought nothing into this world, nor have we the power to take anything out of it. If we have food and clothing, we have all that we need.

### **XVIII Shelter**

Lk. 2:7                            Even at Jesus' birth, Mary wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the place where travelers lodged.

Lk. 9:58                         During Jesus' ministry he said, "the foxes have lairs, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

Lk. 9:4-6                        He tells us, "stay at whatever house you enter and proceed from there. When people will not receive you, leave that town. So set out from village to village, spreading the good news everywhere and curing diseases."

Lk. 10:5-7                      On entering any house, first say, "Peace to this house." Stay in the one house eating and drinking what they have. Do not move from house to house.

1 Cor. 4:9-11                  God has put us at the end of the line. We are fools on Christ's account. Up to this very hour we go hungry, poorly clad, wandering about homeless.

Heb. 11:38                      We wander about in deserts and on mountains, we dwell in caves and in holes of

- the earth.
- Heb 11:13-16 By acknowledging ourselves to be strangers, we show we are seeking a heavenly homeland.
- 1 Pt. 2:11 Beloved, we are pilgrims and strangers in exile, hence I urge you not to indulge your carnal desire.
- Heb. 12:22-24 Now we have drawn near to Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to myriads of angels in festal gathering, to the assembly of the first-born enrolled in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of the just men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant.
- Mt. 4:1-2 With Jesus we are conducted by the Spirit into the desert for forty days.
- Mt. 4:23 Then we tour all of the area, teaching in the churches, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom.
- Lk. 5:16 We often retire to deserted places to pray.
- Lk. 6:12 We go out to the mountain to pray, spending the night in communion with God.
- Lk. 8:1 After this we journey through towns and villages preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God.
- Lk. 9:28 We go together up into a mountain to pray to see Jesus transfigured.
- Lk. 10:38-42 Accept the hospitality of Martha and Mary in Jerusalem.
- Lk. 22:39-44 Then go out and make your way, as is the custom of Jesus, to the Mount of Olives, your brothers accompanying you. Withdraw from them about a stone's throw, then go down on your knees and pray. Be strengthened by angels. In anguish pray with great intensity, and your sweat will become like drops of blood falling to the ground.

- Lk. 22:54, 66                    Then be led to the house of the high priest and be brought before the council.
- Lk. 23:1                            Then be led before Pilate.
- Lk. 23:26-56                    After that prepare yourself to walk the way of the cross to be crucified and laid in another's tomb.
- Lk. 24:1-6                        From there you will rise...
- Jn. 14:2-3                        And go to the dwelling place prepared for us by Jesus in his Father's house, where there are many mansions.

### **XIX Ministry**

- Mt. 9:37-38                    The harvest is great but the laborers are few. Beg the harvest master to send out laborers to gather his harvest.
- Mt. 10:1, 5-8                    Jesus summons us and gives us authority to expel unclean spirits and to cure sickness and disease of every kind. Jesus sends us on a mission after giving us the following instructions: Do not visit 'pagan' territory and do not enter a 'Samaritan' town. Go instead after the 'lost sheep of the house of Israel'. As you go, make this announcement: "The reign of God is at hand!" Cure the sick, raise the dead, heal the lepers, expel demons. The gift you have received, give as a gift.
- Lk. 10:1                            He sends us out in pairs before him to every town and place he intends to visit.
- Mt. 28:19-20                    Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, yes, even until the end of the world!
- Rom. 10:13-15                    Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe unless they have heard of

him? And how can they hear unless there is someone to preach? And how can men preach unless they are sent?

Gal. 1:11 - 2:9

The Gospel we proclaim is no mere human invention. We did not receive it from any man, nor were we schooled in it. It comes by revelation from Jesus Christ. Without seeking human advisors or even going to 'Jerusalem' to see those who were pillars or apostles before us, we went off into solitude, or 'Arabia'. Prompted by revelation, we later must go up to Jerusalem and lay out for scrutiny the Gospel as we present it, all this in private conference with the leaders, to make sure the course we are pursuing, or have pursued, is not useless. Those who are acknowledged successors to the apostles must give us the right hand of fellowship, if we are to continue in ministry.

1 Cor. 12:4-11

There are different ministries but the same Lord. To one the Spirit gives wisdom in discourse, to another the power to express knowledge. Through the Spirit one receives faith. By the same Spirit another is given the gift of healing, and still another miraculous powers. Prophecy is given to one, to another power to distinguish one spirit from another. One receives the gift of tongues, another that of interpreting tongues. But it is one and the same Spirit who provides all these gifts, distributing them to each as he wills.

2 Tim. 1:6-7

Stir into flame the gift of God bestowed when hands were laid on you. The Spirit that God has given us is no cowardly spirit, but rather one that makes us strong, loving and wise.

2 Tim. 2:2

The things you have heard through the apostles, you must hand on to trustworthy men who will be able to teach others.

2 Tim. 2:14

Keep reminding people of the Gospel and charge them before God to stop disputing about mere words.



- 2 Tim. 2:16                      Avoid worldly, idle talk, for those who indulge in it become more and more godless.
- 2 Tim. 2:23-25                  Have nothing to do with senseless, ignorant disputations. As you well know, they only breed quarrels, and the servant of God must not be quarrelsome, but must be kindly toward all. He must be an apt teacher, patiently and gently correcting those who contradict him.
- 2 Tim. 4:2                        I charge you to preach the word, to stay with this task whether convenient or inconvenient, correcting, reproofing, appealing, constantly teaching and never losing patience.
- Lk. 14:12-14                    Whenever you give a lunch or dinner, invite beggars and the crippled, the lame and the blind. You should be pleased that they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid in the resurrection of the just.
- Mt. 25:35-40                    Jesus was hungry and you gave him food, he was thirsty and you gave him drink. He was a stranger and you welcomed him, naked and you clothed him. He was ill and you comforted him, in prison and you came to visit him. As often as you did it for the least of his little ones, you did it for Jesus.
- Lk. 7:22-23                     The blind recover their sight, cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, dead men are raised to life, and the poor have the good news preached to them. Blest is the man who finds no stumbling block in Christ through our ministry.



A WAY OF LIFE  
for  
THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF CHARITY  
(A Non-Canonical Guideline and Spirituality)

CHAPTER 1: BASIC VISION

The Brothers and Sisters of Charity is a covenant community called as a spiritual family into deep love relationships with and in Jesus Christ. Jesus is our primary example. The Scripture is our primary rule. Our primary law is love.

The primary charism of this community is love. The greatest source of love is God, who is selfless love and self-sufficient transcendency with the life of the Trinity itself. The whole created universe is a free expression of God's love. The greatest expression of God's love for creation is the redemptive self-sacrifice of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. Thus, the Trinity and the cross of Christ remain our divine models for the working of love in the Christian community that sojourns on the face of this earth.

In order for this divine love to avoid being only misdirected human emotion, it must be guided by divine truth. Consequently, it involves an understanding of the mind as well as the emotions of the heart.

This love relationship of heart and mind will be formed and fostered through a life of prayer and study. From this life of charity, centered on love relationship with Jesus, the brothers and sisters will work to share the simplicity of Jesus' love with others through an apostolic service. Through a well-balanced life of prayer, study, and apostolic service, we hope to make the simple love mystery of Christ's dying and rising more visible in today's world.

Covenants:

This lifestyle of charity will be lived out by the profession of covenant promises. These covenants are to God and to the community. These covenant promises will be professed according to various states of life and for various lengths of time by all who come to share this life of charity in imitation of Christ. The primary covenant promises of charity are as follows:

- 1) Poverty: To live a life of apostolic poverty so others might know the wealth of the King of kings.
- 2) Chastity: To live a life of chastity so others might be wed to the Divine Lover.
- 3) Obedience: To live a life as bondservants to the King in obedience so others might know the freedom of co-heirs to his kingdom and the divine authority of Him who first humanly obeyed.

In addition to these three primary covenants, we may also profess the following covenants:

Substantial Silence: To live a life with an attitude of humble silence so that others might hear the living word of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Substantial Solitude: To live a life of substantial solitude so others might come to know the presence of the constant companion.

Prayer: To live a life of contemplative prayer so others might experience the divine action of Jesus' love in their life.

Penance: To live a life of daily self-denial and conversion so others might turn daily to the comfort of the Spirit of Christ in their life.

#### Integration:

Integration is a key expression of our primary charism of love. Integration comes from the personal encounter with Jesus on the cross. On the cross Jesus reconciles the height of heaven and the depths of the earth, the far left and the far right on the earth, through his outstretched arms of love. This means that the things which contradict one another in the world may now come to complement one another in Christ. This brings much integrated diversity as long as all is centered squarely on the cross of Jesus, where God's love for all was manifested perfectly.

Integration also comes from a realization of the healthy interdependence of all the members of the church, all peoples of the world, and all creatures of creation. This attitude causes us to become truly catholic or universal and full, as we seek to know all God's gifts coming to us through creation, the human race, and the church, and to find our healthy place with each. Because of this, the scope of the community is international and universal.

The Brothers and Sisters of Charity integrate various aspects of Christian tradition into a manifest, living whole in order to more effectively share the holistic beauty of this balanced tradition with others. As such, our community integrates all religions from a uniquely Christian base, all Christian faiths from a uniquely Catholic base, and all religious

and monastic traditions from a uniquely Franciscan base. Thus, we are wholly ecumenical and integrated from an intentionally Franciscan, Catholic base.

We also integrate seeming contradictions into complements on other levels. We intentionally integrate charismatic and contemplative spirituality. We integrate our call to solitude with our call to community. We also integrate our primary call to contemplative community with our call to overflow into apostolic action through individual and community ministry to service.

Within the structure of the community itself, we also integrate our specific and unique call to live in the single, celibate, or married states into a balanced and living whole. Thus, there are proper integrations between male and female, single, celibate, and married members in our community. Likewise, we integrate the clerical and lay, the monastic and secular states in our community. As such, we build on the monastic tradition which sees the community itself as a quasi-church, and we look prophetically toward the future as a microcosm and possible prototype of the church.

Because of this, we draw inspiration from the entire monastic tradition in our integration. Knowing that the word monk means 'alone' we follow the hermetical example of the desert fathers of Egypt, especially St. Antony of the Desert. Knowing that we do this as brothers and sisters in community, we also draw inspiration from the cenobitic tradition established by St. Pachomius. We emulate the moderation and stability of St. Benedict's rule, as well as the emphasis on brotherly love in the common life found in the rule of St. Augustine. As a semi or socio-eremital based community, we also draw inspiration from the original Carmelite Rule and the constitutions of the many semi-eremittical reforms of the eleventh century, especially the Camaldolese of St. Romuald, with whom the Franciscans share so much history. The integrated double monasteries of the Celtic monks also inspires our integrations between single, celibate, and married members, living together in appropriate expressions in our monastic village.

We also recognize and emulate the hermits, pilgrims, and itinerate preachers of the Penitential Movement, since it was from this movement that the whole Franciscan family was born, giving birth not only to the mendicant friars of the First Order and the contemplative sisters of the Second Order, but also to the rich and diverse congregations of brothers and sisters of the Third Order Regular and Secular of St. Francis, or the Brothers and Sisters of Penance.

Because of our Franciscan base, we observe the holy gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ after the example of St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi. We

first seek to understand and live the beautiful tradition of contemplation of heart that is traceable back to the holy lady, St. Clare. We then seek to understand and live the simple and wise friar, St. Anthony. We seek to understand and live the freedom of our royal Lady Poverty that is traceable in heart and mind back to our free little brother and holy father, St. Francis. The rules and writings of Francis and Clare serve as important sources of inspiration for our lives as Brothers and Sisters of Charity.

We also recognize and are inspired by the various non-Catholic movements which so strongly emphasize intense alternative approaches to family oriented Christian community, such as the Mennonites of Menno Simons, the Amish of Jacob Amman, or the Quakers of George Fox.

Also, the ashrams, or communities of the non-Christian religions of the East have much to teach us regarding lifestyle. Of course, we do this from our Catholic, Christian, Franciscan base, retaining orthodox doctrine, integrity of sacraments, and obedience to the authorities over us, both as individuals and as a community. Finally, at the root and center of all that we are on earth, we seek the divine love of Jesus Christ, our Lover and our Lord, who leads us to the Father under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the gospels, which serve as our primary rule of life.

In all of this, we integrate the various traditions of the past in the present as we build toward the future. We are the living stones and the spiritual temple of God, built on the foundations of the apostles and the prophets, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone. All of the monastic, religious, and Franciscan traditions of Christianity have been built stone upon stone, course upon course, through almost 2,000 years of Christian history. We must build squarely upon the sound traditions of the past if we are to build straight into the future. However, to simply imitate the past is to go down, rather than go up, in this building process. We must build our stones squarely on all the traditions or stones of the past, but we must build upward into new space if we are to go higher. This involves an element of risk. We build upon the past, but we are called to manifest something new. We are rooted in the past, but our flower must be fresh and new if it is to bring new and fresh beauty into this world.

Therefore, although we are Franciscan in our base, the Lord has given us a prophetic word to "die to Franciscanism". Jesus is our primary example and the Scripture is our primary rule. In this we are less Francis and more Jesus. Likewise, we are perhaps more like Francis and less like Franciscanism. As Francis was called to live the gospel in his time, so have we been birthed as a fresh add new expression of gospel living for our time.

As such, Franciscanism is our mother, but we are called to be a child that is unique and new. As the Old Testament was to the New Testament Church, so is Franciscanism to the Brothers and Sisters of Charity. We love our heritage as a child loves its mother. Likewise, we may quote an appeal to the mother in order to legitimize the child. However, we are not exactly like our mother. We are a child that is unique and new. We must be birthed mature, and stand as our own person.

We are not a synthesized community, we are an integrated community. Integration is like two or three cords being woven together to form a rope. In the weaving process the distinct character of each cord is retained, but they work together to form something bigger and stronger. Synthesis is the total disintegration of the uniqueness of each individual part to form something brand new. The Brothers and Sisters of Charity are integrated, meaning that we take various unique aspects of Christian, Catholic, and monastic Franciscan life and interweave them to form something new, but something that is built very surely and very perceivably on the apostolic and religious traditions of our Christian past.

This integration must be more than just good ideas and concepts. It must be a living, spiritual reality. Just as St. Paul says the body of Christ has many members, yet it is one body; so, too, do we take many different members of our Christian heritage and integrate them into a living body that continues to grow through space and time in Christ.

#### Regathering:

As a Catholic and Christian ecumenical community, we intentionally see the dispersion and regathering of the Jews of the Old Testament as a possible symbol and pattern of our ecumenical mission. As the Jewish people were given a divinely ordained leadership of priests, a lifestyle based on the law, and a worship centered on temple sacrifice, so has the new Israel been given an ordained leadership of apostles and their successors, a lifestyle based on the law of love, and a worship centered on liturgy and sacrament. As the Jewish people were dispersed by God for the sins of the leaders and the people, so has the New Testament church been dispersed for the sins of both the shepherds and the flock. As God continued to shepherd his people in dispersion by raising up a new Rabbinical leadership and a word oriented worship in the synagogue system, so has God continued to shepherd the people of the New Testament dispersion through various ecclesial communities of the Reformation. Likewise, as God regathered the dispersed Jews of the synagogue and integrated them with the original leadership and worship of the temple, so must we regather the legitimate leadership and worship gifts of the Reformation and integrate them with the original apostolic leadership and Eucharistic worship of the Catholic Christian expression. We integrate while retaining the legitimate integrity of both.

### Apostolic and Prophetic:

The Brothers and Sisters of Charity are called to be a microcosm of the church. As the church itself is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone, so is the Christian community called by God to be both apostolic and prophetic. The apostolic dimension is lived out by our humble submission to and union with the pope and the bishops as successors to St. Peter and the apostles. The prophetic dimension is lived out in love by the simple integrated witness of our community and its various structures, spiritualities, and ministries. Since the community itself is a microcosm of the church, the apostolic is also embodied in these prophetic structures, spiritualities, and ministries. In this unique integration of the apostolic and prophetic charisms, the community itself becomes a possible prototype of the church of the future.

As the church is both an apostolic and prophetic witness of Christ to the modern world, so does our Christian community as a microcosm of the church, bear an apostolic and prophetic mission to the world. Not only do we proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ as a leaven in the dough of the modern world, we also provide a spiritual and temporal alternative to even the basic concepts and structures of modern, secular society. We present an alternative dough to better bring the Bread of Life to a hungry world. We form an alternative society within the society of the religious and secular world.

## CHAPTER 2: COMMUNAL LIFE

### Spiritual Family:

As the name Brothers and Sisters of Charity implies, we are a spiritual family bound in the life of Jesus Christ. As Jesus is our brother, so we are brothers and sisters in Him. As love is the fulfillment of the entire law and prophets, the greatest law of our community is love, and the greatest prophetic message is charity.

As a true spiritual family in Christ, the community is incarnationally guided by the leadership of a spiritual father and mother who act as spiritual parents. As Christians both the father and mother stand as Christ to each other and to the whole community. In this relationship a true and loving attitude of family is retained between the sons and daughters and the parents. The parents normally seek the appropriate input of the whole family before exercising the proper role of decision-making in leadership that affects the whole family. In turn, the family is called to support the parents as the ones upon whom the greater burden is laid through familial dialogue and loving obedience. In this family relationship is found the balance of mutual support which is love.

This attitude of family relationship reaches out to all branches of the

Franciscan family tree from whom we have been birthed and nourished as a new fruit of the Spirit of God. This attitude permeates outward to all religious and monastic communities of the church, the entire church, and to all of creation, both human and non-human, animate and inanimate. Knowing that the church is Christ's body, all human beings are created in the image of God and all creation bears the distinct traces of the Creator. Consequently, a holistic attitude of love, peace, and justice, permeates our whole environment and ecology as a community and as individuals.

Since Jesus and His disciples are our primary example of love, and the Scriptures are our primary rule for this family life, we are always to be united with the Church Jesus founded, through which God gave us the Scriptures. The Franciscan tradition, moreover, binds us to special reverence for the pope and complete obedience to him. We esteem him as the successor to St. Peter and the vicar of Christ among the bishops, who shepherd the flock of the church on earth. According to all monastic traditions, let us show respect for each individual bishop as a successor to the apostles. As it was the desire and example of St. Francis, let us give due respect to all priests, deacons, and religious. As an ecumenical community let us, likewise, show proper respect for all the leadership of the various ecclesial communities which call upon the name of Jesus as Lord. Let us show respect to all the people of God as members of Christ's body, all people on earth as created in God's image, and all creation as bearing the traces of God.

All is united in Christ who created all and offers redemption and reconciliation to all from the cross and his empty tomb, through the ministry of the church. These attitudes and actions of family and unity with all transforms our whole life in the power of the Spirit, whose temple we are. They turn the water of mundane, daily, human living on the face of this earth into the wine of the kingdom of heaven in a true Christian community through the miracle of faith in Christ.

#### Love:

In keeping with the name, the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, the most important charism of our family is love. Jesus teaches us that love of God and the neighbor is the fulfillment of the whole law and all the prophets. The Apostle Paul tells us that it is the greatest charismatic gift and is first on his list of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, love is the greatest charism and our most important law in the community. When you cannot find a law or a leader to guide you in what to do, follow the advice of St. Augustine who said, "Love God and do what you will", and ask the question, "What would Jesus do?"

Love is most fully manifested in the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. But love is not the annihilation of self. It is the sacrifice of self. You cannot sacrifice what you do not first possess. Therefore, a true love of



self must precede self-sacrifice. As Jesus teaches, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

True love of self is based on the love of God who created us in his own image. That image has been obscured by sin, but the image remains and is restored once we are cleansed from sin in Christ. We must hate sin if we love God, but hatred of self does injustice to the image of God, and injustice to the image of God is a sin against God himself. If we love God, we must love ourselves. If we love ourselves, we will appreciate ourselves and develop a positive self-image.

Yet, true self-sacrifice brings an even greater self-fulfillment. As Jesus says, "He who loses himself for my sake and the sake of the gospel, will come to find it." Therefore, a true self-sacrifice brings both true self-fulfillment and the paradox of the cross, which is the ultimate fulfillment of self through selfless love.

This true self-awareness in the mystery of Christ does not make us egotistical or proud. It makes us humble. This humility is absolutely necessary in community. This humility must be based on the truth ... the truth of our own self existence in light of the truth of God, all humankind which bears the image of God, the church which as the temple of the Holy Spirit is the Body of Christ, and all creation which bears God's traces. It is truth that we are dependent on God, and interdependent with the church, the human race, and all the created world for our very self existence. This truth of our own existence fosters both humility and a sense of positive self-worth.

The humility of love cannot foster either independence or codependency in community. Independence denies our dependence on God, our interdependency with the church, the human race, and the created world. It is ultimately egotistical and proud. Codependency seeks a false dependency on God and people as a reaction to a lack of a true appreciation of self or positive self-image. Ultimately, it causes unrealistic expectations in our love relationship with God and with people, and leads to disappointment, despair, and even hate. Attitudes of independence and codependency work in opposition to the true charism of love, which fosters attitudes of humility based on the truth. Since an attitude of true humility is necessary in community, a mature attitude of self-love and self-worth in the Lord which breeds a positive self image is needed by all.

If we are truly humble, we will also be more silent so as to better listen both to God and to people. This is based on a realization of our interdependence with others and our dependence on God, which causes us to truly listen to others and to God in order to be self fulfilled. It is also based on a love which causes us to sacrifice that self through silence so

that the words of others might be truly heard.

If we really listen in silence to others and to God, then we will discover the gift of obedience. This involves simply and maturely cooperating with the reality of our dependence on God and our interdependency with people, especially those in the offices of authority established by God within both the church and the world. This is true especially in the church and the communities of the church who guide us in the name of God for our own self-fulfillment in Christ. It is also based on the self-sacrifice of love, which willingly conforms the self to the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

### CHAPTER 3: PRAYER

The most important task of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity is to prayerfully worship God. Prayer is the strength of our individual and community existence. It is through prayer that we find the heart of our love relationship with Jesus, working in individual lives that communities prosper in the peace and unity of God as a whole.

It is in the solitude of prayer that we find our true companion and thus learn to be better companions for one another in community. It is in the inner silence of prayer that we hear the living word of God and thus learn to speak words that flow from the love of God to one another. Let it never be forgotten that the primary purpose of this community is to live a life of contemplation and prayer.

Our approach to prayer embodies an integration of many spiritual traditions. We draw much inspiration from the solitary and semi eremitical approach of the hermits like St. Antony of the Desert in both our private and our communal prayer. The solemnity of the common liturgies of Benedictine and all coenobitic monasteries inspires us to appreciate the importance of the work of God in the Liturgy of the Hours. The charismatic, creative, and spontaneous use of color, sacramental sign and symbol, and of all creation, through an appreciation of Christ's incarnation as found in Franciscan prayer, says much to the balance between charismatic and liturgical, reverence and joy, form and freedom, in worship. Likewise, does Francis inspire us to reverence the traditional use of sacraments and devotional aids? We also love and appreciate the beautiful hymns of the Protestant Reformation, and their emphasis on the word of God in Scripture in both private and communal prayer. The charismatic experience of Catholics and Protestants alike in our own time draws much from the ancient monastic and Franciscan mystics, as well as the more recent Pentecostal Movement of the earlier twentieth century in America. Lastly, we cannot help but recognize some similarity between the Hesychast tradition of Russian Christianity and the experience of the mystics of the far East.

### Creation:

Inspired by St. Francis of Assisi, we seek not so much to pray, but for our life to become a prayer.

In this holistic attitude, we are helped greatly by all of creation which bears the traces of God. We are helped by encountering all peoples for they bear the image of God. We are helped by the church for it is the very Body of Christ. With these helps from God, our whole life becomes a prayer and all of creation becomes a sort of church to be revered.

### Penance:

As penitents, or people of conversion, we can only turn to creation as a ladder leading to God, if we first turn to God expecting him to draw us up by grace to himself through all creation. We recognize that the world bears God's traces, and all people bear God's image, but that image has been obscured by sin and has corrupted the whole world. As penitents, we always seek to be open to the charismatic fire of the Holy Spirit of God, which burns up all that is not of God and inflames our hearts with divine love. This fire must be stirred up actively through charismatic praise and thanksgiving, as well as through Christian meditation, as we choose to conform our thinking in our lives to Christ. Everything in our life must be consumed in the fire of God's love. Hot embers will then burn steadily and effortlessly as we enter into passive, contemplative peace.

To help us in this conversion we also use both the sacrament of penance, and individual and corporate confession within the community. This is done to foster forgiveness, not guilt, so is responded to freely, not under communal constraint.

### Sacraments:

We recognize that the grace of God is offered to us as a gift through the ministry of the church in the sacraments. They both symbolize our existent faith and cause that faith to grow stronger. This gift must be actively received by faith if we are to experience the full and conscious benefit of these mysteries. However, even with weak faith, God can work through these channels to cause our faith to grow stronger.

We also recognize that the grace of God is not exclusively limited to the channel of the sacraments of the church. Normally, the sacraments are the instrument God uses to administer a particular grace. But God, being God, is free to use whatever channel in the created world he so wishes to give his gifts of grace. Likewise, he may touch a person directly, without any incarnational channel whatsoever. Even in these cases, the further reception of the appropriate sacrament is advisable, since a true sacrament of the church not only affects, but symbolizes grace. The sacrament can only confirm and strengthen, and therefore perfect grace.

### Divine Office:

Inspired by the ancient monastic tradition, our community prays the Liturgy of the Hours daily. The Liturgy of the Hours is the common prayer of the community, for it unites us with the official common prayer of the whole church. Ordinarily, it is prayed in common wherever the brothers and sisters live together, or wherever they come together.

The common celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours is not attached to a specific place, but to the community itself. We see the world as our cloister, the body as our cell, and our soul as the hermit within. Still a church or oratory is ordinarily to be preferred, both because it is a holy place and because in it the witness of prayer is better given the people of God.

### Eucharist and Communion:

Since the community is a microcosm of the Body of Christ, we gather as frequently as possible to receive the Body of Christ sacramentally in communion. When possible, this is done within a Eucharistic Liturgy. On Sundays and Holydays, Eucharist is celebrated at the community or attended by the community in the local parish.

As a symbol of the painful disunity of doctrinal mind and structures of body that still exist between Catholic and non-Catholic expressions of the Christian faith, and in obedience to the teaching authority of the Catholic Church, we do not practice inter-communion during our Eucharistic liturgies or Communion services. We take the pain of these celebrations as a symbol of the pain still existent among various professing Christians because of the disunity of their particular ecclesial communities with one another. In this symbolic sense, we take this pain as a microcosm of the pain of the whole professing Body of Christ and as a positive force which impels us to work even more strenuously for the cause of the restoration of the full unity in the professing Body of Christ.

### Charismatic:

The Holy Spirit is given to us in various ways through word and sacrament, especially Baptism and Confirmation. Yet, we recognize that we must actually respond to this gift if we are to enjoy the full working of the Spirit in our lives. In the common prayer hours we are open to the movement of the Holy Spirit. We do not stifle the use of new music for worship, nor the gift of spontaneous singing in the Spirit by individuals or groups. We try to be open to the various gifts of the Spirit within the context of the liturgy. We also take time to personally share various needs before or during the intercessions, so the community can better pray with understanding from the heart. The community must be open to the moving of the Holy Spirit if our common prayer is to be meaningful as a communication between a living God and human beings.

Upon communal discernment the formal liturgical office may be discontinued in favor of total spontaneous common prayer and for various periods of time. However, at least one formal office is prayed daily, even during this time. In this freedom to move in the Holy Spirit, let reason and reverence be safeguarded through the grace of discernment on the part of both community and leadership.

In addition to the more overtly Catholic charismatic celebrations of liturgy and sacrament, we also engage in the more spontaneous and less structured charismatic service, centered more exclusively on the word and the spontaneous working of the Holy Spirit. In this we try to embody many of the good expressions of worship which come to us from the Reformation. It is our hope that we do this in a way that is mutually balanced and respectful while retaining the doctrinal and sacramental integrity of both Catholic and non-Catholic expressions and maintaining a truly Catholic base.

Devotion:

In our devotions we give special attention to those which cause us to meditate on the life and passion of Christ. We also give special place to those honoring Mary and her role in the church, for it was through her faith response to God that the Word was made flesh, and it is she who as the bride of God is consequently the most perfect model of the church as the bride of Christ. We give a special place to the Scriptures, for they are the written version of the living Word and are the earliest written account of apostolic tradition through whom the whole world first heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. Likewise, we love and adore the Holy Eucharist for it is the continued sacramental incarnation of the Body of Christ, who is the living Word. Furthermore, we honor the saints who have been transformed by that sacrament and word, and who are in constant communion with us through the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit.

Notwithstanding the need for the discipline of faith in any form of prayer, if at any time these devotions become an occasion for legalism or undue spiritual dryness, the use of charismatic and spontaneous prayer can be, at least temporarily, substituted. All devotions are subject to the guidance of the church, sound theological insights, and the 'canon' or 'yardstick' of Scripture.

Contemplation:

After we have stirred up our hearts and minds through both private and communal means for charismatic praise and directed meditation, we allow ourselves to pass over into pure and passive contemplation. Here we learn to simply 'be' with Jesus, without the intrusion of either ideas or emotion.

Ministers make provision for the brothers and sisters to be prepared for this contemplation in both theory and practice. The writings of the mystics of the church, especially those of Franciscan and monastic tradition, as well as both private and communal times of retreat in solitude and silence, are provided for.

In all contemplation, members must 'test the spirits' by all available means given to us by the church.

Conclusion:

In all our private and communal prayer we remember that personal love relationship with Jesus is the sole purpose of any particular prayer form. Any form of prayer, be it private devotions, public liturgies, charismatic phenomenon, or contemplation itself, can become a false idol which often must be torn down in order for true spirituality to be authentically built up by Christ.

All particular forms, techniques, or methods are simply tools for prayer. They can never replace the pure experience of prayer itself, which is union with Christ. They are gifts from God, but they are not God. We must always be careful not to create false gods by worshipping the gifts, but must go through the legitimate gifts to true worship of the divine Giver. Thus, will all of our private and communal prayer bring us into intimate union with God.

#### CHAPTER 4: STUDY AND FORMATION

The Scriptures encourage us to "study to show yourself approved", and to "meditate on the law of the Lord day and night". The studies of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity are aimed at forming a personal love relationship with and in Jesus Christ.

It is through study and meditation that Jesus tells us many objective truths about his being and his kingdom. Study is, therefore, an important nourishment for our prayer, and prayer, in turn, leads us to Jesus, who is himself the Bread of Life who nourishes the whole world.

Study in Jesus is like the stage of dialogue between two lovers who desire to grow very close. Getting to know one another through words is a needed and natural stage before one can enter into a stage of unspoken communication that is based on knowledge, love, and trust. Upon knowing the objective truths of Jesus, it is easier to enter into a mature and trusting love relationship with him that is more subjective and unspoken in nature. The unspoken stage of communication with Jesus can only be reached after having first entered into the spoken stage of dialogue. Therefore, the contemplative seeks to know the truth that sets him free in a world of knowledge, love, and trust. The ever-growing

contemplative will find a place for study if his prayer is to be guided in a way that is true and sure.

Because the Brothers and Sisters are concerned primarily with relationship with Jesus, their studies include a balanced understanding of Scripture and prayer through which we know the mind and heart of Christ. Because both Scripture and prayer come to us through the church, a basic understanding of the church is helpful. Because we are concerned not only with relationships with Jesus, but human relationships in Jesus, this study of the church, appropriately, includes an emphasis on monastic and Franciscan approaches to community life. Since we are aiming primarily at contemplative union of heart with Jesus in all of our relationships and all of our studies, a study of contemplative and charismatic prayer traditions of the church are helpful. As the story and message of Jesus has come to us through the church, all study is undertaken in the guiding light of God's truth in Christ as revealed through the Holy Spirit in the church.

As a gospel community raised up by the Spirit in the church through the ministry of the founder, we study the writings and oral teachings of the founder.

In our approach to study we draw inspiration from the Biblically oriented church fathers, such as St. Augustine or St. John Chrysostem; the monastic tradition of *Lectio Divina* of St. Benedict or St. Bernard; the mystical yet practical Franciscan tradition of St. Anthony or St. Bonaventure; and the Celtic tradition from the monastic villages and leading centers of those such as St. Columba, St. Finian, or St. Hilda of the famous double monastery at Whitby. Of course, the Dominican school of St. Dominic, St. Thomas Aquinas, or St. Catherine of Sienna is important, as well as the contemplative approach toward learning as embodied in the Carmelite reformers St. Theresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. From a Catholic base we also draw inspiration from the emphasis on the Scriptures as found in Protestant Reformers such as Martin Luther or John Calvin. Of course, through it all the simple emphasis on the gospel of Jesus Christ as found in St. Francis of Assisi keeps study from becoming a dangerous road toward religious pride.

The study of the contemplative is only undertaken to further relationship with Jesus Christ and with brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ and the whole world created by Jesus Christ. Study for the sake of study leads to both vanity and pride, both of which are harmful to the prayer life of the Christ-centered contemplative.

The place of study will help those involved in apostolic ministry, whether in the capacity of inner-community or outside apostolic work. The truths of our ministerial function must be studied and learned if we are to

perform them with a mature freedom that breeds an attitude of peaceful prayer.

Even as Jesus formed his apostles and disciples, so are we to be formed by him in this way of life. This is done by the power of the Holy Spirit under the guidance of the Scriptures and the teaching authority of the church. It is also accomplished under the leadership of the spiritual father and mother of the community, which is raised up by the spirit, inspired by the Scriptures, and established as a spiritual family within the church. As such, the community is responsible for the formation of its members regarding things pertinent to community life.

Because the whole human race bears the image of God and all of creation bears God's traces, the wise Brother or Sister of Charity will also spend some time in secular study. This is done to better familiarize oneself with the world in which we live. We are to be in the world, but not of the world. We are to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to all of the world. In order to better this, we must know at least something about the world.

The wise brother or sister spends a little time each day in both religious and secular study. Most of the study is done in private. The daily reading of Scripture from the common prayer hours and Mass provide much of the needed input for good meditation, but private Scripture study and other sacred reading keep the common readings from becoming burdensome.

The community meets regularly for spiritual studies. These primarily concern living the simple gospel life in community according to the vision and ideals of the founder as spiritual father. It is through these group studies that we can help aid the community in a common growth that breeds unity and fellowship, rather than a purely individualistic growth that can breed factions and divisions.

## CHAPTER 5: APOSTOLIC SERVICE

After drinking in the water from the wellspring springing up into eternal life through a life in community in prayer and study, brothers and sisters fill their canteens of apostolic service and take living water to those dying of thirst in the desert. After giving the thirsty water to drink from our canteens of apostolic service, we carefully lead those stranded in the desert back to the well of eternal life, which is a mature and personal love relationship of heart and mind with Jesus our Lord. Brothers and sisters must be careful to always return to the oasis of prayer and study before our canteens of apostolic service run dry. If this should happen, both the rescuer and the rescued would end up stranded in the desert without enough water to return to the oasis. The healthy life of apostolic



service flows naturally from the life centered on study and prayer. Our ministry flows from our being; our being is not centered on our ministry. Thus, will both our contemplation and active life be free to soar to the heights of the life of the heavenly kingdom, even while here on earth.

Ministry of Presence:

The most basic apostolate of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity is to simply live the gospel with a humble and joyful heart. In this sense our apostolate includes both our simple presence among the people and our proclamation of the gospel to the people through work and word. This is the ministry of presence.

Itinerancy:

The brothers' and sisters' main ministry is to go forth in apostolic itinerancy from place to place after the pattern of Matthew 10 and 19. As little ones, we go forth not as the rich and powerful of the world, but as the poorest of the poor. The bigness of professional training is not absolutely necessary to minister God's simple love. All that is needed is a caring heart. Thus, the ministry of presence is the most important ministry of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity. To simply greet people on the streets with a cheerful greeting of Christ's peace is ministry enough. To go to the homes of the shut-ins, the lonely, and the unchurched, simply to say we care is preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ profoundly.

Let this ministry go forth in total availability. Let us serve in whatever capacity is needed; visit homes and gather the needs of the people in prayer within the churches, sing, teach, or do manual labor. If we can serve we will; if we are welcome we will stay; if we are not welcome we will simply move on to another church or town.

We venture forth in apostolic poverty, taking nothing for our journey. We are not necessarily dependent on automobiles or special equipment to minister. If we absolutely need more than we can carry on our backs, then we need too much. However, we freely use whatever is made available to us in a local town or church. We go forth without money, asking none for ourselves. In exchange for our labor we ask only a little food to eat and a place to sleep. Nothing more is needed. We may, however, beg money and goods for the poor, giving special priority to the local area in which we minister.

Those who go forth in this gospel life normally seek to go two-by-two in strict imitation of the gospel. However, larger itinerate groups may travel together, especially during a time of formation. This is done under the inspiration of the gospel, which portrays Jesus in the company of the holy apostles and the holy women who assisted them out of their means,

### Stabilized Ministry:

There are also more stabilized ministries which need some planning and organization at both the community and in places to which we go. Due to the need for money to maintain these ministries, they are patterned on the common life of Acts 2 and 4.

Notwithstanding our call to itinerate poverty, we also recognize the need for stability within today's overly transient world. Consequently, we seek to be a witness of the stability Jesus brings to our life as a family of God. This manifests itself through keeping the commitments included in our covenants, our Scripture Rule, and these constitutions, as a universal community as we travel about the world. It also manifests itself in the family-like ties evident in the local community. Solid family commitments and availability should be evidenced in our relationships with the brothers and sisters of each local community and the laity of each local area.

The apostolic service of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity varies according to both the natural and supernatural gifts of individuals as discerned by the community. All formal ministries of the community are discerned by the leadership of the community. In this discernment, community leadership listens carefully to the voice of the individual and the observation of the whole community. Ideally, the exercise of apostolic service causes both the individual and the community to prosper in Christ. Of course, the brothers and sisters who are entrusted with the ministry or work of the community apostolate are to remain faithful to the life of the community and obedient to the members.

In all apostolates, even those of personal inspiration, the brothers and sisters are obedient to proper church authority. We recognize the bishop of Rome as the successor to St. Peter and the vicar of Christ. We recognize the entire college of bishops and each individual bishop as successors to the apostles. Likewise, we recognize all priests and deacons as those to whom ministerial faculties have been granted by the bishops. Furthermore, when ministering in a non-Catholic church or parish, we respect and recognize the legitimate and appropriate authority in the person or persons of each ecclesial community's respective leadership.

### Period of Ministry:

The community seeks a peaceful balance between prayer and activity. Yet, the primacy of prayer is always recognized and protected. A rhythm of the Spirit leads us from prayer into action, and from action back into prayer. This rhythm exists on both communal and individual levels, according to particular statutes of the particular expressions of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity.

## CHAPTER 6: POVERTY

The gospel calls all Christians to a life of simplicity and poverty of spirit as a love response both to God and to people. This means moderately using the things of this world as pilgrims and strangers without losing full sight of the inheritance of our heavenly homeland. Following the primary example of Jesus, this includes denying ourselves both the things we need and the things we don't need, so that others might have the things they need. We are called to live simply, so that others might simply live. We distinguish between our wants and our needs, for indulging our wants can kill the needy. We are called to simply love the lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Gospel poverty is essentially a love response to God and to people. The beauty of gospel poverty is found in love. Poverty without love is an ugly curse that brings pain and death to the very people created in the image of our life-giving God. On the other hand, love without the sacrifice of poverty is as empty as a lifeless shell. Love is selfless. Selflessness brings sacrifice of self for the sake of others. This sacrifice manifests itself in various expressions of gospel poverty. Gospel poverty cannot be a willing self-sacrifice without love, and love cannot be Christian without the self-sacrifice of poverty. When we become poor in spirit, we come to know the wealth of God's love; and if we know the wealth of God's love, we gladly become poor for the sake of others.

Gospel poverty is also an ascetical discipline which protects our life in God. We must love our neighbor, but we must love our neighbor as ourselves. Therefore, some protection of self in Christ is necessary before we can truly sacrifice self in the love of God for the sake of others. Therefore, Gospel poverty becomes an ascetical discipline which protects and nourishes our spiritual wealth in Christ.

According to the mind of St. Francis, the logic of gospel poverty goes like this: The more you have the more you must defend, the more you have the more you have to pay for, therefore, the more you have to ask for; therefore, the less you are able to give the gospel as a free gift to others. According to the mind of St. Paul: The less we are responsible for materially, the more we are able to give the gospel away to others without encumbrance.

The Brothers and Sisters of Charity work to be as free as possible from the cares of the world, so that our hearts may be fixed only on heaven. We engage in a life of heavenly prayer, study, and work, free from the cares of this world, which so quickly kills and blinds the spiritual life of freedom. We are bound to as little as possible, so that we may be free to give as much as possible to anyone who asks when the love of Jesus

inspires. We are poor, so that others might be wealthy in the Lord. Motivated by love of God and love of neighbor, we gladly embrace the lowliness of poverty so all might know the exalted glory of true wealth in Jesus.

The ascetical discipline of gospel poverty is like the pruning of the wild growth from a fruit tree. Initially, it seems to cut the tree back to almost nothing, but in the long run it causes the tree to actually become more fruitful. Likewise, with the gospel poverty. Initially, it seems to deprive a person or a community from any earthly pleasure, but in the long run it causes even our earthly life to be more fruitful.

Ultimately, gospel poverty is a naked embrace of the paradox of the cross of Jesus Christ. Gospel poverty must be a love response to God and to people, and the highest expression of God's love is in the self-emptying of God in the incarnation of Jesus Christ and his death on the cross for the sake of the salvation of the world. Therefore, the logic of poverty is found in love, and the highest expression of love is found in the cross. Therefore, gospel poverty makes ultimate sense only in the light of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### The Three Scriptural Models:

There are three Scriptural models of poverty found in the New Testament. The Brothers and Sisters of Charity embody these three New Testament models according to the various states of life and particular expressions of community found within our overall family.

The first Scriptural model is found in Matthew 10 and 19, which describes the itinerate life of Jesus and the apostles. The Brothers and Sisters of Charity live out this Scriptural model in a very literal way when we embark on our itinerate ministry. According to this model, neither individuals or the apostolic and itinerate community as a body possess anything whatsoever. We carry only the bare essentials of life on our backs, heading out on foot from place-to-place, not knowing where we will rest our heads, what we will eat, or where we will minister from day-to-day. This life is a prophetic witness of joyfully embracing the most radical poverty by an act of our own free will, so as to visibly and obviously depend solely on the providence of God and the charity of all humankind, especially the charity and hospitality of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The second model is found in Acts 2 and 4, describing the common life of the first Christian church in Jerusalem. The Brothers and Sisters of Charity embody this New Testament expression of gospel poverty within the life of the celibate brotherhood and the celibate sisterhood. In this life the individual brothers and sisters renounce all claim to personal possessions, but the respective expressions of community may own

property and have possessions in common. However, even in this common ownership we remember that our covenant of poverty binds the whole community into solidarity with the world's poor and a lifestyle that is both interiorly and exteriorly simple. For the individual of the community, this life of strict renunciation of individual ownership and strict common ownership is entered into gradually, according to the stages of commitment from temporary covenant to permanent covenant. This is done according to the particular statutes of the celibate brotherhood and celibate sisterhood respectively.

The third Scriptural model for poverty is found in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, chapter 8, where Paul describes the more domestic approach to Christian living. Here, Paul encourages that the relief of the poor ought not to impoverish the rich, but there should be a certain equality between the rich and the poor, even while retaining private ownership and wealth. The Brothers and Sisters of Charity embody this Scriptural model within both the single and the married expressions of community. In this expression, the individuals and families may retain private property, but they are called to share that property with their brothers and sisters in Christ, according to the particular statutes of their particular expression of community. In this they manifest the church's teaching on the balance between the right to private property and the social and communitarian nature of all property and possessions, as well as the whole created world itself.

With these three Scriptural approaches to poverty, the first is like prophetic lightening which lights up the whole sky with a flash for a brief moment, yet has the power to light up entire cities for a long time. It provides an inspiration by a few for the sake of the many, yet this model itself is not intended to be the lived alternative for all. The second approach is less idealistic and is more approachable as a lifestyle for the majority of those who are called to the celibate state of life. It is like a power station for a whole city; much too powerful for the average household, yet still a source of power for every domestic household. While this is more approachable to the majority of those who are called to celibacy, it still remains prophetic to the world in general, since only a minority of the followers of Christ are called to do so in celibacy. The third Scriptural way is more practical, for it is the livable ideal for the many, both single and married, who follow the way of Christ. It is like an electric light bulb which gets its power both from the power station and its original inspiration from the flash of lightening. However, this way is also prophetic, relative to the witness of the whole world, since such poverty of spirit and gospel simplicity are certainly the narrow way, when compared to the materialism and consumerism so evident and rampant in our world today.

### Particulars:

St. Paul says to Timothy, "If we have food and clothing, we have all we need" (I Tim. 6:8). And Sirach says, "Life's prime needs are water, bread, and clothing, a house too for decent privacy" (Sir. 29:21). Based upon these two Scriptures, we see the basic needs of our life in poverty as food, clothing, and shelter. In turn, each of these three areas is affected by our approach to gospel poverty and simplicity.

In all of our external manifestations of poverty, we are conscious of the domestic and foreign poor, and seek solidarity with them through appropriate lifestyle changes and sacrifices. We do this in a way that neither denies the goodness of the created world or genuine human advancement in science, technology, or the arts. Nor are we afraid to enjoy the genuine blessings from God. But in our joy in blessing we must always be seasoned with a little sorrow for this pain of the poor, and always ready to share our joy with them. Real lifestyle changes and sacrifice must be the result. We do this according to the particular statutes of the particular expressions of the community.

### Food:

In keeping with the admonition of the gospels, we discipline our eating habits so that we might have more of our will to give to Jesus and more food to give to the hungry. We discipline our bodies daily so as not to be mastered by the desires of the flesh. Yet, we take care of the body God has given us, for it is now the temple of the Holy Spirit. Nor should we ourselves be impoverished by constant fasting.

As the Wisdom literature of Scripture explains: Simplicity in food and drink brings health to mind and body, as well as table etiquette which manifests courtesy and care for others. However, scrupulosity regarding food and drink brings legalism, which brings worry, which brings sickness, which brings death. True gospel simplicity in food and drink brings a freedom and a joy that was manifested in Jesus and the first apostles.

In order that poverty and moderation be clearly evidenced at our meals, an excess of food is avoided and only that kind which is in harmony with our state of life and the particular statutes of our particular expression of community is served. Remembering that love is our greatest law, we take care to provide the real necessities of the brothers and the sisters and the special needs of the sick.

For those who suffer from addiction and compulsions in food, drink, and other areas, we lovingly and forgivably encourage participation in both religious and proper secular programs which might be helpful. Prayer and purity of heart, mind, and body is the primary tool we use to calm our nerves to bring us joy from the giver of peace and joy.

### Fasting:

Jesus speaks of a healthy asceticism regarding food and drink, especially in the form of fasting, but this is not to be done in gloomy legalism or scrupulous religiosity. We are to fast with a whole new spirit, a spirit of joy, a spirit of freedom. Yet, in this fast, we are like Christ before us, to be tested by God and tempted by the devil to prepare us for our ministry and our life of poverty. In this fast, we go with Jesus into the desert to prepare us for our itinerate ministry among the poorest of the poor, who many times only have bread and water for their daily fare. If we cannot hold up under a fast undertaken willingly and in controlled conditions, how can we expect to do so when such poverty and fasting come to us in time of trial and against our will?

Specifically, we encourage the Brothers and Sisters of Charity to fast according to the norms and liturgical laws of the church. Furthermore, we encourage all who are able to fast on bread and water on Wednesdays and Fridays in accordance with current, popular Marian devotions.

In a spirit of environmental and ecological sensitivity, we also do our best to produce and serve only good, healthy food at our table. We recognize that many of the agricultural techniques of modern society actually bring disease and death into the world, even though they seem to bring us fast and abundant quantities of food.

However, in keeping with the demands of gospel poverty, we do not become fanatical or overly concerned about food and drink. We do not spend undue extra money on health foods that the truly poor cannot afford. Whenever possible, we acquire our food from simple gardens, maintained by our own hands, or from low-priced markets that are easily accessible. Also, according to particular statutes, we are not ashamed to go to the table of the Lord and beg food from institutions or restaurants in our area.

When sitting at the table of a hospitable host, we eat whatever is set before us in thanksgiving and prayer. Neither are we critical of others' habits concerning food, drink, or smoking. As Little Brothers and Sisters, we are called to teach others not so much by our words, but more by our example of simplicity, lowliness, and child-like innocence.

### Clothing:

The Brothers and Sisters of Charity are called to dress themselves simply and humbly as a sign and symbol of gospel poverty in the midst of a materialistic world. We do this in response to Jesus' own teaching on simplicity of clothing. We also do this in response to the crass materialism and consumerism of our modern world, in which fashion fads are propagated year in and year out at the expense of both the economy of the poor and the morality of the whole human race. Therefore, the

Brothers and Sisters of Charity are to exercise gospel simplicity in their use of secular and religious clothing.

In response to the penitential tradition of the church, which itself goes back to the example of the two witnesses of Revelation 11 and the example of St. John the Baptist himself, the Brothers and Sisters of Charity may garb themselves in the prophet's dress of extreme poverty and/or 'sackcloth'. Likewise, from the entire semi-eremitical, monastic, and Franciscan traditions, the Brothers and Sisters of Charity may clothe themselves in various expressions of religious and monastic dress. This is done according to the particular statutes of the particular expressions of our community.

In this, we must be daily cautioned and constantly aware of Jesus' teaching against the religious pride of the scribes and Pharisees who liked to parade around in their long robes so the others could see and praise them for their so-called spirituality.

The uniform, or habit, of the whole monastic tradition can be a positive, silent witness of humility, or it can be a very dangerous occasion for pride. We must remember the saying of the Eastern monastics, that the habit makes the monk; but according to the mind of the developed monasticism of the West, the monk is not made by the habit. Somewhere between these two sayings, the Brothers and Sisters of Charity find the truth.

All clothing of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity is deep within the true manifestation of a life of gospel poverty, humility, and love. The clothing we wear is simple, inexpensive, plain, and modest, so as not to give way to the temptation of vanity or religious pride.

#### Shelter:

The Brothers and Sisters of Charity also manifest a radical gospel simplicity in the area of shelter. The very homes and buildings in which we live manifest a gospel alternative of good news in the face of the system and pattern of our modern world, which has so imbalanced not only human society, but the ecology and environment of the whole created world as well. As an alternative to the quick wealth mentality and the consumeristic materialism of the phenomenon of modern suburban life - the Brothers and Sisters of Charity willingly adapt a gospel simplicity in their homes and buildings wherever they may be, be it in the inner city, in the suburbs, or in the rural areas. In this we are a leaven in the midst of the dough of the secular world, so that the light of God might shine in the darkness and keep the dough of the secular world from falling flat. In this we treat the symptoms of the disease of the pain and poverty of this world temporarily, so that we may eventually get to both the spiritual and temporal root causes.



In an attempt to treat this root cause of sociological imbalance within modern society, the Brothers and Sisters of Charity also set up alternative expressions of intentional Christian community in rural settings. Only in a rural setting and with the help of many brothers and sisters in Christ can a completely alternative approach to society be, at least substantially, pioneered and brought forth.

This alternative approach to Christian society has vast ramifications on the specific expression of gospel simplicity regarding the very building and homes in which we live.

In this alternative setting, the Brothers and Sisters of Charity use forms of shelter that are both economically and energy efficient. We are encouraged to investigate such things as earth sheltering, or styles of construction that are less appearance conscious and more practical. Likewise, whenever possible, we seek a true solidarity with the poor of the third world. However, in this we should not become so scrupulous about utilitarianism that legitimate beauty and esthetics are completely overlooked.

We also investigate alternative forms of energy production, proper to our culture and time. For us this primarily includes solar units, wind generators, hydro-electric units, and gas production from a more environmentally sensitive waste disposal and sanitary system. Others might become possible with new knowledge and technology.

The poverty, sacrifice, and simplicity of such a life is almost self-imposed. If you build your own home, you appreciate even the most simple aspects of it more greatly. If you produce your own energy, you will use that energy more simply. Likewise, if you produce your own food, you will consume it more sparingly and enjoy it more thoroughly. It is this alternative, rural approach to intentional Christian community which requires the most simplicity in food, clothing and shelter, and which manifests the most complete alternative to the sociological imbalances and abuses of modern society.

## CHAPTER 7: CHASTITY

The Brothers and Sisters of Charity are called to espouse Christ Jesus as the bridegroom of their souls in a personal love relationship that is chaste. If this personal love relationship with Jesus is one of chastity, then there will be no question whatsoever as to who is the father of our spiritual children.

The chastity of our personal love relationship with Christ is incarnationally manifested through our human relationships according to our various states of life. For the celibate, the vow of chastity calls us to

give up our right to marry and parent children in order to more fully espouse Christ alone. In this covenant of chastity, we imitate the literal way of Jesus who was himself without earthly wife or children. In this covenant of chastity, we free ourselves of all earthly domestic responsibility so as to more single-heartedly espouse both the church and the community as the bride of Christ with Christ. In this covenant of chastity, we become a symbolic reminder of heaven where none will be given in marriage to another, but where all will be united as the one bride of Christ. For the married brother or sister, the covenant of chastity calls us to enter more fully into the sacrament of matrimony, which in a most perfect way manifests incarnationally the mystery of the love union between the church who is the bride of Christ and the groom who is Christ Jesus himself. This covenant of chastity helps the married Brothers and Sisters of Charity to manifest the contrast between monogamous Christian marriage and the marriages of the modern secular world in which one quite easily goes from spouse to spouse through divorce. Furthermore, this covenant of chastity helps to strengthen the Brothers and Sisters of Charity who have entered into Christian marriage to be more faithful parents to the children who are born of this love union. These children themselves become sacramental reminders of the spiritual children who are born into the church through the love union between Christ as the groom and the church who is his bride.

While on earth the covenant of chastity is sacrificial, just as was the very life of Jesus. It is not always easy to remain celibate, nor is it easy to remain married to one spouse, especially when the world constantly bombards us through media and peer pressure to a life of promiscuity. Chastity is not always easy, though its rewards are great.

We do well to remember that chastity is best kept pure where a love relationship with Christ is left free to grow in the Spirit, and relationships of deep love and friendship are encouraged and nurtured between brothers and sisters in Christ. But in this let us be aware of the due discretion and disciplines made available through the moral teaching of the church and the ancient and trustworthy traditions of both religious and intentional community life.

Since chastity is a pure expression of love itself, it is good to remember that love itself is not an emotion, but is an act of the will. Love is a decision that includes the emotions, but is not guided by them. The emotions are guided by the will and the decision to love. Love is a commitment; therefore, chastity in an expression of love requires commitment and a decision to persevere. If that commitment is based solely on emotions, then it will fail. However, if that commitment to chastity does not include the emotions, it will become dry, weary, and unbearable. So, let the healthy love oriented chastity find the balance

between the human will and the human emotions, which is truly a God-given gift.

## CHAPTER 8: OBEDIENCE

The covenant of obedience calls us into a love union with Jesus, who obeyed both God the Father and the religious authorities of his day even to the point of death. In our covenant of obedience we, too, are called to obey God, the church, and the ministers and leadership of the community. We also do well to obey the civil authorities whenever their law does not conflict with the law of God and the church, for Christ Jesus himself, as well as the apostles, Peter and Paul, submitted themselves even to the unjust punishment inflicted on them by the civil authority of their day. In this obedience we give up our own will for the sake of the community, the church, and the whole world, and come to find a new freedom and a life in their death to self will.

This does not, however, mean that we are not to respectfully make our needs and opinions known to the ministers of the community, the church, and the world. As Jesus and the apostles spoke the truth, even when it conflicted with those in authority, so also must we. But as Jesus finally submitted to their authority, even to the point of death, so also must we; believing that in this death to self we share in the self-sacrifice of Christ, which brings new life and salvation to the whole world. Dialogue and love must, therefore, be encouraged if this obedience is to be a full expression of Jesus' love at work both within the individual members of the community and their ministers.

Ministers strive to create relationships and atmospheres where open dialogue is fostered. In this, however, all, both minister and member must conform to the Apostle Paul, who encouraged us to always give our reply in a humble respect.

Obedience is a direct outgrowth of humility, and humility is a direct outgrowth of a realization of the truth of the interdependence of all of the created world and a love which comes from God. All of the particular bodies of the created universe, animate and inanimate, human and non-human, are interdependent upon one another in the same way. This interdependency is not a choice; it is a simple fact of existence. It is a truth. Therefore, we are submitted to the various forces of nature. Likewise, we are subject to various human institutions, especially civil government. In particular, we are interdependent with the various members of the church which bears the Spirit of God and is therefore the Body of Christ. This is true, especially, of particular communities in the church, which have been given a special charism. by that same Spirit of God. God's image, the church herself bears the Holy Spirit and is therefore the Body of Christ, and particular communities of the church

have been given a specific charism by the Spirit of Christ, proper obedience to these various realities facilitates at least in some way, obedience to God himself.

Therefore, our covenant of obedience is based both on the fact of the interdependence of the created world, humankind, the church of Christ, and this community in the Body of Christ, and also upon our love for God and people, which impels us to be conformed perfectly to the example of Christ Jesus himself.

In our relationships of obedience we recognize a hierarchy of priorities between the various social bodies of community that exist within the Christian faith. Our first priority is God. Next is the church catholic, which includes every aspect of our life. After God and with the church universal, comes the nuclear family, which is the most primary expression of community in a person's life. Next comes the support group, which in this case is the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, followed by any other para-church organizations. After that comes the local parish in which the individuals and community actively participate and support. Lastly, comes the whole world with whom the whole church, including our community, shares the good news of Jesus Christ through work and word.

For the celibate brotherhood and the celibate sisterhood, the covenant of obedience requires a more intense relationship and application between the minister and the member of the community. For the celibate the community becomes the primary family on earth. A more complete knowledge of a person's life and a more intense input into a person's life in both spiritual and temporal direction as these relate to the overall life of the community is necessary. Therefore, the covenant of obedience with the celibate brotherhood and the celibate sisterhood is by its nature more specific and intense.

Since the primary expression of family for both the singles and the married members is their own more particular nuclear family, their relationship with the community is secondary; therefore, knowledge of and input into a person's personal life need not be as intense. Consequently, the covenant of obedience with both the single and the married member of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity is less specific and intense. Furthermore, there is a difference in both the specific application and the intensity of the covenant of obedience between those who live in intentional monastic community and those who live in their own homes. Due to the nature of intentional, monastic, Christian community, for the single, celibate, or married states, there is a more specific and closer interdependence between the members of the community and the community itself. Consequently, the covenant of obedience has more specific and intense application for the intentional

monastic expression of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity.

Those who live in their own homes as Little Brothers and Sisters of Charity have a less frequent, specific, or intense interdependence with the other members of the community, the leadership of the community, or the community as a whole. Consequently, their covenant of obedience is by its nature less intense than the covenant lived out by those who live in the intentional monastic expression of our Christian community.

The specific applications of our covenant of obedience as Brothers and Sisters of Charity are outlined according to the particular statutes of the particular expression of community to which we belong.

### CHAPTER 9: COVENANT PROMISES

God is a God of covenant. He covenanted with humankind in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:16). He covenanted with Adam after the fall (Gen. 3:15), and with Noah after the flood (Gen. 9:16). He covenanted with Abraham to multiply his offspring like the stars of heaven, even though Sarah, his wife, was sterile (Gen. 12:2). He made a covenant with Moses and gave the chosen people the law (Ex. 19:5). He made an everlasting covenant with his servant, David (2Sam. 7:16). He fulfilled that covenant with David perfectly in the person of Jesus and through the establishment of the new covenant (Lk. 1:32 and Heb. 8:8), which is, itself a covenant of love.

As a covenant community, we are something old yet something new in the plan of God. As the baptism of John was something new for its time, while building on the old, so are the covenant promises of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity something new for our time that build upon our Christian and Judaic commitments and communities of times past.

Like the earliest monastic traditions, we are a lay community that professes an informal commitment to live life in community which is not necessarily defined clearly by the church. Yet this commitment is not opposed to the church. We are totally submissive to the teaching authority of the church, yet we do not fit into the precise definitions of current canon law.

Like the Penitential Movement from which much of the monastic and Franciscan family was born, we are neither exclusively monastic or secular, but something unique that includes both in our single, celibate, and married expressions. As such, we are neither an association of the faithful nor an institute of the consecrated life exclusively; yet we include aspects of both in our intentional monastic Christian community and our domestic expression constituting something unique and new. We are simply a covenant community.

Our covenant commitments are an outgrowth of our baptismal commitment. There is no greater general commitment than to die to self in order to rise up a new creation in Christ. This is the commitment of baptism. Our covenants only specify the nature of that dying and rising in Christ in more particular ways during a particular period in our life. Our covenants are an outgrowth of our baptism in Christ.

When an individual hears God's Spirit calling them to investigate membership in our community, they undergo a process of mutual discernment between themselves and the community to 'test the spirits'. This involves a time of dialogue and gradual entrance into the full participation with a commitment of being a Brother or Sister of Charity.

This time is not intended to test the quality or the worth of a person before God, or even, necessarily, to test their overall call to community or religious life; but is meant only to discern their specific call to be a Brother or Sister of Charity. During this time it is the role of the community to help discern the authentic call of God on a person's life and help them respond in being all the good that God wants them to be. Sometimes this leads them into our community; sometimes it leads them elsewhere. Either way is fine as long as it is God's will.

Furthermore, once discerned that a person should pursue membership within the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, we must further discern as to which of these particular expressions of community a brother or a sister be called, i.e., single life, the celibate brotherhood, the celibate sisterhood, the married monastic, or the domestic expression of the Little Brothers and Sisters. Each particular expression of our community receives a brother or sister into that particular expression, according to their own approved particular statutes.

The minister of each particular expression of the community, or one who has been delegated by the minister, has the power to receive new members into the community. Whenever possible consultation with the brothers and/or sisters in leadership in each particular expression is advisable, but this is not mandatory. For the intentionally monastic expression of community, be it singles, celibates, or marrieds, a gradual series of commitments is required. A candidate must spend an appropriate amount of time in a pre-novitiate program. The duration of time can vary and is determined by the minister and the council, in light of the candidate's human and religious maturity. The pre-novitiate program is meant to provide time to judge the ability and vocation of the candidate to determine their grasp. It is also meant to ease the candidate from a lifestyle proper to the secular world, into one that is proper for a novice living in intentional monastic community. The steps of this pre-novitiate program are as follows:

- a) Candidate: This period extends to the beginning of the postulancy and calls for some time, approximately two weeks, of living the normal schedule of our life.
- b) Postulancy: This is a six to twelve month period to get to know the life of the community in both ideals and in practices. During this time the candidate lives with the community, becomes acquainted with the spirit and vision of the founder, works in the community apostolate, and is given an orientation to community life, receiving spiritual guidance for growth and prayer and interior life.
- c) Novitiate: After this period of getting acquainted, the individual will be asked to make a public covenant with the community for a novitiate period of one year. During this time the novice is seriously instructed in Catholic, Christian, and Franciscan monastic approaches to life, in the Spirit of Jesus and the life in Christian community in general. Furthermore, the novice is seriously instructed according to the vision and the ideals of the founder as contained in written materials and oral tradition.
- d) Profession: After this one-year period of living the full life of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, the individual will be asked to covenant for a period of three years. From this time on, the covenant must be renewed every three years. For those who have lived in community for at least four and one-half years under temporary commitments, novitiate and postulancy, a lifetime covenant promise may be made, but this lifetime covenant is an option; it is not an agenda. Those who leave after the duration of any temporary commitment can do so in good standing and with the full support of the community.

For membership in the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, an individual must be able to profess the content and understand the context of both the Apostle's and the Nicene Creeds. This is the minimal standard of orthodoxy given to us from Christian history and the witness of the earliest church. Since we are an ecumenical, Christian community, coming from both a Catholic and a Franciscan base, these covenant

promises require complete cooperation with the authority of the Catholic Church and the Franciscan family. Both the Catholic Church and the Franciscan family stand firm in their resolve to guard the religious liberty of all Christian peoples, all worshippers of God, and all good will. Therefore, the religious differences of those who come from the various ecclesial communities of Christendom. Thus is the community itself a symbol of the unity we can find in Christ, while still respecting the diversity of our various gifts from God.

For the sake of unity, presence by all non-Catholic community members is required at all community worship services. This includes both services of a liturgical and sacramental, as well as a charismatic nature. In obedience to the teaching of the church, we retain sacramental integrity at these liturgical gatherings. Thus does our community also become a symbol of the disunity that still exists between the various ecclesial communities that call upon the name of Christ.

Our non-Catholic brothers and sisters agree not to publicly contend with the doctrinal teaching of the church in order that unity of spirit, mind, and body be preserved in public worship. All of us commit to a mutual respect of one's differences, while still retaining our own point of view. Furthermore, we covenant not enter into vain argumentation over theological issues.

## CHAPTER 10: GOVERNMENT (Non-Canonical)

The Brothers and Sisters of Charity are a spiritual family in Christ, raised up by the Spirit in the church, integrating the single, celibate, and married states in life, as well as those who live in intentional, monastic community with those who live the domestic life in their own homes. As such, the whole community is governed by a general council, made up of leadership representatives of various states of life which exist under their own respective leadership and particular statutes. As one spiritual family, the whole community is parented by a spiritual father and mother in the persons of the founder and the foundress, and exist under the direction of one general council, the Scripture Rule, and the general constitutions.

### The General Council:

Supreme authority in the community resides in the general council when acting in union with the founder and the foundress, the Scripture Rule, and these general constitutions. The general council consists of leadership representatives from the celibate brotherhood, the celibate sisterhood, and the married monastic community, as well as the Little Brothers and Sisters who live the domestic life in their own homes. Other representatives may be added as other expressions develop.



This general council exists under the general direction of the founder and foundress, the Scripture Rule, and these constitutions. The founder and foundress act as spiritual father and mother to the whole community, and, therefore, have a permanent place on the council. If at any time they become unable to actively govern, their lawful successors will take their place, but, even then, the founder and foundress have a permanent place of honor on the council with passive voice.

The general council has the power to govern, proper to the general concerns of the community. This primarily includes the direction of the annual general conference, any general ministries or foundations, any necessary amendments to the general constitutions, and general disciplinary action directed towards any particular leader or particular expression as a whole. Particular concerns proper to the various states of life and communities is left up to particular statutes and leadership of each respective expression. Likewise, the direct disciplinary action concerning individual members is ordinarily left to leadership of the particular expression.

The decisions of the general council are reached by a majority vote. The method of voting will be by ballot or by toll. As spiritual father and mother of the whole community, the founder and foundress have veto power over the decisions of the council as long as they themselves agree. When they do not the founder has veto power alone as general minister of the whole community.

All members of the community, including the founder and foundress, must take into consideration the general well-being and desires of the whole community before exercising any power in leadership. Leaders must first listen to the Holy Spirit speaking to even the smallest member of the community before they can speak with true authority. It must always be remembered that Jesus is our primary shepherd, the Holy Spirit is our general minister, and God the Father is our primary spiritual father. As such, God is our primary Father and the church is our primary Mother. Likewise, the Trinity itself is the primary model for love and unity ideally exemplified by the general council.

#### The Spiritual Father:

The founder is the spiritual father of the whole community, and therefore, acts as the general minister. Since he is a true spiritual father of the whole spiritual family, the community, his term is for life according to the norms of these constitutions.

The spiritual father as general minister enjoys ordinary authority over each and every brother and sister, as well as over the particular expressions of the community. Normally, he exercises his authority through the leadership of each particular expression of community, but

he may act alone under extraordinary circumstances. Therefore, he exercises this authority alone or with the general council in accordance with the norms of these constitutions.

Decrees:

The minister general, with the input or the consent of his council, can promulgate decrees which are obligatory for the whole community. These decrees are effective only until the general conference, but if they are confirmed by the council at the time of that conference, they remain in force. The minister general, with the input of the council, can promulgate decrees for the particular expressions of the community. However, he may do this only after consulting the respective leadership of each particular expression. Such decrees may even be given permanent force until they are revoked.

Favors and Dispensations:

Favors, dispensations or other concessions of any kind are granted in writing by the general minister, either to individual brothers or sisters or to particular expressions of the community. These do not terminate when the one who granted them no longer has the right to do so, unless added clauses specify otherwise. Even though mention be made of the previous refusal, a favor denied by the general minister cannot be obtained validly from the vicar without the consent of the general minister.

Visitations:

The general minister, either personally or through a delegate, makes visitations of all the particular expressions of the community on a regular and frequent basis. Ideally this is done once a year.

Absent:

When the spiritual father, as general minister, is absent or impeded, the spiritual mother as vicar governs with ordinary authority. However, she must not use her authority contrary to the mind and will of the spiritual father. If the spiritual mother, as vicar, is also absent or impeded, the next officer takes his/her place with the name and office of pro-vicar.

The Spiritual Mother:

The foundress is the spiritual mother of the whole community, and therefore, acts as the vicar general minister. Since a spiritual marriage exists between the spiritual father and the spiritual mother of the community, the term of her office, likewise, is permanent, according to the norms of these constitutions. The minister general, with the council, and the confirmation of the bishop, may remove the vicar from office in the case of habitual, grave offense for the common good of the whole community or for a just cause may accept her resignation. The vicar assists the general minister in everything, but when the minister is

present, the vicar performs only what has been assigned to her. When the minister general is absent or impeded, the vicar governs the community with ordinary authority in accord with the above articles. She succeeds to the office of minister if it becomes vacant until the new general minister arrives. When the general minister is absent, the vicar can do only what cannot be postponed until his return. The vicar should make no innovations she knows to be contrary to the general minister's wishes as founder and spiritual father.

Particular Expressions:

Each particular expression of community, i.e., celibate brotherhood, celibate sisterhood, married monastic, and domestic family expressions, exist under their own respective leadership and particular statutes. These particular statutes must be approved by the founder as general minister and the general council whenever possible. Likewise, all particular leadership must be confirmed by the founder as general minister of the whole community. In emergency situations the general minister may appoint interim leaders until such time as proper vote may be taken by the particular expressions.

Higher Authority:

The general leadership of the whole community, including the founder and the foundress, exists under higher authority. This authority includes the bishop of Rome and the bishop of the Diocese in which the motherhouse exists, concerning things Catholic; the Order of Friars Minor and the Franciscan Province of the Sacred Heart concerning things Franciscan; and the Board of Directors of the Little Portion, Inc. concerning things temporal. While the general leadership of the community is more initiating by its nature, the higher authority over them is more permissive. It sets up the general and wide parameters of what is considered authentically Catholic and Franciscan, as well as lawful. It steps in only when the general leadership has gone over the line. The leadership of the community is free to direct the community wherever they discern the Spirit to be leading within these parameters.

Recourse:

Individual members of the community may have recourse to higher authority whenever an habitual abuse of authority exists in their immediate superior. They are bound to obey leadership whenever leadership directs according to the Scripture Rule, these general constitutions, and particular statutes, and does not direct contrary to either the church or an individual's conscience concerning faith and morality. Minor insensitivities by leadership that do not direct contrary to these things should be lovingly obeyed, but openly and honestly dialogued through between appropriate leadership and individuals. Even occasional, outright abuses of these things by leadership should be borne in love by individuals, unless they become habitual or of a moral

consequence. An individual should not spurn the authority of their leader, even though they cannot obey him in these areas. Then, after much dialogue and prayer, an individual may have recourse to higher authority. If problems in leadership continue to be habitual, the members may petition higher authority so that disciplinary action by that higher authority may be taken for the good of the community.

#### Appropriate Dialogue:

When a brother or sister disagrees or has difficulty with leadership, they are to use appropriate channels for dialogue. They are encouraged to speak freely, yet respectfully, to their own respective and immediate leadership, or the leader with whom they disagree. They may also speak to other community members who are directly involved as long as they speak respectfully and in confidence. Any involvement of other community members is considered insubordinate and gossip, and therefore a serious offense against leadership and their covenant of obedience.

They may also have recourse to any higher authority within or above the community in serious situations. They may consult a spiritual director, confessor, or professional counsellor with whom confidentiality is assured. Any dialogue of inner community affairs outside of these appropriate channels is considered gossip and possible slander, and is considered a morally grave offense against the community.

#### Patriarchal and Matriarchal Successors:

The spiritual father and mother appoint and commission successors before the termination of their active leadership. These successors may be celibate or married, but must be able to work together without harm to either their celibate or married states. The appointment of these successors comes with sensitivity to the whole community after consultation with the general council and must be confirmed by the bishop or other appropriate church authorities.

In the event of the unexpected death of the founder and/or foundress as spiritual father or mother, making their own choosing of a successor impossible, the community, the remaining spiritual father or mother, and the bishop will discern God's choice of a successor. In this, the consultative vote of both the general council and the community will be considered, keeping in mind the special precedence of the vote of the intentional monastic expression in which the founder and foundress lived. The remaining spiritual father or mother will then exercise their authority to choose or appoint a patriarchal or matriarchal successor for their deceased spiritual spouse. This choice must then be confirmed by the bishop.

In the case of the death of the founder as spiritual father, the foundress

as spiritual mother may ascend to the position of general minister. This must be done by the vote of the monastic expression and the general council with confirmation by the bishop, keeping in mind the will of the whole community as discerned through consultative vote when possible.

In the case of the spiritual mother as foundress ascending to the role of general minister, the patriarchal succession of a new spiritual father need not be immediate. A natural development of the charismatic reality of the spiritual father may unfold as discerned by both community and leadership with proper confirmation by the bishop. In the interim period the pro-vicar will act as vicar general minister.

The general minister may, therefore, be either male or female as spiritual father or mother as discerned either by the direct and implemented according to the norms of these constitutions. In the case of the patriarchal and matriarchal succession affecting the office of general minister and vicar general respectively, only the consultative vote of the intentional monastic community and the general council is needed before the appointment by the remaining spiritual spouse and confirmation by the bishop. In the case where the exchange of the offices of general minister and vicar general minister between the spiritual father and mother is involved, the active vote of both the intentional monastic community and the general council is needed before the bishop's confirmation

#### Conferring of Offices:

Offices and positions in the community are conferred either by election, which is duly confirmed, or by appointment. There are two methods of election in the community. These are the written and the roll call. The election takes place, ordinarily, at the general conference extraordinarily, at a meeting of the general chapter of a particular expression of the community, according to their particular statutes. The minister general, either personally or through a delegate, presides at the election of officers. In the spirit of co-responsibility and communal service, the brothers and sisters accept election to the offices mentioned unless absolutely impossible. All professed members are eligible for the offices and positions of the community, as long as they have the requisites and qualifications established by common law and these constitutions. Unless otherwise provided, one who has been elected by a chapter cannot exercise authority until he has been confirmed by the general minister or his delegate, who presides at the election.

#### Loss and Vacancy of Offices:

Loss: Offices are lost by expiration of term of office, by acceptance of an incompatible office within or without the order, by a resignation that is accepted, by removal and deprivation.

Prolongation: All offices and positions conferred by election or by appointment always become vacant at the time of the general conference unless other provision is expressly made. The general minister with the input of this council can decree the prolongation of an office or position. This is done with consideration of the vote of the general chapter of the respective particular expression of community. An officer of a particular chapter of a particular expression of the community, after consulting with its membership, can accept the resignation of an office which has been conferred by that same chapter. Resignation of the general minister has no effect unless it is made to and accepted by the bishop. The general council, when acting in union with the general minister can with confirmation by the bishop, accept the resignation of the vicar general minister. It may also accept the resignation of the particular leadership of a particular expression of the community outside of their particular chapter. The general minister may accept the resignation of offices conferred by appointment.

Removal: For a grave reason and with the input of the council, the general minister may remove from office any particular leader of any particular expression of the community represented in the council. When a decree of removal is issued, recourse with the effect of suspending the decree may be directed to the general minister and the bishop, respectively. Such recourse must be made to the minister who issued the decree and this within ten available days. These ten days are to be computed from the time of communication of the decree. If this time elapses and no recourse has been initiated, the office becomes automatically vacant.

Conclusion:

All leaders in the community must be both good followers and good leaders. They must be willing to listen, yet able to teach. They must be knowledgeable of Catholic Christian doctrine and Franciscan monastic spirituality from both study and experience. The ministers will be subject to the guidance of the church, and will thus guide the brothers and sisters by both example and work.

## CHAPTER 11: CORRECTION AND DISCIPLINE

Jesus tells us that we are to forgive a repentant brother or sister until seven times seventy. He also tells us that when there is an offense within the community, we are to go first to the brother or sister by ourselves, then with a witness, and finally, with the leaders of the community. If after that, the brother or sister does not repent, they are to be treated like a tax collector or a publican. Likewise, Paul commands us that while we are not to judge those who live outside of the community, we have the obligation to judge those within the community both for the sake of the community at large and the soul of the individual themselves.

When there is a behavior or disciplinary problem within the community, we first are to go and speak to the brother or sister with whom we have a fault, or whom we believe has a fault with us, and talk with them privately about this matter. Next, we go with one or two witnesses, but even this is kept very private and confidential. If the individual still does not respond, then the matter should be brought to community leadership.

The ministers show fatherly and motherly compassion to brothers and sisters who sin, or who are in danger of sinning, in order to give them appropriate and effective help in the Lord Jesus. Ministers do not impose formal penalties unless this is absolutely necessary. Likewise, they are prudent and charitable in imposing corrective punishment when needed.

Communal correction is only undertaken for the genuine spiritual welfare of both the individual and the community. Great care is taken to protect the basic human rights of the individuals in question, while also preserving the discipline and welfare of the community. If the good of individuals or of the community forces a minister to admonish, correct, or punish, he is to offer this service kindly and lovingly in accordance with the norms of the Scripture Rule, these constitutions, and particular statutes.

When public or private sin is present in the community, the minister may exhort those in sin to go to their brothers and/or sisters, and also may encourage them to go to a priest in confession and penance in order to be absolved of their sin by the church who holds the keys of the kingdom.

He may also exhort non-Catholic members to private and public confessions before the offended parties, in order that the individuals and the assembly of the community recognize God's forgiveness of their sin. In this way they may put it behind them and out of their minds once and for all.

All ministers should remember the words of St. Francis who said, "All the friars, both the ministers who are servants and their subjects, should avoid being upset or angry when anyone falls into sin or gives bad example; for the devil would be only too glad to ensnare many others through one man's sin. Rather, let them give the sinner spiritual aid, as best they can." Nor, "should they embarrass him or speak about his fault. They should have the greatest sympathy for him and keep their brother's fall a secret." It is not the healthy who have need of a physician, but they who are sick.

The ministers who are constrained to impose punishments do well to have before their eyes what St. Francis wrote to a certain minister, "I should like to prove that you love God and me, his servant and yours, in

the following way. There should be no friar in the whole world who has fallen into sin, no matter how deeply he has fallen, who will ever fail to find your forgiveness for the asking, if he will only look into your eyes. And should he appear before you again a thousand times, you should love him more than you love me so that you may draw him to God; you should always have pity on such friars."

Dismissal: For the dismissal of professed brothers and sisters from the community, grave reasons are required. These grave reasons include willing and habitual disobedience concerning the teachings of the church concerning faith and morality and/or habitual unwillingness to live according to the vision and ideals of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity as put forward by the founder and foundress in the Scripture Rule, these constitutions, and the particular statutes of the expression of the community in which they made their covenant. The dismissal of individuals from the particular expressions of community must be in accord with the particular statutes of the particular expression of the community. Generally speaking, the leadership of the particular expression of community is competent to issue a decree of dismissal. However, this must be either confined or vetoed by the general minister, who is the spiritual father of the whole community.

All of the ministers should care for the spiritual, moral, and social welfare of those who leave or are dismissed from the community. They assist them, remembering their needs as well as the demands of equity and considering the time the individual spent in community life and the benefits received from the community.

## CHAPTER 12: OUR OWN LAWS AS COMMUNITY

The general council, in union with the spiritual father and mother as general and vicar minister and with the confirmation of the local bishop, are competent to establish constitutions as well as to repeal constitutions. Even the general council and the successors to the founding spiritual father and mother may not change anything essential to the founding charism of the community contained in these constitutions. Interpretation of laws established by the general council falls within the competence of the general council. Outside the general council interpreting is entrusted to the particular leaders of the particular expressions of our community with consultation with and confirmation from the general minister. An interpretation made outside of the general council, unless it is approved by general council.

It is the role of the general constitutions to offer norms necessary for good order in the lifestyle of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity wherever they may be.



It is the role of the particular leadership of the particular expressions of our community to establish particular statutes in light of personal and local needs or circumstances. These may never be contrary to the norms of the general constitution and must be approved by the minister general, who is the founder and spiritual father of the whole community.

For a just reason, the minister can dispense from laws of discipline enacted by the community, even in habitual and particular cases, but not those laws expressly excluded:

- a) The general minister with respect to individuals and the whole community.
- b) The particular minister for his own particular expression of community wherever they may live.

However, a habitual dispensation in favor of the brothers and sisters of an entire particular expression of community is reserved to the general minister.

No minister of the community has the power to dispense from what touches the very substance of our community life, nor unless expressly stated otherwise, from the laws of these constitutions, namely, those pertaining to structures or government, even enacted by the council.

The laws contained in these general constitutions do indeed bind in conscience since faithfulness to the gospel can scarcely be attained in a way proper to this community without faithful observance of these laws. All brothers and sisters should strive to keep them with the greatest care.

# Brothers and Sisters of Charity at the Little Portion

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