

## BOOK OF THE PROPOSALS

### MANUSCRIPT 30

*The Book of the Proposals, commonly known as Manuscript 30, contains the decisions of two Chapters of the Company of the Servants of the Poor. The first one was held in Brescia on June 4, 1536, while the second was probably held at Sabioncello on August 24, 1538. Some pages of the Manuscript are handwritten by Jerome Miani himself.*

*The Our Prayer, though contained in this Manuscript, is reported elsewhere.*

On June 4, 1536, The Company of the Poor Derelict met in Brescia. They are Father Alessandro from Milan, Father Agostino from Bergamo, Sir Jerome Miani, first father of these poor, Marco from Milan, Giovanni the Third from Como, Cristoforo, Giovanni Antonio Vergesi, Romerio, Giovanni Francesco senior, Giovanni Antonio from Milan, Agostino, Giovanni senior, Pietro from Valdimagna, (Iob is absent because he is sick and is in Bergamo), Francesco the First, Bernardino the First, Martino, Bartolomeo, Giacomo, Bernardino the Second.

Those who do not belong to the Company are also reminded that they can ask forgiveness when they do something evil they are not aware of. This is stated in # 129.

Remember also that the governors, when they find someone poor in need, are to notify the person in charge and are to help them. When someone knocks at the door, no one but the doorman is to open. Remember also to read during meals, and when it is possible, to find someone who could read in the hospitals.

Moreover, these orders are to be observed here, especially those regarding knocks at the door, talking during meals, and reading during meals.

Father Agostino raises his voice: too little mortification, too little care of the souls, too little vigilance.

An ordinance is to be prepared to be read to all those who join us, regarding all the things they need to know:

- especially about working, taking away goods;
- that everything brought in will be used in common and nothing will belong to anyone individually;
- about not keeping nor asking to keep anything, should one leave;
- about obedience, poverty, and patience;
- about discomfort in eating, sleeping, and clothing;
- about devotion, confession, fasting, illnesses;
- about abstinence during illnesses, about mortification, talking in a low voice, with few words;
- and especially about not taking oaths, blaspheming, or lying;
- about never finding excuses for wrongdoing;
- about asking permission for everything; and, until one is a novice, about not doing anything without permission, and all the other things which pertain to a novice.

These ordinances for novices are to be exposed on a bulletin board on a wall.

Should anyone leave, he is to be treated with love, and he should not be allowed to leave in anger, if it is possible.

Passed.

Procedures to follow before the quadrimonthly chapter.

Since all things done with judgment are always closer to the truth and such things please God and His servants, we decide that the Chapter of the Servants of the Poor and of three representatives from the cities be held every four months.

Since all things planned have a better result than ones improvised, we decide to establish in writing the following procedures for the Chapter of the Servants of the Poor and of the three representatives from the places, which is held every four months.

Eight days before the Company convenes, the three Servants of the Poor are to meet in order to prepare what is going to be proposed to the Company and to the three representatives from the places. The date for the meeting of the three Servants is to be announced to all the “Commessi” of the places. A month earlier, the date and the place of the Chapter is to be communicated so that everybody may be notified, freeing and preparing himself for the chapter. Eight days after the Chapter of the Company, the three representatives of the places will meet to prepare for the reunion. When the “Commessi” come to the Chapter, they are to bring five written lists regarding the children:

- one of the children who are going to be assigned as apprentices;
- one of the officials;
- one of the children according to the old order;
- one of those who deserve to be moved down according to the new order;
- one of the orders and disorders which are going to be proposed. To this list is to be added a report on all the children of the place entrusted to each “Commessio.”

Besides the ones who will present the three representatives of the places, that is, a procurator and one of the three, the “Commessi” are to propose the two mentioned above, each in his own place.

Since the previous procedure is quite unclear, we will try to clarify it as follows: all the “Commessi” of the places, after prayer, are to consider diligently who could be presented to replace that procurator who is to be substituted, when the four months expire. They are also to consider changing one of the three representatives from each town, even though this pertains to the three representatives from each town. We need to do this in order to know easily the sure way and to choose the most appropriate men for this spiritual exercise and the most prepared ones for the Chapter. Moreover, all participants, either belonging to the Company or being representatives of each place, are to bring proposals to the Chapter.

Passed.

The Chapter will be held during these three times: on Pentecost, All Saints’, and St. Matthias’ day or the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin, if it does not fall during Holy Week.

The Chapter will be held one time in one place, and other times in others, according to necessity. [We have to see whether it pertains] to the Chapter to decide if it is better to go begging according to the times rather than according to needs. To the Company it seems it does not. However, begging according to needs means that the beggars are out continuously. To the chapter we are to ask how... to give water to those who go underneath.

We remind the Chapter to send the Visitors with the new ordinances; [to send them also] before the chapter in order to invite to the Chapter, to prepare and question the children to know how the “Commessos” behaved himself.

*(Prayer: Sweet Father of Ours)*

We propose that any time “Forty Hours” is observed the Blessed Sacrament should be displayed immediately, with a small procession, at least around the church; once It is put back on the altar, the praise “Sweet Jesus” should be sung; the procession is to be made with the mysteries of the Passion, if they are there, otherwise without them. At the end of the Hours, after the “Hail, Holy Queen,” “Deus qui nobis sub Sacramento mirabilis” should be recited, as well as during Mass.

Sending the children begging, especially sending them to the doors of the churches with boxes, is cause for loss of souls and ignoring spiritual things. Therefore, we propose never to send the children to the churches’ doors for the purpose of collecting money or other alms with boxes. On the contrary, we are to find a way to work more so that we can live by our sweat. Only when in dire need are we to look for alms.

Passed: it must be done with permission of the Ordinaries.

Passed: as we work and the work increases, we must decrease the frequency of sending boxes out to the doors.

It is proposed that on Sundays, besides the Office of the Blessed Virgin after the Evening Prayer of the Blessed Virgin, the Evening Prayer of the Deceased will also be said, especially for benefactors; on Mondays, after the Office of the Readings of the Blessed Virgin, Night Prayer and Morning Prayer of the Deceased will be said; on Wednesdays, the Seven Penitential Psalms will be said, remaining seated; on Thursdays, the Office of the Holy Spirit; on Fridays, the Office of the Cross or Passion; on Sundays, after the Office of the Readings of the Blessed Virgin, the Seven Penitential Psalms, the Litanies, and the prayers should be recited while kneeling.

It is proposed that on Fridays all the members of the Company will follow the discipline early in the morning and in private, in remembrance of the Passion of our Lord.

It has been passed that on Sundays, after the Office of the Blessed Virgin, the Seven Penitential Psalms will be said. On the weekdays, only the Office of the Blessed Virgin is to be said. If any feast fall on the same day, the Office of the Deceased is also to be said. On Wednesdays the Seven Gradual Psalms are to be said also; on Thursdays the Office of the Holy Spirit and on Fridays the Office of the Cross, even if any feast falls on those days.

It is proposed that the “Commessi” who work in the hospitals should be provided with helpers; this helper, whether belonging to the Company or not, is to replace the “Commessos” during Chapter. When the “Commessos” participates in Chapter, the helper is to summon all the children of that institution and, after praying, is to question them in secret, one by one, about the “Commessos’” mistakes. And he is to take with him two presidents who are to investigate the same thing. Everything is to be put in writing and sent to the Chapter, but not through the “Commessos.”

We know by experience that in almost all the hospitals there is much disobedience and many irregularities occur, and many people are scandalized and unfavorably impressed. This is caused by the “Commessi” who are indiscreet, who have no zeal for souls or little care for themselves. Moreover, those who cause these disorders are not faithful and constant in their works. Therefore, we propose that the “Commessi” must take care first of themselves and then of those who are entrusted to their custody; that an investigation into the management of the house has to be carried out diligently; and that for those who are found to be the cause of disturbance and are unable to settle down, another solution will be found, that is, either to send them to live with others or to give them a better way of salvation.

My opinion.

We poor petition that our priests may live on alms, in a community; may celebrate in the Roman Rite, privately, for us poor, even during those prohibitions not caused by us; may hear confessions in all our institutions, as well as the confessions of those who are related to us; may recite the Office together; may preach publicly in our institutions; may read and explain the sacred Scriptures in our institutions; may receive the sacred Orders even without having any income, if they are candidates to the priesthood; may choose among themselves a leader to whom they can give obedience; may renounce everything according to the requirements of community life. Moreover, [we petition] that all those who are in these institutions or related to them may receive a plenary indulgence at their death, and the “statione” in this life.

For all other things, we remain under the jurisdiction of the Ordinary.

We propose the Chapter be held only twice a year and, in order not to disrupt devotions, to see to it that it will not be held during Lent. Instead of the Chapter, [we propose] to send Visitors more often; there should be at least two of them, to divide the towns between them, since one alone can not visit all the places easily.

We propose that the opinion of all the brothers be heard before admitting somebody into the Company.

It passed that the Chapter would be held only twice a year, every six months, but between Chapters the custom of visiting twice should be maintained.

It passed that:

- no one who is in the institutions will keep silk bookmarks in their books;
- in the refectories of our institutions no tablecloths will be used, but a small tablecloth for each one; tablecloths will be cut for other needs; if any institutions have an abundance of them, they are to share them with others; should a noble person come to have a meal among the poor, the same custom must be used but with cleaner linen;
- meat will not be bought except in cases of true necessity for the sick and the elders; the “Commessi” will have authority, when no alms are given, to buy something inexpensive for Sundays and other solemn feasts;
- should there not be enough food for everybody in the house, it will be given only to the elders and small children; in delivering it, all have to be assured that they receive his/her own right portion;
- in the houses of the poor, no roasted meat of any kind will be prepared either during chapters or other circumstances, except for the sick;
- in our institutions the “Commessi” will continually remind all to observe poverty, especially in seasoning the soup and burning wood;

- the brothers of the Company will be reminded to observe the rules made up and established by the happy and blessed soul of our father Jerome regarding poverty, either interior or exterior, rules which are contained in the Rules for Due Circumstances; the observance of these rules is manifested in the way we dress;
- if anyone, inspired by the Spirit of the Lord to conform himself more to the will of the blessed soul of our father Sir Jerome about poverty (which he loved so much and he demonstrated this in his deeds), does not want to wear linen shirts, he will be given woolen shirts, but not serge shirts; and this will not be for the reason of being different but for spurring the other brothers to follow our Lord Jesus Christ, naked on the cross;
- in our institutions hoods or small mantels will be made for those who beg so that they may cover themselves during begging and traveling;

It must be done.

In our institutions they are to do what they can.

Those who were elected as First Father and Councilors are Father Federico, Father Angelo Marco, and Father Marco. They will have authority over the whole Company but they cannot admit into or dismiss anybody from the Company, or add and take away any practice.

This Chapter was held in at St. Mary in Sabioncello, on August 24, 1538, the feast of St. Bartholomew.

In Pavia, younger children can be placed with older ones so that the latter may help them out, but they are not to be malicious.

It may be done.

We are not to accept the institution of Sabioncello unless it is completely free of everything.

To Father Marco is given the task of transcribing all the practices in order in one book, and as many copies are to be made as there are communities so that every place may be given a copy.

I, Don Luca Antonio Fasolo, cleric regular from Somasca, under oath state that I have heard the testimony from Tognio and Togni, eighty-year-old men, who were questioned by me whether they knew father Jerome Miani. They told me this detailed story: Two brothers, hostile to each other, met while one was coming down from Somasca and the other was going up from Vercurago. Facing each other on the path, they started cursing the Blessed Virgin and our Lord. Father Jerome, arriving while they were quarreling, spoke these words: "Brothers, what kind of evil did our Lord and the Blessed Virgin do that you blaspheme so atrociously? I will do penance for you." He knelt in the mud and started to eat mud with his mouth while asking our Lord for mercy and forgiveness. Seeing that, the two brothers made peace by hugging and kissing each other.

This is what I heard from the two just mentioned. And from the same two, I heard when I was sixteen or seventeen that our father Miani performed the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves.