

GENERAL RULES FOR THE INSTITUTIONS

The Priestly Office

The priest should live according to his name ("Sacerdos"). Therefore, he is to give the "sacred things," virtuous examples, and the saving Word of God. He is to comment about the mysteries that are celebrated in the feasts in church, to explain the simple truths of the Christian life to his faithful with the examples of the Saints, and administer the sacraments of confession and communion with love and after exhorting the faithful to prepare worthily. However, no one can administer the sacred things well to the neighbors if he is profane and subject to his senses. He has to be vigilant first of all of himself by applying himself to spiritual readings and frequent prayers while he gets ready to celebrate for his family. And if he does not have anyone of the congregation with him, he is to choose a good spiritual director as his confessor with whom he could find counsel in his doubts.

Since he is not only a priest, but also a spiritual father, he is to love the children who are entrusted to him and diligently provide them with all the things that benefit the soul, sacrificing himself for the good of the neighbor. He is to try to be present at the vocal and mental prayer, at the discipline, and at meals. He is to have the children read and teach them some grammar, since there is no one else who could teach. He is to lead the house meeting of the oldest children. As a good father, he is to find the way to keep the peace in the house among the officials, and among the sponsors, through a good leadership, exhortations, prayers, and at times through threatening; he should keep everybody working. He is to be benevolent with the "Com messo," often consulting with him, and doing everything together in agreement. He should not be involved with outside tasks if before he did not take care of the house. He should not alter the ordinances of his predecessor without the counsel of the Superior or Visitor, and should not introduce customs which are not compatible with the ordinances to avoid that his successors persevere in them. In his actions he is to always aim at the honor of God and of the Congregation: who does not know that when a member is wounded the whole body hurt? He is to love his brothers of the Company more than his blood brothers. When he moves to a city where he has never been, he is to present himself to the Ordinary to get the permit to administer the sacraments to the faithful outside the house. He is to live in peace with his pastor. He is to watch that he never say anything in public that could scandalize the neighbor and offend the eternal God.

The "Com messo" Office

The brother who holds the "Com messo" office must have three things. First, he greatly needs the fear of God. In order to preserve himself in this holy fear, he must be fervent in prayer and attend the sacraments of confession and communion. Second, he must have a vigilant care first of himself, and then of all the house of which he is in charge, with prudence. He is to refrain from scandalizing the children and to make sure that in them there no be any offense of God and any bad habits. He should duly punish the errors during the house meeting, according to the quality and seriousness of the faults, but he must punish always with clemency. To his office pertains the task of

keeping the orphans clean and cleansed, and sending them out of the house well in order both in body and soul; as well as, of providing for of the living needs of everybody, according to the quality and needs of the creatures; of supervising the other officials, of giving orders to all about what they have to do, both in the house and outside; of making sure that everybody in the morning gets up on time, says the Liturgy of the Hours, does all the other things in time; of procuring work to the children and taking good care of all the things.

Third, he must have humble submission and harmony with his spiritual father. From these attitudes, come the peace and profit of all the family. It should be like one soul in two bodies and one will in two souls. By means of our buying agents, he has to provide for the house, in time, all the things necessary both for living and clothing.

The Officers of the Institutions

The institutions, besides the priest and "Commessos", need other managers in order to accomplish the work of the Lord in full. These institutions are not like a family, however, like a family they need more or less managers according to the number of the family members.

First, in general, besides the "Commessos" there is the need of a manager either of the Congregation or an employee; however, he must conform himself to our customs. With the knowing of the "Commessos," he is to take care of the works and that the merchants be served with promptly and diligently.

Second, he is to be in charge of the pantry. After consulting with the "Commessos," with the cook he will order all the necessary for living, taking care that faithfully the food of the Lord be delivered, according to each one's need; he is to set the table, not let the food go bad because of greed, not be lavish in delivering everything at once. If there is time left, he is to put himself at the disposal of the "Commessos."

Third, he is to be a cook, so that he may prepare the things that belong to the kitchen both for the sound and the sick. He must work in a clean way. If it is necessary, the "Commessos" will assign an aid.

Fourth. In many places it is convenient to have a manager who may teach reading to the children and to the youngsters, who may help. If "Commessos" deems it appropriate, he could also take care of the sick, whom he will assist with promptness and charity, according to the orders of the doctor. This office, as well as the lower ones, could be performed by the older orphans, as it is deemed appropriate to the priest and the "Commessos."

It follows the office of custodian. To this office usually it is assigned one of the oldest children, one who shows some goodness and prudence: he is the one who takes care of the children when the "Commessos" is present or absent. The custodian takes care that the children hurry up in the morning, go to the Liturgy of the Hours, to the Mass, that they move around two by two; that they learn, work, observe the silence time, recite the Litanies of the Blessed Virgin in the morning and those of the Saints after meals. He takes care that no misbehavior occur in the house and in the community; should misbehavior occur, he has to tell the responsible to report it in the house meeting. The custodian can have the disobedient ones drink water during meals, as penance; those who do not observe modesty at the table can be sent by him to eat in the middle of the dining

room. Because this office is kind of annoying, it is a good thing to change it every month. Also the other lower offices can be changed every month during the house meeting. These lower offices are: the sacristan, who takes care of the sacristy, rings the Hail Mary, keeps everything in order neatly, and serves Mass; the gatekeeper, who closes the doors and the shutters, and hands in the key to the "Commessos" at night; two who take care of the dormitory, make the beds, and keep the house clean; one who takes care of the oil lamps; one who takes care of keeping the head of the children clean to avoid that they get sick, by anointing and washing, and doing any other thing that they may need; washing the sick ones every eight days and the healthy ones every fifteen days, and once in awhile washing the feet. In almost all the institutions there is the need of those who go begging for the bread and the other necessary things. To this office it is necessary to assign well behaved children who can set a good example; these ones need to have their needs taken care of in the house, lest they create problems outside and scandalize the neighbor. All these officials, once they have accomplished their task, are to return to the community and do something else with the others.

Acceptance of a Person in the Institutions

Great prudence is required in accepting persons in the institutions! There are those who are too strict in not accepting anyone and run the risk of giving account of those who are called by God and could produce fruits in the work of the Lord. However, worse are those who are too lax in accepting everybody; there are too many who, because of their depraved costumes, create confusion in the institutions and leave scandalized, since they were not called by God.

We need to observe this rule: those who are busy in good deeds, not easily are to be accepted, but we need to exhort them to persevere in those good deeds; those whose life was dissolute and immoral, because they have grown old in their depraved habits, are not suitable for these institutions; those who belong to other religions are not to be accepted; those who come in order not to carry the cross and to live according to our orders, are not good for us; the same for those who, it is evident, are not necessary either here or there in our institutions, especially if they do not have any skills at all. And everything must be done with the participation of the priest Superior.

Those Who Are Raised in the Institutions

Greater prudence is required in deliberating about the keeping of those who come into the institutions as orphans, as well as in accepting the older ones. The Superiors, with a prudent eye, should investigate the behavior and customs of the children who are raised in the institutions, and should not admit them easily if they cannot see in them good inclinations to virtue and to become either priests or "Commessi," or good officials; instead, with diligence they should try to give to each one, according to his vocation and attitude, a direction in his adolescence, keeping in mind for what goal these institutions are established, that is, to help these creatures to come out of the corporal and spiritual misery, endow them with some good virtues, and give them a good direction for the glory of God.

Admitting the Orphans to Grammar School and Sacred Order

In all the institutions all the orphans who are capable must be taught reading and writing. However, those whom the priest and the "Comnesso" deem capable of learning grammar and make progress, with the consent of the Visitor and after they are able to read well, may be admitted to learning. However, they are not to be relieved from the manual tasks despite the fact that they are learning, neither from the rules of the other orphans in order to save the peace in the house and to make them feel useful somehow. And when they are observed persevere and progress in letters and moral virtues, they might be taken from the institutions and put in the school of arts with the intent to ordain them as clerics. And they are to exercise in the Liturgy of the Hours and ceremonies under the guidance of a good father.

Attendance to Sacraments

The priests are to celebrate every day, unless they are prevented by some impediment, and go to confession in order to be more pure in approaching the sacrament. The "Comnessi" with some other officials of the house are to go to confession and communion every eight days if they are not impeded somehow. And all the officials are to go to confession every week and receive the communion, according to the father's advice, at least once a month. The children are to go to confession every month and the adults are to receive communion during the major feasts. Those who receive the sacrament in a pure and worthy way progress greatly in their spiritual life and are wondrously helped to patiently carry the cross of their tribulations.

Ordinances about Prayer That Is Common to All Institutions

In all the institutions the Office of the Blessed Virgin is to be said all year. All the residents in the house are to attend and say it well, while the "Comnesso" makes sure that the voices are well in tune. Every Sunday, they are to say the Seven Penitential Psalms; on Monday, when it is not a day of obligation, they are to say the Office of the Dead for the deceased benefactors; on Wednesday, they are to say the Gradual Psalms; on Thursday, the Office of the Holy Spirit; on Friday, that of the Cross and on Saturday, the rosary, when they are feast day. Every day, after Night Prayer, they are to recite the usual vocal prayer, which is said also in the morning while the children get dressed. The officials with the children, every day, morning and evening, are to practice meditation for fifteen minutes, during which few devout words are read from a good book, in order to inspire to raise the mind to God and to consider His benefits. The children who cannot read, while the others recite the Office, say the rosary to the Blessed Virgin.

Chores

The Superiors of the Institutions are to use great care that the time be well organized. In order to have the children perform some task, besides the prayers, they are to see that everybody has some chores, according to his degree, and which can be easily performed by everybody.

First, after the prayers, they are to learn their lessons; once they have repeated them, all are to do their chores according to the obedience. There are three reasons why the poor are to work hard: first, to comply with the commandment of God; second, to learn to support themselves when they are adults; third, not to molest their neighbor in begging for alms, as well as to avoid laziness.

In this the "Commessi" are to make sure that the oldest ones have no time to waste. While working, in the morning they are to observe an hour of silence and then recite the Litanies of the Blessed Virgin; the same after meals, reciting those of the Saints and other prayers or praises for the glory of God.

House Meeting and Chapter

These institutions have been characterized by a beautiful order since the beginning. Therefore, never it should be allowed not to convene the house meeting presided by the "Comnesso" and an aid, every day, if we want peace and welfare for both the Superiors and the subjects. After the Our Father, in this meeting the faults of the children are heard, when they have committed something in or outside the house. Those who accuse themselves are to receive a light penance, while those who are accused by either by the custodian or by the companions, with charity are to be given a punishment comparable to the error for self-amendment and as an example to others. In this meeting they deal about the things that are to be done and the needs of all, and they give an account about the works, in order not to bother the "Comnesso" outside the meeting and the latter, without hanger, may punish those who misbehave.

The oldest and the officials of the house confess their mistakes and ask for penance in the Chapter, where the priest is present. The officials are to accuse their faults at least once a month. Where there is a big family, they are to hold every week for those who do not go to the house meeting for humbling themselves. In this meeting, they are to be notified if there are disorders in the house in order to bring remedy to them.

Fasting and Discipline

It is a good thing, says Wisdom, when man starts since childhood carrying the yoke of suffering for God's love. Therefore, in imitation of the good servants of the Lord, in these institutions they are to fast (besides the fasting of obligation) on Friday in memory of the Lord's Passion, unless it falls on the vigil day of some feasts or unless the Father Priest dispenses from it. Moreover, those who are healthy are to observe fasting in Advent and not to eat cheese products, if it is possible. Those who are a little older should discipline himself on Fridays, in the evening, while they say the Miserere, De Profundis, Pater Christus factus etc., Iesu Christe Fili, three times, with the prayer Respice Quaesumus.

Obedience and Other Orders for the Institutions

When the Pope, His Holiness, grants the faculty to elect Superiors to the Congregation, he also obliges all the subjects to obey them. Therefore, when a Chapter appoints one Priest an another "Comnesso" as government of a family, the family is obliged to obey them. Likewise, when one is appointed as custodian, the subjects are obliged to and must

obey him. Not wanting to obey to one's Superiors in things honest and just, is a grave sin. For the preservation of the Congregation, all the brothers must obey the Father Superior and all the ordinances issued by the Chapter. Likewise, the officials of the institutions with their subjects must obey the priest and "Comnesso." And all together must obey God who mandates us to love each other.

In all the institutions the priest is to bless the meals and give thanks, and someone is to read some good books while eating in order to get out some fruits for the soul. In the evening, usually the children are to debate about the things of the Christian life.

It is a "Comnesso's" task to allow the children to have some fun in the or outside the house in order to meet their need to play.

Money and Clothes

When the Institutions have their buyers outside, the brothers have few opportunities to handle money. However, when in the institution there are no buyers outside, the priest and "Comnesso", either one or the other, faithfully handle the goods of the poor because they are common properties consecrated to Christ. Hence, the other officials and the children are not to handle money, or keep money, unless one of the officials is sent to perform some service or but something. However, he must not keep money on himself. In spending, one is to aim at poverty, both in the things of living and in the things of clothing in order not to scandalize the neighbor.

The Father Visitor is to have this preoccupation: where money is handled, he must demand to give an account. He is also to be concerned that no one exceed the honest way of dressing according to our style, that one watch from pleasures and prodigality, and that one make sure that the children be orderly dressed but as poor. This is the good example we give to the world; and this is what will draw many to our Congregation: if we keep un-blemish our vocation to be ministers of the poor of the Lord.

Some Customs of the Institutions

In those institutions where there is people's attendance and the custom of chanting Evening Prayer in church, this practice should be kept in order to edify the neighbor and have the children involved in holy devotions. Likewise, it should be continued the tradition of saying the Office during Holy Week and the Octave of Corpus Domini where there is this custom. In organizing general processions and the other possible devotions, we are to observe the ordinances of the city where we live. Likewise, we are to continue to go to the funerals where there is this custom. The "Comnessi" must have great care when sending out the children to solicit money with their money boxes, as well as bread, that they may beg only for the things necessary and nothing else; as well as they should often send someone to watch that they the children do not misbehave and give bad example to the laypeople. We should not start the custom of going around for the country town where it is not in use. And as far as possible, the brothers are to devise the way to eliminate going around begging; we are to work and hope in God: if we take care of the salvation of the soul, God will provide for the bodies, as the Gospel states.

Avoiding Dealing with Women

Beautiful but delicate is the fame of honesty! With any effort all the brothers, both lay and priests, are to avoid working with women and always see not to discredit the Congregation. No one must assume the care of a congregation of women without the Chapter's consent because we know that not everybody are suitable for such enterprises; and no one of the brothers must be obliged by obedience to assume such a care. In all the institutions we are to see that women be not allow to come around in the house.

Care of Strangers

We must practice charity toward the foreigner, but with prudence, in order not to harm the institution. We must not give hospitality longer than one day, to those we do not know, except in cases of necessity; and we are to see to it that, while we treat him with charity, he will not steal from the house. Those who belong to our institutions are not to be accepted unless they have letters from the priest of the place they left. On the contrary, those who move from one place to another because of obedience, we must treat with every kind of charity by washing their feet and meeting all their needs for the love of the Lord.

The Office for the Deceased Brothers

Just and proper is the memory of the brothers who depart from this life. Therefore, if one of the Father Priests dies, all the family of all the institutions must recite the Office of the three Night Prayers for the deceased. And those who do not know the Office, must recite the rosary. The priests should commemorate that soul in thirty masses or at least for three days. The same must be done if one of the "Commessi" dies. If an official dies, we will say one Night Prayer with Evening and Morning Prayer, and the priest will say three Masses. Then, continually, we must remember the deceased both in the prayers and the daily Offices that are recited in the institutions.

The end.