

## RULES FOR SPONSORS

In the name of the Holy Trinity and of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and of St. George, unconquerable Knight and protector of the City of Ferrara.

Honorable Sir Giovanni Antonio Rondinelli, most worthy judge in this city of Ferrara and who hereafter will be custodian and supreme director of this holy institution for the care of orphans.

The devout Servants of the Poor, i.e. called the Company from Somasca, have come to Ferrara to care for the orphans of this city. According to their Constitutions, they do not want nor can assume duties other than those of the religious ministries. Therefore, for the honor God and for the direction of this holy institution they ask to be given some aids, so-called sponsors who, because of their love, would care and supervise these poor little children. This could result in the salvation of their souls. The qualities of these sponsors needed in all such institutions are as follows.

### 1. The sponsors are counseled to lead a Christian life

First, these sponsors are earnestly counseled to lead a Christian life that is, to adapt themselves to the precepts of sobriety, piety and righteousness. Sobriety means to be a gentleman, to be just to one's neighbor, and pious toward God. Christian sobriety affects the way of living, dressing, and speaking. The brothers of this company should therefore live modestly in their house according to their condition, not according to the customs of the world. They are to maintain habits of true Christians avoiding bad company as much as possible and all those business where sin or danger of sin are manifest. To avoid this they will frequently seek counsel from their spiritual directors. They will be vigilant that their wives, children, and families follow similar principles, that is, that their habits, customs and way of life be those of a good Christian, without blasphemy, without games except for recreation. They must be truthful in all their conversations, maintain the fear of God and love of neighbor, not do to others what they would not want done to themselves; therefore, they must do good and endure evil. They will not take what belongs to others, nor quarrel, especially among themselves. Should it be necessary at some time to make a particular decision, it shall not be done without the consent of their prior and of their spiritual director. Should there be any quarrel with their debtors or creditors, they will follow the advice of the same director, so as to be ready to deal properly with their opponents.

Should any of the members become ill, the company should be notified in order that he might be visited and helped spiritually, as well as corporally. On one hand, he shall be advised to receive the holy sacraments: confession, communion and, if necessary, extreme unction. On the other, if needed, attention should be given to worldly affairs, such as a will or testament. He shall also be

assisted in order to alleviate his suffering in the hope that the Lord may bring him back to health or, if it be for the best, to his heavenly home. This is to be done according to the need of the sick. Should he pass to better life, the customary prayers for his soul should not be forgotten, as it is done by the members of similar confraternities, which would be too long to describe. Anyway, in such a case it is appropriate that the properties be spent for the honor of God and in service of the neighbor more than for one's comfort. All should know that, wherever prayers are said for the company, every member participates in, be he alive or deceased.

Above all, they will strive to live piously for God, from Whom comes every good. Therefore, every day they are to remember His Divine Majesty, lifting their thoughts to God in mental prayer or at least saying the Our Father and the Psalm "In Your Names, God, save me." Those who do not know how to read are to say the Rosary. Because the most holy sacraments are the of this unity and love, all are encouraged in the name of the Lord that, once every month, all confess and receive the holy Eucharist, a panacea for all physical and mental illnesses. If, for good reason they are unable to do so, the spiritual director will be informed for. On this Sunday all recite the seven penitential psalms.

## 2. Care of Orphans

To direct the orphans, the company of the sponsors is to elect a prior who will be on duty six months, which time may be extended to one year. The election will be done by ballot and the person having the most votes will be elected. The following two sponsors having the most votes will be counselors who, in the absence of the prior, can act with the priests who will be in charge of the house. This done, in the same manner, an honest man of good reputation will be elected who will act as a treasurer. He will hold the money received from alms and from the work done by the orphans and have custody of the key of the safety box. Every week, with one of the sponsors or the priest of the house, he will open the box and take the money noting it as income. There must be also a bursar who will receive the money from the treasurer with the approval of the prior, and spend for the daily needs of the orphans, according to the advice from the priest or the "Commesso." He will render an account every month of what he received and of what he spent. These reports and the books will be prepared by a secretary or bookkeeper who will write the orders, and everything else necessary. This will include the proposals and deliberations made in the meetings, the names of the orphans accepted, dismissed or deceased. These officials may be reelected more than once. Their books are to be audited and approved, after which all members are notified at the first meeting.

The meetings will be held every Sunday at whatever time most convenient to all. They will be conducted with order and simplicity. Nobody will speak unless called upon or when it is the turn of another; the things discussed are to concern the service to orphans or maintenance of the house. Above all, at the beginning

and at the end of the meetings, must there be prayer. When a difficult proposal cannot pass, it will be postponed to another time. The members will pray to God that He may inspire to do well and that everyone be satisfied with the decision of the prior, the counselors and the Father.

The duty of the sponsors will be to look for the poor orphans. However, because there are so many, they are only to accept those who are in the hospital, those who should be orphans, legitimate, poor, and those without incurable diseases, able to work, and not in need of maternal care, that is, those from seven to thirteen years of age. If they come to serve others, they will be accepted not as orphans but as servants of orphans.

The manner in which orphans will be accepted is that they will present themselves at the meeting of the first Sunday. If they do not have sufficient information two or three members of the company will be assigned to make diligent inquiries. It would be superfluous to give all details in writing. When the majority agrees on their suitable qualities, they will be accepted, with God's blessing. If the majority is not reached, notice must be taken for the following occasion.

The officials will have the duty of caring for the children, and as far as food, clothing, behaviors, schooling or art will do as in other cities is done. If any orphan has some perishable goods, he will be put them in common. If he has properties or imperishable possessions and no legal custodian, the sponsors will be happy to preserve and care for them until the child attains majority.

If any orphan becomes slightly ill, and can be easily cured, he will be taken care at home. Should he require care for more than a month, they will see to it that he is taken to the hospital or some medication to help him for the love of God is procured. Once cured outside the house, he will be welcomed back with the others.

When an orphan becomes an adult and its intention and vocation are known, according to the evaluation of the sponsors, but especially of the one who dealt with him, he will be assigned to that discipline that will better fit his inclinations: either religion, or letters or honest labor that will enable him to earn a living. Should someone want to remain to serve the brothers, may God bless him.

If somebody requests to have an orphan work for him, information must be sought about his life and reputation. If they are compatible, the orphan is placed to work with him with God's blessings, and according to the customary agreements and conditions in use in the other cities. Records of the date of departure must be kept in the journal. May God make him a good servant of His. He must not be assigned to work as a page.

When a boy is placed somewhere, one or more of the sponsors will have the duty of visiting him occasionally to encourage him to do well, and especially to persevere in his devotions. The sponsors will assure themselves that the child is well fed. When it is noticed that something is not right, it must be reported at the meeting in order that it will be provided. If the placement is good, he will not return to the house unless there is an urgent cause. Should someone run away from the house, or does not do well, if old enough, the boy will be punished and sent away from the city. Even though he is one of our boys, not only they have to punish, but also realize that if a bad behavior is not punished, it would cause others to dare to do such things, and they would never be at peace among them. All well know that chastising one or two, the others will quiet down. This must be given serious consideration, because such runaways become delinquents and end at the gallows. If a young child, he must be taken back and reprimanded as an example to the others.

It has been ultimately decided that the Fathers and priests of the Congregation can appoint and dismiss "Commessi" and teachers without any impediment. As when needed, they may have other instructors come, as such as tailors and lather-workers and, of course, someone to teach letters, according to the need. These can also help the institutions in other cities. This can be done without difficulty or without inconvenience to anyone. Moreover, they would be free to stay or go, because this has been the custom of the institutions in other cities. In this way, may this holy and marvelous work always develop and improve.

The honorable judge of the Twelve Councilors, who will be pro tempore the protector of the charitable institutions of the city, whenever he encounters difficulties at the meetings and in other situations, or needs more authority, is to refer to His Lordship in everything, so that the questions which are long and unsolved may be concluded. And it must always be done in this way, to the honor and glory of God, our Lord. Amen.

Ferrara, January 1<sup>st</sup> 1563.

I, Giovanni Antonio Rondinelli, Judge of the Councilors, approve the above written rules.

These written rules of the above mentioned honorable judge were recorded by me, Pietro Giovanni Baranni, chancellor, in the Register of the City of Ferrara, on December 8, 1563, pages 127, 128 and 129.