

RULES & CONSTITUTIONS
OF THE
Little Company of Mary.

1893

Part the First,

General
CONSTITUTIONS

AND

Rules
FOR ALL THE Sisters.

CHAPTER I.

THE Institute of Nursing Sisters, called the Little Company OF Mary, because of a most special consecration of the sisters to the Maternal Heart of Mary, has for its end the glory of God and the salvation and ' sanctification of the sisters' own souls, and the souls of others, especially by the charitable care with which they tend sick and dying persons, in union with the sacrifice of Mary at the foot of the Cross, where Jesus shed His precious Blood, for the salvation of the world.

The spirit, therefore, which should animate the sisters of the Little Company, is the imitation of the Maternal Heart of Mary, and considering that it is a work of charity, most acceptable to that heart, to help the faithful to die a good death, since on this eternity depends. The sisters, consequently, in union with the spirit of Mary, and under her patronage, consecrate them-selves to attend with maternal care, upon the sick and the dying, and with this object direct their whole religious life, and in particular their assiduous prayer, their devout adoration of the most Holy Sacrament, their frequent offerings of the Precious B1ood of Jesus Christ; and all their works of charity, and their

sacrifices, to the end of imploring the Divine mercy for the dying, always in company with Mary at the foot of the cross, and, as it were, taking with humility and simplicity, her maternal office at the death-beds of the faithful, who are her children.

Happy are those sisters, who, by doing their best to correspond perfectly with the grace of their vocation, will often cause Paradise to rejoice, by bringing the sick to repentance, and by leading them to resign them-selves with profoundly contrite hearts, to look upon death as a penance for their own sins, and to accept it as such, so that sanctified by the laver of the most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, they die the death of the just, and so go to extol the mercy of God for ever in Heaven. Happy the sisters, who, by their abstinence, prayers and sacrifices, moving the mercy of God to open the treasures of His graces to the faithful, who are dying, and so, co-operating in the salvation of souls, will thus render themselves more acceptable to God, and to Jesus their Spouse; and for ever more deserving of the affection of their dear mother, Mary, and will, moreover, enrich the crown of glory prepared for them in Heaven.

CHAPTER II.

On the works of the Little Company.

The principal external work of the Little Company is, as has been said, at-tendance on the sick and dying in their own homes, by day and by night; the sisters devoting themselves to all the charitable services which they are able to render, both to the patients them-selves and their families, with entire self sacrifice.

The sisters will attend the sick to whatever class of society they may belong, whether they be rich or poor, Catholics or Protestants. If the sick are in a condition enabling them to offer a contribution to the sisters, they will accept it, otherwise they will give their attendance gratuitously. An association called the Maternal Society, composed of pious women under the direction of the sisters, will be annexed to each community so far as possible; these pious women will be sent to attend upon such cases as may require assistance at operations likely to excite the imagination and to en-danger modesty – such as childbirth, etc. The sisters will not be permitted to assist at such cases, unless in a case of indispensable and extreme necessity, and after having taken every measure of precaution which the most careful prudence requires. 'With the exception of these cases, no kind of sickness, even epidemic or contagious, may be excluded from the sisters' care. The sisters of the Little Company will also employ themselves in bringing back sinners to

repentance, and in con-verting heretics and infidels; visiting, exhorting, and instructing for that pur-pose those whom they know to be in need of their help; but always with the co-operation and under the direction of the priest of the parish to which such persons belong.

Saving always the principal end of the Little Company, that is to say, attendance on the sick, the sisters will also if the circumstances of the community will allow it, engage in helping the founding of new missions by giving elementary teaching in their schools, either gratuitously or for a low stipend, when such missions cannot pay an adequate salary. Lastly, the sisters will be ready to undertake any other work of mercy, spiritual or corporal, to which they may be invited, with the consent of the competent authorities, always provided that it does not hinder the perfect carrying out of the principal work peculiar to the Little Company.

CHAPTER III.

On the Simple Vows – Temporary and Perpetual.

The sisters of the Little Company of Mary take simple vows of poverty, chastity and obedience – temporary vows and perpetual vows.

First, the temporary vows are taken at the end of the Novitiate, which lasts for two years complete. In the first year the novices attend solely to the formation of their spirit at home; and in the second, they make some little trial of the external works of the Company, which is necessary both for the novices as a practical trial of their vocation, and for the Company in order to ascertain their fitness for the peculiar works of the institute. When the two years are over, the novices, if they are approved by the General Council, as will be explained, will make their religious profession for a period of three years only, yet, in view of, and as a preparation for the perpetual vows, this triennium being as it were .a continuation of the Novitiate, in order to prepare for the final perpetual profession.

Also, that things may have their own distinctive names, the sisters who have made their perpetual profession will be called professed sisters, while those who have made the triennial profession, though they may be in a sense called professed sisters, will more properly keep the appellation of novices, but will be called approved novices, or approved sisters, to distinguish them from the novices properly so-called, and these again have distinguishing names (white and blue novices) from the difference in the veils worn by those of the first year who are in probation at home, and by those of the second who are beginning .to be

tried out of doors in attendance on the sick. The triennium of temporary vows, therefore, will be, as it were, a second trial or novitiate, made necessary by the special difficulties presented by this institute as regards the interior and exterior life, and will be of use in the order for the completion of the religious instruction and formation of the sisters in the spirit of the Little Company before they are incorporated with it more closely and. perpetually.

When the triennium is finished, the religious who persevere in their good purpose, and who are definitely approved by the General Council, will make their final profession with perpetual vows. If a sister determines to leave the Company before completing the triennium, the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda must be asked for the dispensation from her vows, but if she be dismissed by the Council she is understood to be thereby set free from her temporary vows. To obtain a dispensation from the perpetual vows, however, it is necessary, in all cases, to have re-course to the Sacred Congregation. Those, however, who truly love their own vocation, will daily pray fervently for the grace of holy perseverance in the Little Company of Mary until death. Every year the renewal of vows, temporary and perpetual, will be made by all publicly in the chapel, .and a similar renewal will be made more frequently by each one in private for her own devotion.

The sisters who have taken the vows of religion temporarily, and still more, those who have taken them for life, will look upon the day of their profession as the day of their nuptials with the Lamb of God, and of their indissoluble union with the Spouse of their Souls. They will ever keep alive .also in their hearts the most sweet and salutary remembrance of that happy day on which they became for time and for eternity, spouses of Jesus Christ, and they will celebrate its anniversary with a fervent communion until death,

CHAPTER IV.

O» the Spirit of the Vow of Poverty, and on the observance of it in, the Company.

If it shall please providence to send possessions to the Little Company, it will be allowed to acquire them, and possess them as common property, not in order to grow rich, but in order to provide for the wants of its members; to maintain its good works, and to keep in repair its buildings, etc. Rut the principal resource for the maintenance of the sisters are gratuitous alms and offerings made in recompense for their charitable attendance on sick persons in their own homes.

Therefore, from those who enter the Company, and are unable to bring with them a dowry, properly so-called, besides their trousseau, the Company will be satisfied with requiring only such a sum as may be considered a fair compensation for the expenses necessary for their maintenance during their postulante and novitiate.

Every one desiring to enter the Company, for the love of Jesus, who was poor throughout His life from the manger to the cross, should reflect if she' has more or less personal property or patrimony that she must renounce it all to live a life of poverty, taking a vow of poverty according to the constitutions and spirit of the Little Company she is entering.

Hence before going into retreat for profession, those who have property will dispose of the same if they can conveniently do so, in some definite manner, in order not to be troubled thenceforward with temporal business. Nevertheless, since the vow of poverty does not necessarily take away the radical ownership, but only the actual disposal of goods, the sisters can keep the bare ownership of their property, but so long as they remain in the Company they cannot retain the administration, usufruct, or simple use of it. They must therefore, before making their profession, make over, and that by a special deed the administration, usufruct and use of property to whomsoever they please, and if they like to the Company itself, The act of cession may have annexed to it a clause giving the power of revocation at the pleasure of the sister, even if she remain in the Company, provided always, as regards the professed, that for this they *first* obtain permission from the Holy See. The same must be said as regards property coming to the sisters by inheritance or otherwise after their profession. The simple ownership of this the sisters may dispose of by will, or even by gifts or other acts among the living, but for this they must have permission from the superioress general of the Company – always excepting the dowry given to the Little Company.

Lastly, the sisters with the permission of the superioress can and ought to guarantee the possession of their temporal goods, with all the formalities required for this purpose by laws of the State. By the vow of poverty the sisters have only the use of all those things which are supplied to them by the community. They therefore, cannot dispose of any-thing as if they were its owners, either by giving it in alms, by lending it, destroying it, exchanging it or putting it out of use without leave from the superioress. For the same reason they are forbidden to dispose of anything they may receive, either in recompense for their

work and for their services of charity or as alms given to them, even if given as a personal recompense. Every-thing without exception must be given into the hands of the superioress that it may go to the general profit of the community, which gives lodging, board and ' clothing to all alike. Through love for holy poverty the sisters will avoid all superfluities in lodging, board and clothing, being contented in all things with what is necessary and moderate. There shall be nothing special or delicate in the board of the sisters; but it shall be wholesome, substantial and sufficient to support the strength of the weakest as well as the strongest.

It shall be the same for all, without any partiality or difference; no exceptions must be made, except on account of illness, and in this case the prescriptions of the medical man are to be followed as far as the religious spirit and the means of the community will permit. Happy are the sick sisters who, animated by the spirit of poverty, know how to bear with love the want of conveniences which the poverty of the community cannot supply them with. Such privations will ascend to the throne of God in union with those of the holy family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

In order to avoid all abuses opposed to holy poverty, care should be taken to observe exact uniformity in the clothing, regard, however, being had to the difference of climates, that the sisters may not suffer thereby.

The linen will be kept in common, but each sister will have a number or a mark upon the articles which she has for her own use. If a sister has need of any extraordinary article of clothing, she will apply first to the superioress, and then, with her permission, to the wardrobe keeper.

All are recommended to take care of the things belonging to the community, and to see that they are not spoiled or destroyed through their fault, so that they may remain as long as possible for the use of the community, and in case of need, they will mention to the superioress if anything has to be attended to for the use of the house.

If anything in their own use requires attention, they will also themselves put it right; doing the necessary repairs before things get worse.

The sisters cannot use keys for the furniture they have in use, nor keep any sum of money, or store of eatables at their own disposal. The superioress will even abstain from this, and not permit it in others.

No one shall be allowed to open the drawers or boxes of others, or to

take anything out of them, without leave from the mother superior. Since cleanliness is the sister to evangelical poverty, the sisters will cultivate this virtue carefully, both in their own persons and in their belongings, and those of the community. They will not put on dirty or tarn habits, especially when they have to go out of doors, and appear in public, or to visit the chapel. They must make it their care therefore, to cleanse them, or to mend them in good time. Nevertheless, they will not be ashamed to go about with patched habits, provided they are clean. They should remember that the sight of the cleanliness and order which reigns in a convent is one of the things which specially conduce to edification of seculars. Lastly, in order to fulfil with perfection their vow of poverty, the sisters will strive to keep their hearts entirely detached from earthly goods. The superioress especially, who will have to think of the temporal interests of the community, shall keep their hearts detached from the same by means of an un-bounded confidence in Divine providence, which feeds the birds of the air, and clothes the lilies of the field.

Such is the way in which the sisters of the Little Company will secure for themselves, in great measure, the happiness promised, even in this life, to those who have left all to follow Christ in holy poverty.

CHAPTER V.

On the care to be taken for the preservation of Chastity.

In as much as the peculiar works of the Little Company of Mary by their very nature bring the sisters into continual relations with externs, and expose them to many dangers from which the religious, who dwell strictly in community, are protected, the sisters of the Company are more especially obliged to keep themselves on their guard, and secure from these dangers by prayer and watchfulness. They must in particular observe the following rules: –

They will study to acquire that angelic modesty of demeanour, which is of itself a special virtue, and which so marvellously adorned their mother, the most Holy Mary; a demeanour not light, nor hard, nor repulsive, but serious, grave, and courteous, at the same time that it breathes the sweetness, grace, and tranquillity of Divine charity – in a word the demeanour and bearing of a mother, as becomes a sister who has the name of belonging to the Company of Mary.

In their communication with externs and with each other, they must carefully avoid every word and action which might seem in any degree un-becoming, or too worldly and familiar. They should be especially

circumspect in their dealings with persons of the other sex, and avoid as much possible remaining alone with them. Should it happen that it becomes their duty to converse with anyone, such as doctors or others, let them endeavour always to do so where others may see them. Above all, let them guard against allowing or returning any mark of personal affection, if such should be offered to them by anyone. If it should happen that in the house of the patient whom they are attending anyone should take the liberty of showing such marks of feeling, it would be the strict duty both of the sister who is their object or of any other sister who may have observed them, to inform the superioress of them immediately, that she may take such precautions as may be necessary to protect the sister from the dangers which threaten her, They must re-mem-ber that if anyone, through over confidence or indulgence, should neglect to give this information, she would render herself responsible before God for the evil which might arise from her ill-judged silence. The sisters shall behave to all priests with special respect, and they will ask for their blessing with great humility and reverence, thus acknowledging their sacred character, but never-the-less in their dealings with them they shall use all the pre-cautions mentioned above, nay, they will be even more particularly on their guard with them by reason of the particular dangers which arise from their high and sacred station, for this both excites the sisters to desire their esteem, and at the same time makes them less careful to avoid the snares of the devil. They will not leave the house after night-fall, without grave cause, and then they will not do so unless they are accompanied. They will not admit any extern into any part of the convent, except the parlour, without the special leave of the superioress. Lastly, each sister in particular, and all the sisters in common, shall recommend themselves unceasingly to the protection of their most holy mother, Mary, and shall beseech the Immaculate Virgin to guard and pre-serve, with maternal care, the purity and good name of her Little Company

CHAPTER VI.

On perfect Obedience.

St. Philip Neri used to say that obedience is a true holocaust, which we offer to God on the altar of our hearts. The vow of obedience is the most keenly felt of all the three, since what we love best, and find it hardest to give up is our own will, consequently the perfect observance of this vow is a true sacrifice in which the will continually offering itself to God, gives up everything else in order to be itself consumed for the glory of God by the fire of Divine love. The sisters there-fore will strive to

aim at the most perfect exercise of obedience, prompted by the pure motive of charity.

They will obey with joy and alacrity, endeavouring to apply their whole attention of mind and strength of body to carry out as punctually as possible the duties prescribed by the rule, and the particular injunctions of their superior.

If weakness, ill health or any ailment should be a grave and serious hindrance to the execution of any order received by a sister, she not only may, but ought to inform the superioress of her condition before carrying out the order, since it may easily happen that the superioress may not have been aware of her ailment. Since severe public penances are not in use in the Little Company, let the sisters make up for this by being careful to be all the more docile to the directions of obedience and more submissive to correction.

They should remember that the only remedy that the Company has for obstinate and habitual disobedience on the part of any sister, is the dismissal of such sister. Let them strive to avoid this as a most grievous injury to their vocation and one probably fatal to their souls.

CHAPTER VII.

On Prayer and Spiritual Exercises.

ASSIDUOUS prayer, especially for the dying, is no less than corporal attendance on the sick, the principal and characteristic work of the Little Company of Mary. The prayers to be said and the devotions to be practised by the sisters are principally the following: – Morning and night prayers shall be recited in common in the convent chapel. Every night and morning mental prayer shall be made for the space of half-an-hour. Let the sisters endeavour to draw as much profit as possible from this spiritual exercise, since it is one of the greatest means of sanctification. They will thank God at the end of it for the light they have received; they will beseech Him to bless their good resolutions, and they will not forget the spiritual “bouquet” so much recommended by St. Francis de Sales. One of the fruits of their meditations should be the frequent use during the day of ejaculatory prayers, and this because these loving aspirations towards God during their various occupations will keep alive in them continually the spirit of prayer. Convinced of the importance of the practice of meditation, the neglect of which would at last dry up in their soul the source of so many Divine graces, they will be most diligent in examining their consciences

in the manner in which they make their meditation and on the profit they derive from it. An examination of conscience is to be made twice in the day, once about mid-day, the second time during evening prayers. The first is more especially a particular examine on some defect which needs to be corrected, or some virtue which has to be acquired; the second is general, that is, about all the faults and defects of the day. The sisters should pay attention to make these examinations, though brief they may be, nevertheless, serious and practical.

Except when prevented by their duties, as in some special case of nursing the sick, the sisters shall recite the fifteen mysteries of the rosary while they are engaged upon their usual occupations, saying the five joyful mysteries daily in the morning with the intention of gaining God's blessing on the day; the five sorrowful mysteries about three o'clock in the afternoon for the dying, and the five glorious in the evening in thanks-giving for the benefits received during the day. Besides these times also when they are working together they should have the habit of reciting the rosary or some other vocal prayer. The office of our Lady shall be recited ' in common in the convent, and the sisters will endeavour to recite it in private if they can while they are out nursing. The daily practice in private of "The Way of the Cross" is also in use. They shall, moreover, by rule if not prevented, make three short visits for a few minutes to the most Holy Sacrament every day, and they shall never fail to visit the Holy of Holies each time they leave and enter the convent. It is also the custom that a visit of adoration to the Blessed Sacrament should be made every night by a sister appointed in turn to that office. Spiritual reading shall be made in common for the space of half-an-hour. Some edifying spiritual books also shall be read during dinner and supper. As regards the private reading, sisters must be guided by the judgment of the superioress. In general they should take care to make their reading not merely for barren instruction to their minds, but for fruitful edification for the religious life by endeavouring to put in practice what they have read, and to form themselves according to the model proposed to them especially in the lives of the saints. On Fridays lastly, for the space of three hours from noon till three o'clock, the sisters will take turns in adoring the most Holy Sacrament in honour of the crucifixion and death of our Lord, and during this time the strictest silence shall be kept by all the sisters so far as possible.

The visit of adoration in turn before the Blessed Sacrament for the dying will be a practice of devotion. In the noviciate houses it is a rule. A white cloak will be added to the habit already worn by the sisters when they watch before the Blessed Sacrament or assist in choir.

CHAPTER VIII.

On THE USE OF THE Sacraments.

On the Sacrifice of the Mass and Spiritual Retreat.

The sisters of the Little Company shall hear holy mass every day, unless absolutely prevented from doing so by their duties of charity to the sick. They shall endeavour to perform this act of religion, which is of the greatest importance, in such a manner as to derive from it all those fruits of grace and fervour which it is its nature to bestow. What merits may they not acquire, and what strength may they not gain, by daily uniting their sacrifice with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

The sisters will approach the sacrament of penance once a week, unless in certain times and places they are pre-vented by just reasons from going so often. They shall have an ordinary confessor, assigned by the bishop, to whom they shall go during the course of the year, and an extraordinary confessor, likewise assigned by the bishop, to whom they must at least present themselves to receive from him a blessing and some spiritual counsel, four times in the year, as is customary, this will be if possible, at the ember days. With the permission of the superioress they may go to any approved confessor in any church, when their attendance on a patient or other good reasons oblige them to remain absent from the convent.

The sisters will consider weekly confession as a great means of sanctification, on account of the virtues practised in it and the fruits contained in this sacrament, Let them take care that their confessions are short, humble, sincere, and animated with true contrition. They should avoid prolixity and scruples, which are generally a hindrance to the abundant fruits of this sacrament. In order to profit by it to the full, let them recognise in their confessor the person of our Lord, and let them show him the respect, confidence, and docility due to the one who is the judge, father and physician of their souls. If they approach the sacred tribunal with due dispositions they will go away from it enriched with numerous graces by which they will be enabled to correct themselves in the spiritual life, and to make progress in the practise of religious virtues; and if they do not perceive this result in themselves, always falling backwards into the same faults and defects, they should carefully seek for the cause of so great an evil, so as to apply a speedy and efficacious remedy thereto, in order not to abuse the special sacrament of the Divine mercy.

With respect to the sacrament of the most Holy Eucharist and the

frequency of communion, the sisters should consider the immense spiritual strength which is drawn from this Bread of Life, and the great advantages derived from devout and frequent communion, On this subject, however, although the constitutions warmly recommend frequent communion to the sisters, they prescribe nothing definitely, inasmuch as the sisters should guide themselves according to the advice of their spiritual director, and according to the opportunities allowed them, by the various cases of sickness which they are obliged to attend. It will not be lawful, however, for any sister to deprive herself voluntarily of this means of sanctification for more than a fortnight.

The use of spiritual retreats is founded on experience, and on the example of our Lord and His disciples. They are consequently in general use through-out the church, and are of obligation in all religious orders and congregations. Besides the spiritual retreats, which ought to proceed all clothings and taking of vows whether triennial or perpetual, the sisters of the Little Company shall meet together every year, to make a spiritual retreat of eight or ten days, and if it be possible, they shall do so in the principal house of the diocese if the company have more than one house there. As regards the time, the mother superioress will take care to see, as far as possible, that the bishop may be able to send a competent director, so as to terminate the retreat on the first Sun-day of July, the feast of the most Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, a time when the sisters are generally more free and can assemble in greater numbers. The sisters, moreover, shall make a spiritual re-treat of three days at the approach of the holy festivals of Christmas and Easter, but without the assembling in one place only, or requiring to have a father-director to give it. Again, once in the month and ordinarily on the last Sunday in the month, except the month in which any other retreat takes place, they shall spend the day in spiritual recollection in preparation for a good death.

The sisters will endeavour to profit by these days of special grace – to revive in themselves the spirit of their vocation.

CHAPTER IX.

On the Practice of Silence.

The practice of silence is one of the most beautiful and useful of spiritual exercises, and ought to be loved by all those who desire perfection, because it easily makes them fit to converse with God and the angels and saints of Heaven. So as to fulfil the Apostle's words "Our conversation is in Heaven."

The sisters, therefore, shall abstain from all unnecessary conversation, even among themselves, and shall keep silence, whether at work or elsewhere, except at the time of the customary recreation, or when the silence is dispensed, or when they have need to speak to the superioress, or for some other reason of duty, or of aim of charity to others.

In fine, silence is a rule to be kept in such a way as that no one should speak except in a passing way and with a few words and in a low tone. In order to be able to love silence and to find pleasure in practising it, the sisters should endeavour to keep their minds united with God and to think about the joys of Heaven and other devout subjects, and especially to pray for the dying.

CHAPTER X.

Of the Instruction necessary for attending on The Sick

Instruction, especially about all that is necessary for the purpose of the vocation to the Little Company of Mary, will not only make the sisters more useful to their neighbour, but will also help them much in the service of God and for their own perfection, if it be not separated from true humility. The sisters consequently will endeavour to follow diligently the lectures which will be given in the convent, and all of them who are not hindered shall make it their duty to assist at the practical instruction which will as a rule be given by some one of the sisters who have the most experience and skill in the care of the sick. They will explain some text book on the subject, answer the questions put to them, and give an opportunity to anyone who may be able to contribute useful information gained by experience or by consulting medical men, to communicate them modestly to others. Moreover, instructions shall be given in cookery and in the art of preparing medicines, etc. Lastly, the novices shall learn to pronounce Latin well, and any of the various subjects of elementary education in which they are deficient.

CHAPTER XI.

On the Refectory and Meals.

Silence ought always to be observed in the refectory during meals, except on recreation days, and while the body is refreshed with food the soul also should receive its own nourishment by spiritual reading .

Letters sent to the sisters shall not be distributed nor read at meal times.

The meals shall be carefully prepared and always served with diligence and order. If the mother superior and mother assistant are both absent, the senior sister shall preside and say the benedicite. Every sister in turn shall serve at table, unless she has been for some special reason, dispensed by the superioress, and the sister who has served, as well as the one who has read, will remain in the refectory for their meal when the others have left it. The sisters who may be prevented by their duties from being present at the time of community meals, will take their meals at a convenient time. It will not, however, be lawful to change the time of meals at pleasure, or to take any refreshment out of the times appointed by the rules, or in addition to what is allowed to the community. If, however, they should feel in want of it, they should freely mention it to the superioress, and she will give them what they may need as she may think well. The sisters also, who spend the whole day out of the convent on duty, should endeavour to keep to the same number of meals as are usually given by the community.

CHAPTER XII.

On Recreations and festivals.

The sisters shall assemble for recreation after dinner and after supper. The superioress may exceptionally prolong the time fixed in the time table if she thinks fit. The sisters shall call to mind that the time of recreation is a time for learning and practising great virtues, especially patience, cheerfulness and charity. They shall all concur with true sisterly love in the common refreshment of spirit, and therefore in listening and talking they shall attend rather to pleasing the sisters than to pleasing themselves. A sister who disregarding her own interior sufferings, fatigue and afflictions, joins with simplicity in the common joyfulness will give pleasure to our Lord and His holy Mother, and will make great progress in grace and holiness. During recreation the sisters will carefully avoid everything that might give pain and annoyance to the sisters, and especially all back-biting, complaining and malicious and sarcastic remarks, even in jest, for jesting does not take away bitterness. They must never be allowed to express themselves with vulgarity or over vehemence, or ill manners. On the contrary, let them find in recreation an occasion of exercising themselves in modesty, in propriety of manner, and in benevolent and cordial behaviour. They will bring with them to recreation some little manual

work which does not need too much attention. Let them all display a disposition of gladness of heart and spiritual joy, especially on festival days. They should remember that the common recreation is a matter of the highest importance because of the advantages which spring from it, in-deed it often drives away sadness and temptation from some souls, and encourages others, contributes greatly to mutual charity and affection, and draws ever more closely together that spirit of union which is so essential in a religious house, in order to please God, the angels and saints, and to produce a plentiful abundance of spiritual fruits.

CHAPTER XIII.

On Punctual Observance.

The time table for the day shall be put up in the convent, and ought to be punctually observed by the sisters whatever number there may be in the house. The sister who has charge of ringing the bell and the mother superioress shall be both responsible for it being rung punctually at the hour prescribed for each duty. The time table ought not to be changed for light reasons nor without real necessity. In the absence of the superioress and of the assistant, the senior sister in the house shall preside at the exercises of the day, and shall take care that they are punctually fulfilled. The sisters should remember that regularity and punctuality in the common exercises is a matter of primary importance. If the sisters who have come back from a sick case feel the need of rest they may remain in bed and be exempted from all' community exercises, for which the superioress shall give them leave. Dispensations from some point of observance are sometimes necessary, as for instance when a sister is ill or over tired; but the sisters should be careful not to ask for them, and the superioress not to grant them without good reason. Indeed relaxation of observance is so great an evil in a community that it would be mistaken charity to introduce it by undue indulgences.

CHAPTER XIV.

On observance in Branch houses.

The ordinary rule cannot always be kept in its entirety in the branch houses. The superioress of these, before fixing the time table, should agree with the superioress general upon the changes which local circumstances require, and should then keep to the instructions she may receive on the subject, and see that they are punctually observed.

For the rest, the common rule is to be strictly observed, and the sisters should pay attention to follow it always with the same spirit of humility and obedience. It may sometimes happen that a sister, going from the mother house to a branch house, may notice some inobservance of rule, whether through inadvertance or carelessness; she should, in all simplicity, tell the superioress what she has noticed, and if she does not remedy the neglect, she should not fail to give notice of it to the superior of the mother house. Generally speaking, any sisters noticing a systematic violation of rule in any matter, ought to consider themselves under obligation to prevent its continuance, either by calling the attention of the local superioress to it, or by making the principal, or general superioress aware of it.

CHAPTER XV.

On Almsgiving and Hospitality.

The sisters should remember that they live from day to day, maintained by the providence of their heavenly Father. In order, therefore, to show their gratitude to His paternal care, and to merit its continuance, they shall be accustomed to share their dinner, and sometimes also their other meals, with the poor of Jesus Christ. A portion, in honor of Mary most holy, shall be set aside for some poor person, before the food is distributed to the sisters. They shall strive to assist the poor according to circumstances, by collecting alms for them, making their clothes, and distributing to them the necessaries of life, in proportion to the means they may possess. Hospitality shall be generously practised by the Little Company. The superioress shall appoint some of the older and more prudent sisters in the community to attend to visitors. The sisters in general, should comport themselves towards visitors, with such kind and charitable manners, as become religious, who make profession of renouncing themselves for the love of their neighbours. Such uniform and constant demonstration of considerateness and kindness, will infallibly become for the Little Company, a most powerful means to draw hearts to the love of the Divine Saviour.

CHAPTER XVI.

On the chapter of faults,

Every week, at an hour appointed, the chapter of faults shall be held, at which all the members of the community shall assemble. It shall be presided over by the sisters with perpetual vows, either in rotation, or as on each occasion they may be appointed by the superior.

When the superioress has finished saying the prayers, the sister who has to preside, will take her place at the left of a little table, on which shall be a crucifix and a statue of the most holy Virgin, Beginning with the superioress, all the other sisters in order, shall form a circle round the table. The presiding sister will give a short exhortation on some point of the rule, on the exercise of some virtue or on some defect to be avoided, afterwards, each sister, beginning with the youngest, will kneel before the crucifix, and, first kissing the ground, will say "In presence of God, and Mary most holy, I accuse myself;" and will mention the faults which she may have committed against the rule, and against discipline, but not anything which is a secret of her soul, and which she is not obliged to make known, except to the minister of God in confession. She will listen humbly to the correction or admonition of the sister who presides, and then will kiss the ground. When the accusation of the novices is ended, the mother superior will give an exhortation, if she thinks fit, and when she has finished, both postulants and novices will withdraw. Then the sisters with triennial vows will begin their accusations, and will each receive her own correction. The mother superior will come last; in correcting her however, the sister presiding shall stand. Each one will perform the little penance assigned her.

The chapter of faults, if well carried out, helps very much towards maintaining observance of the constitutions and rules, and of the daily domestic regulations. This first part of the constitutions shall be publicly read every month, either in the refectory, or in chapter; either all at once, or in parts on several days. Each sister will still more frequently read in private the particular rules of the second part, which belong specially to herself and her own office.

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