



CAMALDOLESE HERMITS
OF
MONTE CORONA

**THE CONSTITUTIONS
OF THE CONGREGATION
OF THE
CAMALDOLESE HERMITS OF MONTE CORONA**



**Holy Family Hermitage
Camaldolese Hermits
1501 Fairplay Road
Bloomington, Ohio 43910
2018**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface to the Constitutions	i
------------------------------	---

First Part: The Hermit

Chapter I	Our Vocation	1
Chapter II	The Religious Vows	5
Chapter III	Life in the Cell	10
Chapter IV	The Formation of the Hermits	15
Chapter V	Reclusion	27

Second Part: The Eremitical Community

Chapter VI	Solitude and Silence	30
Chapter VII	Liturgical Worship in the Hermitage	34
Chapter VIII	The Prior	37
Chapter IX	The Common Life	41
Chapter X	Work and Temporal Goods	45

Third Part: The Congregation

Chapter XI	The General Chapter	52
Chapter XII	The Father Major	63
Chapter XIII	The General Curia	66
Chapter XIV	The Canonical Visitation	71
Chapter XV	The Constitutions	74

PREFACE TO THE CONSTITUTIONS

1. “See what love the Father has given us that we should be called children of God; and so we are. In this love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only son into the world, so that we might live through him” (1 Jn. 3:1-4, 9).

There are never lacking in the Holy Church those faithful who, filled with wonder at the manifestation of God’s love in His Christ, are invited by the Spirit to correspond to the gift of God in a radical way, dedicating their whole life to the following and the service of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. PC 1).

2. Many are the forms of life in which it is possible to make concrete a total response to the Gospel. Among them is that of the monk and hermit. He who receives the gift of the call to the solitary life thinks that he cannot lead a life fully faithful to the exigencies of the Gospel or arrive at an intimate familiarity with God as long as he lives immersed in the flow of worldly society.

Therefore, in order to succeed in keeping himself united to the Lord without distractions, he not only renounces the good of matrimony but, as far as possible, does not even seek the company of men.

In order to receive and keep faithfully the Divine Word, he limits himself in the use of human words.

In view of a more intense prayer of praise and of intercession he strives by means of an authentically poor, simple and austere life to purify his own heart and to let reign therein the peace of Christ.

3. Such an ideal of monastic and eremitical life was propagated by our Holy Father Romuald about a thousand years ago. Gathering hermits in small communities and introducing into their life a stable rule and obedience to a superior, Saint Romuald became a renewer of the eremitical life in the western Church (cf. the Oration of the Saint in the Roman Missal).

No writing of his has remained to us, but his biographer, Saint Peter Damian, has furnished us in his works with the doctrinal and spiritual expression of Romualdian eremitism. It

is a question of a plan of monastic life quite distinct from that of the traditional Benedictine monasticism, even though the Rule of Saint Benedict constituted and still constitutes a fundamental code for all the disciples of Saint Romuald.

In addition to this, Saint Peter Damian indicates with force and precision the place and the function of the hermit in the Church. Material solitude does not impede but rather reinforces mysteriously the spiritual presence of the solitary in the community of believers. If the hermit prays, it is the Church that prays in him. In the measure in which he is a living member of the Church, he fulfills perfectly the “duty of his universality” (St. Peter Damian, *Opusc.* 11, 10).

4. Among the various hermitages founded by Saint Romuald only that of Camaldoli, situated in the Tuscan Apennines, lasted and eventually became the birthplace and center of the Camaldolese Order. The fourth Prior of that Sacred Hermitage, Blessed Rudolph, drew up in the form of Constitutions the instructions and the teachings handed down from our Holy Father Romuald, thus creating the first document of Camaldolese legislation.

5. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Camaldolese hermit, Paul Giustiniani, desirous of a more solitary and more austere life, gave new development and new impetus to the Romualdian eremitical ideal by founding various hermitages which constituted, after the Pontifical approval of 1524, the “Company of the Hermits of Saint Romuald”, called today the “Congregation of the Camaldolese Hermits of Monte Corona”.

The members of this little Congregation of ours wish to follow the example and to put into practice the eremitical and spiritual teaching of their Founder, who, since his death, has been constantly honored with the title of Blessed.

6. The present Constitutions, like the various preceding editions throughout the centuries are intended to be a faithful prolongation of the legislative work of Blessed Paul. The profound transformations of contemporary society, the spreading of our Congregation to other continents, the event of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and the recent promulgation of the Code of Canon Law have required the re-elaboration of our particular legislation.

7. May the solid food offered by Saint Benedict in his Rule, the luminous figure of Saint Romuald, the life and doctrine of our Founder, Blessed Paul Giustiniani, give us strength and light, a stimulus and encouragement on the path of the Gospel (cf. RB, Prol. 21) in the following of our Lord Jesus Christ, the supreme rule of our life and simultaneously its center and goal (cf. Bl. Paul F + 96 and CIC, can. 662).

FIRST PART
THE HERMIT



CHAPTER I

OUR VOCATION

8. Of Jesus our Savior, divine Scripture reports that He withdrew several times to solitary places and went up alone to the mountain to pray, passing the night in prayer (cf. Lk. 5:16, 6:12).

Every Christian is called to associate himself with the prayer of the Son of God to the Father in the Spirit. Such prayer becomes an essential duty for those who have received the grace to follow more closely the praying Christ (cf. can. 577).

9. The eremitical life in our Congregation is wholly oriented to union with God in continual prayer and contemplation (cf. can. 674). Our vocation is the contemplative life, “not the future life which we await nor even that ecstasy of the spirit granted sometimes in this life to certain very perfect souls”; but “that kind of life in which after one has given up preoccupation with anything temporal or spiritual, he occupies himself only with himself and God and, in so far as human frailty permits, strives continuously to unite himself to God by means of holy reading, meditation on the eternal realities and assiduous prayer” (Bl. Paul, Q 1 41).

“For Christians withdrawal into the desert is equivalent to uniting oneself more deeply with the Passion of Christ and sharing in a particular way in the paschal mystery” (Venite seorsum, 1). Solitude lived faithfully has not only an aspect of sweet intimacy with the Lord but often also a dimension of suffering and of struggle. Let the hermit remember, when the solitary life is burdensome to him, that this is his characteristic way of sharing in the sufferings of Christ and the “toil” proper to the monk, which bears, however, abundant spiritual fruit in the Church.

10. Contemplation, in so far as it is an inexpressible experience of God, finds particularly suitable soil in our eremitical solitude. Indeed, it is in silence and solitude that the Lord prefers to reveal Himself more intimately to the hermit who lives with mind and heart extended above this world toward the Father, making him experience in an ineffable way His presence, His goodness, His infinite love. But only he who has crossed the desert of purification will enter the promised

land of contemplation. He who desires to live with God alone must detach himself radically from all that is not God. The observance of the evangelical counsels according to the eremitical discipline is intended to render the soul poor, humble, free from self and always more docile in the action of God.

11. The eremitical institution of Monte Corona, assuming both the essential elements of cenobitism—the Rule, authority, the common life—as well as those of anchoritism—solitude, silence, custody of the cell—appears to be a harmonious fusion of the one and of the other kind of life.

“Even if our hermits live in solitude, they do not therefore live completely alone or deprived of the help and comfort of fraternity, but rather unanimous in the same purpose of life, they populate together the solitude as though they were in the house of the Lord, while each one enjoys the advantages of his community.

If one fails, he is immediately supported by another; if one is oppressed by a hostile element, the latter is removed by others.

They stimulate each other for every good work, they encourage each other, and, as they mutually serve one another, they safeguard all that is necessary for salvation.

Thus moderating their form of life, they avail themselves of the advantages and the security of community life and of obedience, while excluding the various occupations and the multiple distractions of the cenobium; they enjoy the glad and fortunate tranquility of solitude without facing any of the dangers inherent in a totally solitary life” (Bl. Paul, Rule, p. 24s).

Each hermit lives in a cell separated from the others, from which cell he comes out only for the activities of the community and for his own or the hermitage’s spiritual and material needs. The cell epitomizes the eremitical dimension of the life of Monte Corona and constitutes for the religious the vital element of his spiritual progress. “It is necessary then to hurry back to our cell as a fish to the sea, for fear that tarrying outside, we may forget interior vigilance” (Apophth, Anthony 10).

12. If this way of life undoubtedly offers notable advantages, it requires at the same time that the hermits develop both the eremitical and the cenobitical virtues, especially obedience. “It is particularly necessary to avoid that anyone under the pretext of the eremitical life withdraw from the yoke of obedience. On the contrary, one should feel oneself all the more bound by the law of obedience the more one recognizes this life to be superior to the rule of cenobites” (St. Peter Damian, *Opusc.* 15, 18).

In obedience we do not see merely a simple exigency of the common life but above all a renunciation of our own will and an expression of confidence in God, who makes His will known to us through the Rule and the legitimate superior. We thus dispose ourselves for an authentic meeting with the Lord in prayer. The authenticity of our life of prayer will in turn manifest itself in generous and joyful obedience.

13. Let it be the hermit’s continual desire to reduce his own needs and to seek in everything poverty, humility, simplicity and hiddenness. Putting the Kingdom of God in the first place (cf. Mt. 6:33), he renounces every type of self-affirmation and the search for earthly riches of whatever kind. His treasure is located in heaven (cf. Mt. 6:20). “This treasure is not only a ‘reward after death for works performed according to the example of the divine master.’ It is rather the eschatological fulfillment of that which lay hidden behind those works already here on earth in the interior ‘treasure’ of the heart” (St. John Paul II, *Red. Donum*, 5).

14. “Your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3): These words of the Apostle, which find a profound echo in every hermit, are realized in a particularly radical manner in the life of a recluse. Reclusion is the Camaldolese eremitical vocation carried to its perfection. Indeed, the recluse, in fidelity to his charism, is the man who becomes prayer, love, the complete gift of self. Even if in our time there are few who live continuously as recluses, the institution and the possibility of reclusion are a fundamental element in the understanding of the Monte Corona vocation. Reclusion takes on the value of an example, constitutes a stimulus to fervor and draws down on the whole ecclesial community heavenly blessings.

15. “Just as it belongs to the priest to celebrate Mass and to the doctor to preach, so it belongs to the hermit to remain quiet in silence and fasting” (St. Peter Damian, *Opusc.* 15, 5). The Church, in which there is a diversity of charisms, esteems the life given wholly to prayer and attributes to it a mysterious apostolic fruitfulness (cf. can. 674). The hermit should deepen his awareness of being involved in the sufferings and needs of others. Separated from all, he must be united to all (cf. Evagrius, *De oratione* 124) with love and compassion. We have a mission which transcends the individual just as it transcends his own community (cf. St. Paul VI, *Discourse to the Camaldolese nuns*, 22/11/1966), and which concerns the whole Church and human family: to point out with our coherent and credible existence whither the course of history is heading, and thus to maintain alive among men the desire of the eschatological perfection of the Kingdom. “For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come” (Heb. 13:14).

CHAPTER II

THE RELIGIOUS VOWS

16. Our eremitical life includes the consecration of ourselves to God through the religious vows, which render our donation stable and irrevocable. “He who makes a vow offers to God not only his actions but himself: he consecrates to the Lord once and for all his freedom and not only the good use that he will make of it. With the religious vows he contracts with respect to the Lord an entirely new relationship which renders the vows similar to a second baptism” (Bl. Paul, Q II, 155). Indeed, the vows constitute “a special consecration which is deeply rooted in the baptismal consecration and is a fuller expression of it” (PC 5).

The stable pact which binds the hermit to the Lord inserts him deeply in the paschal mystery, which is a death that leads to the resurrection. The vow thus conceived arouses an impulse of love which spurs the hermit to conform his whole existence to the demands of the Gospel or rather to Jesus Himself, model of chastity, poverty and obedience.

From the pledge of the vows there arise a bond and certain duties with respect to the Congregation and its members as well as to all the brethren in Christ, since the Order accepts the profession in the name of the Church.

17. “Let him who has professed the eremitical life be careful to keep poverty always and in everything. Let him strive, for love of holy poverty, not only to be content with extreme simplicity in the things which human frailty needs to use but to eliminate likewise from his heart every desire to possess and every attachment to the things that he uses, so that he may truly be an observer of the eremitical life according to the apostolic discipline; that is, to be in this world as though he were not in it and to use the things of this world as though he used them not (cf. 1 Cor. 7:31). Briefly, even if it is noticed that many things are lacking, let absolutely no one and not even the local Prior himself, whose office requires him to be more greatly concerned, be excessively preoccupied with the things that are necessary to human life, and let no one think in his heart: ‘What shall we eat, or what shall we drink or what shall we wear?’ But let him place all preoccupation before God, practicing faithfully that which was spoken through the mouth of

the Truth: ‘Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all the rest will be given to you as well’ (cf. Mt. 6:31, 33)” (Bl. Paul, Rule, pp. 42, 45s).

18. Our perpetual vow of poverty includes the radical renunciation of all temporal goods, the incapacity to acquire and to possess and the invalidity of every act contrary to the vow.

Let our hermits learn, therefore, to love always more the voluntary poverty and the interior dispossession which render sweet the complete dependence on the Father of the community, from whom they ought to hope for all necessary things (cf. RB 33:5). Therefore, nobody can give or receive anything of value, especially from externs, without permission of the Prior (cf. RB 33:2).

Let the Prior in turn watch attentively over this point which is so important in the eremitical observance. The things granted to each one for his own use and need are understood to be granted at the discretion of the Prior, who cannot allow the use of costly objects or of anything superfluous. He can, even without forewarning, visit and inspect the cells of the hermits and without hesitation have removed from them furniture or other objects possibly superfluous or in some way contrary to our poverty.

Let the Prior himself then strive to be always and in everything poorer than his subjects, so that the latter, seeing his good example, may draw profit from it and give glory to God.

19. It has always been a basic rule among us that, outside of the Prior or the Cellarer or him who has been entrusted with temporal cares by the Prior himself, no hermit can keep even the smallest amount of money in the cell or outside it, either personally or through another, either under the title of a deposit or under any other pretext. The Prior is strictly forbidden to allow any hermit to request money from relatives or friends for any motive whatsoever, even as Mass stipends, in order to procure some particular object for himself, unless such money is deposited in the common account and recorded in the book of income.

20. The evangelical counsel of chastity assumed for the Kingdom of heaven, which is a sign of the future life and a source of the richest fruitfulness in an undivided heart, includes the obligation of perfect continence and of celibacy (can. 599).

21. Let all our hermits, especially those who by reason of their office or assignment deal with people outside, conduct themselves with due prudence toward all in order to avoid not only every danger to chastity but also every occasion that could give scandal or simply arouse wonderment in their neighbor, who rightly expects of the hermit a cordial and at the same time a reserved demeanor.

22. Perfect continence is never the result of human strength alone but a gift of the Lord granted to the humble, who will not, however, be able to keep it without a generous discipline and the custody of the senses.

Our separation from the world and dedication to prayer and work, tempered with the necessary repose and the just relaxation, promote not a little in their harmonious combination purity of body and of heart. Even more vital, however, for the safeguarding of chastity are a sincere brotherly love and the mutual acceptance which should reign in the eremitical community (cf. PC 12).

23. With the profession of obedience we offer to God the complete renunciation of our own will as a sacrifice of ourselves, and by means of this we unite ourselves in a firmer and more secure manner to the salvific will of God. Thus conceived, religious obedience, far from diminishing the dignity of the human person, leads it to its full development, making the freedom of the sons of God grow (cf. PC 14).

Religious obedience obliges us to submit our will to the legitimate Superiors as representatives of God when they command according to our Constitutions (cf. can. 601).

Our religious are bound to obey the Sovereign Pontiff as their highest Superior also by reason of the sacred bond of obedience (can. 590, 2).

24. “By means of obedience we unite ourselves to Him who humbled Himself by becoming obedient even unto death. This virtue is very necessary for solitaries because the harder the life that they lead, the more perfect should be their obedience. Indeed, there must be a greater observance of obedience wherever the way of life is more fervent and more austere” (Rudolph, Rule, chap. 41).

Each one will be able to evaluate the quality of his eremitical life from the smiling and the tranquil promptness with which he adheres to the will of God which is manifested in the orders of the Superiors when they command according to the Constitutions.

The virtue of obedience should be exercised not only toward the Rule and the Superiors but also toward all the brothers. They too should obey one another, convinced that they will go to God only on the path of obedience (cf. RB 71).

25. Such obedience, in order to be fruitful, must develop not in the passivity or mute resignation of the subject but in a climate of confidence and mutual sincerity in which the subject too is conscious of his portion of responsibility for the life and conduct of the eremitical family in which he lives. Superior and subjects, and also the brothers among themselves, are together in search of that which is more pleasing to God and better serves the good of the community and of each member. The spirit of dialogue is not meant to eliminate religious obedience, which remains essentially an exercise of faith. Rather it hopes to render obedience more spontaneous and joyful and to make the brothers’ life together thereby more secure and serene. It should be kept in mind, however, that the one who presides over and is responsible for the community may not always be willing or able to reveal all the motives and reasons for his regulations and decisions.

26. Accepting the invitation of the Lord: “Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt. 4:17), the hermit places his whole existence under the standard of conversion. “What does it mean to become a monk if not to be converted?” affirms St. Peter Damian (Opusc. 16). Thus the monk becomes a man of continual conversion. Indeed, in order to orient one’s whole being to God, a firm decision is not enough but a continual effort is needed. To foster this, the hermit has

chosen his particular path, in order that the discipline of the eremitical life may become the personal expression of his conversion.

By promising in his profession the conversion of his own manners he obliges himself to enter into an essentially dynamic life, reaching out toward an increasing conformity with Christ the Lord. Until the last moment he will recognize himself in the words of the Apostle: “Brothers, I do not consider that I have already won; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13f).

27. Of Saint Romuald it is recorded that he “made little account of one who undertook something great if he did not then persevere therein with constancy” (Life, 9). In fact, the fruits of the life in the hermitage normally ripen slowly and presuppose great stability and perseverance. Therefore, our hermits promise in their religious profession “stability in the Congregation”, which brings with it incorporation in our Congregation, not in a determined local community. Therefore, stability is lived through the hermits’ serene acceptance of their assignment to the local community designated for them from time to time by the competent authority.

CHAPTER III

LIFE IN THE CELL

28. “There is nothing in the hermitage that is more suitable and more necessary for those who practice the solitary life than to remain in the cell, seated and in silence” (Bl. Paul, Rule, p. 79).

Let our cells be sufficiently separated from one another, so that, once we are inside with the door closed, we can let go of every preoccupation in order to fix our gaze and our affections on God with a simple and purified heart. Indeed this is our specific vocation: fleeing far from the preoccupations of this world, to dedicate ourselves to a sacred and laborious leisure which allows the Lord to manifest Himself to the heart of the hermit and to take up His dwelling there. The cell is the most suitable place for contemplative prayer. It should, therefore, be considered as a sacred place in which God is awaited and allows Himself to be encountered.

29. Obviously, the cell can display its precious function only if the hermit perseveres there with constancy. “Therefore, let the solitary endeavor to maintain his continual and perpetual residence in the cell, so that through assiduous stability and the grace of God, residence in the cell becomes sweet to him. Left for a short time, the cell is for the most part sought with greater avidity; but he who abandons it for a long time often forgets about it” (Rudolph, Rule, chap. 37).

Let our hermits leave their cells above all for the celebration of the Eucharist and of the liturgical Hours and for the other common acts. Necessary work for the maintenance of the community will also not seldom need to be performed outside the cell. Neither is it forbidden to leave the cell for personal needs.

In order to respect the recollection of the confreres it is forbidden to enter the cells of the others on the days not dispensed from silence, unless the Prior permits it in particular cases.

30. “Stay in your cell as in paradise”, Saint Romuald invites us (VFr 32), he who knew through experience how the cell can become a place of temptation, of interior struggle and of purification.

There exists before all else the danger of idleness and of “acedia”, that is, of listlessness with regard to things of the Spirit. “The hermits consequently must take great care, as the holy Fathers have taught, to be always engaged so that the devil may always find them occupied and not be able to find a moment in which to tempt them. Let each one endeavor to attend with care and interest to manual labor at opportune and determined hours; at other hours, on the contrary, let him dedicate himself to reading and prayer as well as to other disciplines of the soul either with spiritual or with bodily exercises, so that every moment of the day and night seems to him short and insufficient. Each one should act in such a way that he has more things to do than time in which to do them” (Bl. Paul, Rule, p. 89).

Let the hermits grow ever more aware of living continually under the gaze of God, the loving Father.

31. Let our religious “have Sacred Scripture in their hands daily, so that from the reading of and meditation on the sacred books they may learn ‘the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus’” (cf. Phil. 3:8; PC 6).

Such assiduous contact with the Word of God forms the initial and fundamental element of “lectio divina”, to which the hermits should devote themselves for at least two hours every day. “Lectio divina” includes more than just reading. Indeed it would be too little only to read if this were not followed by meditation, which allows the divine Word to penetrate more deeply within us. By meditating the hermit renders himself capable of perceiving better the voice of the Lord in the past as in his own personal history of salvation.

“Since without divine aid reading and meditation are of no avail, let the hermits dedicate themselves before all and above all to prayer. This is the characteristic of hermits: to be devoted to prayer” (Bl. Paul, Rule, p.69). Prolonged, silent, personal prayer must become a vital necessity for each hermit. Indeed, without such prayer it will not be possible for him to realize the eremitical vocation or to persevere in it for long (cf. Bl. Paul, Rule, p.70).

32. Neither well furnished libraries nor the most beautiful conferences nor our rules in this regard can be of any use if the hermit has not firmly decided to try to improve gradually his own doctrinal, spiritual, biblical and liturgical formation, adapted to his needs and to his own capacity. Suitable books are the perennial food of the soul to feed faith and to sustain prayer. In the cell then, in order to be consistent with our consecration to God, let us dedicate ourselves with ardor to those studies which are more suitable to our profession, so that well chosen reading may promote solid spiritual formation and lay the foundations of contemplation.

The Prior will be particularly zealous in providing the necessary means and the time for the permanent formation of the hermits (cf. can. 661).

33. The experience of our Fathers teaches that the cell itself exercises a formative activity. “The cell is the best teacher for him who dwells long in it, and as time goes on it teaches with action what the tongue of flesh cannot express with the sound of words. Let the brother persevere alone in the cell: and the latter will teach more fully him who dwells there how he ought to live” (St. Peter Damian, *Opusc.* 15, 18).

It is above all the lesson of humility which the solitude of the cell imparts to us. Freed from blinding distractions, the hermit begins to see himself in the light of God and to take the measure of his own emptiness and his own imperfection. All the more intense and profound will be his cry to God and his confidence in Him the more deeply he feels and experiences his own misery and insufficiency.

Sustained by the mercy of the Lord, the hermit will commit himself without discouragement to the invisible battle against the forces of evil which the cell has revealed to him: “Hasten then to overcome your passions, so that admitted to the King’s intimacy you may cling to Him as to an intimate friend. Let the eye of your mind be fixed on the Author of light. That eye will be all the purer the less it will be veiled by the mist of phantasms and vain thoughts” (1. c. 25). Thus, with the grace of the Lord, solitude of body will lead the hermit to interior unity. Giving himself wholly to God, he is given back to himself. Having realized unity within himself and forgetful of self, he perceives from now on the true value of created things, of other persons and of himself.

34. Inside the cell let nothing superfluous be found, nothing that could become for the hermit a motive for distractions or for attachment. Let poverty be its principal adornment; indeed, it is dispossession that often reveals the beauty of things. Let personal requirements and needs be reduced to the minimum to the extent that human weakness allows. On the other hand, we can always have recourse with humility and confidence to the Prior, to manifest to him possible particular needs which we believe ourselves to have, provided that we are disposed to submit ourselves to his decisions, convinced that this is the way which will lead us more quickly to God.

35. Corporal works are ordered to the spiritual. It is legitimate, therefore, that when remaining in the cell we sometimes prefer some manual occupation, even simply in order to rest the spirit. Sometimes manual labor is like an anchor that serves to stabilize the mind. In fact it controls the fluctuation of thoughts and allows the heart to remain united to God even for a long time without the mind's becoming tired.

36. It is our custom that every hermit in the hermitage eats alone in the cell which he occupies. Thus, while restoring the body, he will be better able to preserve his recollection and keep his mind elevated to God. Excluded from this solitary refectory are certain solemnities and other determined days listed in our Customs. The fast and abstinence were instituted by the ancient Fathers to free us from the cravings of our instincts and so that we might be able to follow the Lord more promptly. Such beneficent effects can be had only if what is offered is a spontaneous and joyful gift, since "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7).

It would be incompatible with our state to murmur about the food. No one, on the other hand, is forbidden to make known, with a humble and detached heart, his own needs to the Prior, who enjoys the faculty of dispensing for just motives his individual subjects as well as himself. Let us seek sobriety in everything, adapting ourselves to our diet as it is described in our Customs.

Meat is served only to the sick whenever they have need of it. On all Fridays of the year and during the Lents preceding Christmas and Easter, we abstain also from dairy products and from eggs.

37. Life in the hermitage absolutely demands evangelical perfection, which is expressed also in the mortifications flowing from our style of life. It would be an illusion to wish to reconcile an authentic life of union with God with the seeking of certain conveniences, even those which are common in secular life.

If someone through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit should wish to embrace greater austerities than those of the common rule, let him do so with the blessing of the Prior, who will not deny it especially to one who mortifies himself first of all by submitting himself to obedience, without then causing wonderment in others and without disturbing the servers. Indeed, Saint Peter Damian exhorts us: “in order that our solitude and our penance may be fruitful, they must always be seasoned with the salt of obedience which saves us” (St. Peter Damian, *Opusc.* 15, 18).

CHAPTER IV

THE FORMATION OF THE HERMITS

38. Like our Holy Fathers we fervently desire that the greatest possible number share our consecrated solitude. We are driven to desire this by the love of our neighbor and the inner conviction that, for him who is called to it, “there is no form of Christian life which more easily and in a better way offers to its followers the most delightful tranquility in the present life and the so greatly longed for happiness of the life to come than the institution of the eremitical and solitary life” (Bl. Paul, Rule, p. 17).

On the other hand, it would be irresponsible to accept in our hermitages those who do not give sufficiently clear indications of a vocation. In order to evaluate better the dispositions of the candidates there exist in our Congregation the periods of the aspirancy and of the postulancy (cf. can. 597, 2).

39. In order to be admitted to the novitiate, all our candidates must first pass through the aspirancy, which lasts from a minimum of one to a maximum of three months, and then through the postulancy, which lasts at least three months, according to the judgment of the Prior with his counsel.

40. The purpose of the aspirancy is to allow the aspirant to make his first concrete contact with our way of life as it is lived in practice every day. During this period the Prior and the Father Master should inform themselves further about the motives and the intentions which inspire the candidate. If he really seems to want to abandon the world not because he is forced by some material need or impelled only by disappointments experienced but because he desires to seek God truly, then let there be expounded to him the purpose of our life, the glory which we hope and believe to render to God thereby, and the happiness of leaving all to be with Christ.

Likewise, “let there be represented to him all that is hard and painful on the road which leads to God” (RB 58:8). At the same time the documents required by canon 645 of the Code of Canon Law should be checked, and if any are still lacking, they should be procured.

41. If the aspirant appears suitable and is not at all discouraged but on the contrary shows that he intends to pursue the path on which he has set out, then let him be proposed by the Father Major or by the Prior to the conventual Chapter. If he obtains an absolute majority of favorable votes, let him be admitted as a postulant; otherwise, let him be sent away politely.

42. With this first acceptance there begins the postulancy, which is normally spent in the novitiate house under the guidance of the Master of Novices. In particular cases with the permission of the Father Major and the consent of the Visitators, such a period of trial can be made in another hermitage, under the guidance of a hermit appointed by the General Counsel.

43. The postulant begins to conform himself more completely to the discipline of the hermitage, while he ponders diligently our Constitutions and Customs, aided and guided in this by the Master of Novices. At the beginning of the novitiate the candidate should sign the proper declaration in which he defers without any reservation to the decisions of the Superiors concerning the possible conferment of Holy Orders. He should pledge himself likewise in writing to the gratuitous rendering of his services to the Congregation.

44. The novitiate begins officially for our candidates with their clothing.

Required for admission to the novitiate are the approval, with an absolute majority of votes, of the conventual Chapter and the permission of the Father Major, who will consult the Visitators.

Our eremitical habit, woolen if possible, is white in color and consists of the tunic, the scapular and the cincture. All these are covered in determined circumstances by an ample mantle of the same color.

45. Those who have not yet completed twenty years or who have already passed fifty years are not of the age required to begin the novitiate among us (cf. can. 643, 2).

However, the Father Major with the consent of the Visitators enjoys the faculty of dispensing in particular cases from these limits of age, safeguarding can. 643, 1/1.

No Prior should request such a dispensation for a possible aspirant without having asked and obtained the previous consent of his conventual Chapter.

46. The following are admitted invalidly to the novitiate:

- those who are not of the required age
- a husband for the duration of his marriage
- one who is actually bound by a sacred bond to some Institute of consecrated life or incorporated in a Society of apostolic life
- one who enters the Congregation induced by violence, by grave fear or by fraud, or one who is accepted by a Superior compelled in the same way
- one who has hidden the fact of his former incorporation in an Institute of consecrated life or in a Society of apostolic life.

The Superiors should not admit to the novitiate secular clerics without consulting the Ordinary of the latter, nor should they admit persons burdened by debts and incapable of paying them (cf. can. 127, 2.2; 644).

47. In the conventual Chapter which precedes his clothing, the postulant must be questioned on the following two points:

- whether he has been or still is a novice or professed member of some Institute of consecrated life or of a Society of apostolic life
- whether he is perhaps affected by a serious, incurable or contagious disease.

He is to be warned that in the event that he should conceal the truth, the novitiate would be invalid (cf. can. 643, 2) and therefore, that he would have to be dismissed from the

Congregation in the same moment in which the truth came to the surface, unless the Father Major with the consent of the Visitators, given the nature of the case, were to think it better to proceed differently.

Such a notification must never be omitted, and mention is to be made of it in the book of the capitular acts of the house.

48. The novitiate, in order to be valid, must last an entire two-year period and must be accomplished in a hermitage designated for the purpose. The erection of a house of novitiate, its suppression or the transfer of its location is to be decreed by the General Chapter or by a written decree of the Father Major with the consent of the Visitators.

In particular cases and by way of exception, by concession of the Father Major with the consent of the Visitators, a candidate can make his novitiate or a part of it in another hermitage under the guidance of an approved hermit who takes the place of the Master of Novices.

The length of the novitiate can be abbreviated by no more than four months by the Father Major with the consent of the Visitators for a proportionate cause.

An absence of more than three months, continuous or discontinuous, from the house of the novitiate renders the novitiate invalid. An absence of more than fifteen days must be made up (cf. can. 647-649).

49. The scope of the novitiate demands that the novices be formed under the direction of the Master of Novices, who will abide by the proper regulations for formation approved by the General Chapter.

During the novitiate the young hermits must be helped to cultivate the human, Christian and monastic virtues; introduced to a more demanding path of perfection through prayer and self-denial; guided to the contemplation of the mystery of salvation; prepared for a full participation in the divine worship; instructed on the nature and the spirit, the history and the discipline of our Congregation; and finally, educated to love the Church and her Pastors (cf. can. 650, 1; 652, 2).

50. In order to respond faithfully to the grace of the divine vocation and to be able to make it ever clearer to themselves, the novices should pledge themselves to an active collaboration with their own Master, explaining to him with simplicity and confidence, as to the person chosen by Divine Providence to direct them and to help them, their impressions, difficulties or doubts (cf. can. 652, 3).

51. Although it is clear that manual labor forms an integral part of our kind of life and that lending a helping hand with the internal services of the community helps the formation of the candidates, the latter, however, must not be occupied in tasks which are extraneous to their formation nor burdened even by labors which are suitable to it (cf. can. 652, 5).

52. In the formation of the candidates the community in which they live has a very important function. With the example of the regular observance, of the spirit of prayer, of the custody of the cell and of silence, the eremitical community transmits to those who are in their time of testing the values and the convictions on which it bases its own activity, contributing thus to their spiritual growth.

The relations between the community and the candidates in the time of testing should be characterized by great fraternal charity and the spirit of a family without, on the other hand, inopportune interference encumbering this delicate phase of investigation and study of their vocation.

53. The role of the Master of Novices is fundamental: it pertains to him to discern and to verify the vocation of the candidates and, by testing them, to form them gradually for our life.

He must have made his perpetual profession and have acquired an adequate experience of the Camaldolese life and spirit. He should not occupy other positions except in a case of extreme necessity.

In choosing a Master of Novices account must be taken besides of the testimony of his life, of his spiritual and cultural preparation and of his aptitude for the role of educator.

He is appointed by the General Counsel for three years (cf. can. 651, 1.3).

54. Helpers can be assigned to the Master when necessary, even for some particular area of formation. Such helpers are to be subordinate to the Master with regard to the direction of the candidates and the regulation of their formation (cf. can. 651, 2).

55. A professed of perpetual vows cannot pass from his own religious Institute to ours except through the concession of the Supreme Moderator of the one and of the other Institute with the previous consent of the respective Counsels.

Before proposing the case to the Visitators and Consultors General, the Father Major will furnish himself with the necessary information from the Supreme Moderator of the candidate, thereby making it possible to proceed on the basis of experience. The written exchange of the reciprocal concessions of the Supreme Moderators must occur at the beginning of the formal testing.

After having completed regularly the aspirancy and the postulancy among us, the candidate must undergo a period of at least three years of testing before being admitted to perpetual profession in our eremitical Congregation (cf. can. 684).

56. The novitiate or the equivalent period of trial permits the candidates to be formed in mind and heart according to our spirit and tenor of life, and it serves also to verify further their convictions and their suitability (cf. can. 646).

In the course of the novitiate the conventual Chapter expresses itself on every candidate in two intermediate scrutinies; in the course of the probation mentioned in article 55 there must be three scrutinies.

He who has not obtained a majority or at least a parity of favorable votes will be dismissed; he who, on the contrary has received a majority or at least a parity of favorable votes may continue his apprenticeship.

57. A novice can always freely leave our Congregation, and he can also be dismissed either by the Father Major or even by the local Prior, provided that the latter has obtained the consent

of the conventual Chapter (cf. can. 653, 1). If at the end of the Novitiate there remains some doubt concerning the suitability of a novice, the period of trial can be prolonged, but not beyond six months, by the Father Major, who will consult the Visitators (cf. can. 653, 2).

If the novice after mature reflection and in full freedom has decided to bind himself with the vows, and if the community has judged him suitable, he can make his triennial profession.

58. Dead to sin and consecrated to God with baptism, the hermit is consecrated to God through religious profession by means of the ministry of the Church. Freed from the bonds of the world, he can now tend more directly toward the fullness of charity. The stable pact that binds him to the Lord makes him share in the mystery of the indissoluble union of Christ with the Church and bears witness before the world to the new life which the Redemption of Christ has acquired for us (cf. can. 654).

59. For the validity of the triennial profession it is required:

- that the novitiate have been completed validly
- that the conventual Chapter, with a deliberative vote and an absolute majority of the voters present, have freely granted admission to profession
- that the Father Major has granted permission after having consulted the Visitators
- that the profession be expressed and that it be made without violence, grave fear, or fraud
- that it be received by the Father Major or by the Prior personally or through another commissioned by them (cf. can. 656).

60. Before making his temporary profession, the novice must cede to whomever he thinks best the administration of all that he possesses and dispose of its use and usufruct for the whole time that he will be bound by the vows. Only thus will he be able, without useless distractions and preoccupations, to dedicate himself to our eremitical and contemplative life.

In order to modify these dispositions or to undertake any action relative to temporal goods, the temporary professed must have the permission of the Father Major, who will grant it only for a proportionate cause (cf. can. 668, 1.2).

61. For the triennial profession, the following formula is used:

In the name of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, I _____ from _____ of the Diocese of _____ for love of Our Lord Jesus Christ promise with a vow for three years to God Most High and Omnipotent my stability in this Congregation of the Camaldolese Hermits of Monte Corona, the conversion of my manners, and poverty, chastity and obedience according to the Rule of Saint Benedict and according to the Constitutions of the said Congregation, before God and all the Angels and his Saints, in the presence of the most Reverend Father Major, Dom _____ (or: of the Reverend Father Prior, Dom _____) and the other Brethren. The ____ day of the month of _____ of the year _____.

62. All the professed, even if priests, remain entrusted to the care of an experienced hermit until perpetual profession. Under his guidance and according to the proper rules of formation they are inserted more integrally into the form of life which they have chosen, causing their eremitical Camaldolese vocation to mature in a harmonious and balanced manner as they move forward toward their definitive incorporation in the Monte Corona Congregation.

63. Whoever wishes to leave our Congregation at the end of his temporary vows can do so freely (cf. can. 688, 1).

He who during temporary profession for a grave cause asks to leave the Congregation can obtain the relative indult from the Father Major with the consent of the Visitators and with the counsel of the Consultors (cf. can. 688, 2).

The Father Major, with the counsel of the Visitators, has the faculty of allowing for just motives a religious of ours in temporary vows to pass over to another Institute, provided that he is accepted by the competent Superior of the latter. He who makes use of such a concession keeps the right to return to our Congregation as long as his temporary vows made among us last.

At the expiration of the temporary profession, if there exists just causes, a religious can be excluded from further profession by the Father Major with the counsel of the Visitors, whether it is a question of the renewal of temporary vows or the making of perpetual vows (cf. can. 689, 1).

The period of temporary vows, if it seems opportune, can be prolonged by the Father Major after having consulted the Visitors. In any case the entire period of temporary vows must not exceed the duration of nine years (cf. can. 657, 2).

The Father Major with the consent of the Visitors can permit that perpetual profession be anticipated for a just cause, but not by more than three months (cf. can. 657, 3).

64. At the end of the time for which the temporary profession was made, or at the end of the period of trial for one who is bound by perpetual vows in another Institute, the candidate whom the Superiors will have considered humanly and spiritually suited to pledge himself definitively to our form of eremitical life can be admitted to perpetual profession (cf. can. 657, 1).

The latter sanctions the irrevocable consecration of the hermit to God, contributes to the edification of the Church and inserts the religious totally in the communion of the brothers with the fullness of rights and duties according to the Constitutions.

The candidate for perpetual profession must present a written petition to his Prior, and this will then be submitted to the vote of the conventual Chapter.

65. For perpetual profession the vote of the Chapter is only consultative. Only if it is a question of a candidate bound by perpetual vows in another Institute does such a vote have deliberative value.

To make perpetual profession, a candidate needs the permission of the Father Major, who can give it only with the consent of the Visitors. If the Father Major wishes instead to exclude a candidate from perpetual profession, even if he was admitted by the conventual Chapter, he may do so after having consulted the Visitors.

66. Of the disciple who follows Christ the complete abnegation of everything and of himself is asked. Therefore, before his definitive vows, the future professed must draw up in a form valid also according to the civil law if possible, a radical renunciation of his actual goods, which renunciation is to become effective from the day of his profession. The goods which he may in any way receive after this renunciation and which have not been otherwise allotted through it will belong to the local community in which he lives (cf. can. 668).

67. The formula of perpetual profession is identical with that of triennial profession found in article 61, but in place of the words for “three years” the expression “until death” is used.

The document of the profession which has been made signed by the professed and at least by the Superior, who receives the profession, is to be preserved diligently in the hermitage.

The same Superior is to send a notification of the profession which has been made to the pastor of the parish in which the newly professed was baptized (cf. can. 535, 2).

68. “Not to desire Holy Orders and the dignity of the Priesthood and not to accept them except for love of perfect obedience” (Bl. Paul, Rule, p.30), is the recommendation of our Blessed Founder. Many saintly hermits have avoided the Priesthood in order to safeguard better certain typically eremitical values, such as humility of spirit, hiddenness, solitude and silence. On the other hand, many eminent hermits have known how to unite in a wonderful way the eremitical charism with that of the Priesthood, as for example, our Blessed Father Paul Giustiniani himself.

It is clear, however, that the Priesthood is not essential to our eremitical vocation.

69. The Priesthood is conferred and exercised for the service of the eremitical community, by whom it is not considered, in the first place, as a personal enrichment. Let those on whom Holy Orders have been conferred or who are preparing to receive them know that they, much more than the others, must be under the discipline of the hermitage. Indeed, the Priesthood must not offer the pretext of forgetting obedience and humility but should help them to make ever more progress on the path that leads to God (cf. RB 62:4).

70. It pertains to the General Counsel to present as candidates for Ordination those hermits who not only desire it but who are recognized to be in possession of the necessary aptitudes through the consultative judgment also of the conventual Chapter.

Let all those to whom it pertains be careful to observe accurately all that is prescribed by Canon law concerning the preparation and the presentation of the *Ordinandi*.

71. Our Congregation and our local communities are traditionally guided by Superiors on whom Holy Orders have been conferred. Thus, juridically speaking, we form a “clerical Institute” in the sense of can. 588 of the Code of Canon Law.

All our religious have equal rights and obligations, except those which flow from Holy Orders.

72. The Father Major with the consent of the Visitors can for a grave cause grant to a perpetual professed an indult of exlaustration for not more than three years. If it is a question of a cleric, the previous consent of the Ordinary of the place in which he is to live must be obtained. A prolongation of the indult, or its concession for more than three years, is reserved to the Holy See (cf. can. 686, 1).

Upon request of the Father Major with the consent of the Visitors exlaustration can be imposed by the Holy See for grave causes and safeguarding always equity and charity (cf. can. 686, 3).

The exlaustrated religious is considered exempted from the obligations not compatible with his new situation in life. He remains, however, under the dependence and the care of his Superiors and also of the local Ordinary, above all if it is a question of a cleric. He can wear the eremitical habit, unless the indult states otherwise. He lacks, however, active and passive voice (cf. can. 687).

73. A professed of perpetual vows is not to request an indult of departure from our Congregation except for truly grave reasons pondered before God. He should present his request

to the Father Major, who will forward it to the Apostolic See together with his opinion and that of the Visitors (cf. can. 691, 1).

74. Those who legitimately leave our Congregation or who have been legitimately dismissed from it cannot claim anything from the Congregation for any activity accomplished in it. The Congregation must, however, observe equity and evangelical charity toward the religious who separates himself from it (cf. can. 702).

75. He who at the end of the novitiate or after profession has legitimately left our Congregation can be readmitted to it by the Father Major with the consent of the Visitors without the burden of repeating the novitiate. It pertains, however, to the Father Major to establish a suitable period of trial before the temporary profession and the duration of the temporary vows before the perpetual profession, according to articles 57 and 63 of the Constitutions (cf. can. 690, 1).

CHAPTER V

RECLUSION

76. Since continual prayer is the principal scope of life in the hermitage, the hermits shall hold in great veneration our institution of Reclusion, which permits a stable union with God in an exceptionally intense manner.

One must have a particular inspiration from on high in order to pledge himself to so radical a participation in the death and resurrection of Christ. The recluse, “prisoner for love of a supernal freedom” (St. Peter Damian, opusc. 11), will sometimes taste something of the eternal joys already here below, but more often still, his will be a life of pure faith and of pure abandonment in God, more similar to Gethsemane than to Tabor.

77. He who requests the grace of reclusion and those to whom it pertains to decide about it are together responsibly involved in the search of that which is more pleasing to God, examining with true spiritual discernment the presuppositions necessary to pursue fruitfully an experience of this kind: the practical possibilities and above all the suitability of the petitioner, who must be a hermit of consummate virtue, of great humility and of notable human equilibrium.

Reclusion is not granted to Superiors, to the Master of Novices and to the bursars as long as their appointment lasts.

78. To the recluses are to be assigned the more distant cells with the gardens surrounded by a wall.

“To the recluse will be brought with diligent solicitude by the brother hermits all that is necessary both for the body and for the spirit; opportune aids and comforts will be offered to him, so that, unfettered and freed from every other preoccupation, he can peacefully attend to God alone” (Bl. Paul, Rule, p.26).

Perpetual and inviolable silence is imposed on him, and he cannot leave the cell without due permission or without grave, compelling need. He cannot send letters or messages to the brethren or to others or receive such without the knowledge of the Prior, and he remains entirely subject to the yoke of obedience as the other hermits.

79. Let the recluses celebrate Holy Mass in the oratory of the cell. If they are not priests, they will serve the priest who will celebrate there. They are to say the liturgical hours in their own oratory, following the horarium of the community with regard both to the hours of the day and to those of the night, observing the ceremonies which the others observe in church and in communion with them. Likewise, they are to devote themselves to *Lectio Divina* at the same hours appointed for the community and in union with it.

No supplement of prayers or of readings is prescribed for the recluses, since it is rightly supposed that each one according to his maturity, accepting docilely the suggestions of the Spirit, will know how to regulate himself in such a way as to sanctify his whole day.

80. The faculty of granting perpetual reclusion is reserved to the General Chapter. Temporary reclusion up to three years can be granted by the General Counsel. The Prior can permit reclusion for the duration of a Lent, after having heard his Counselors.

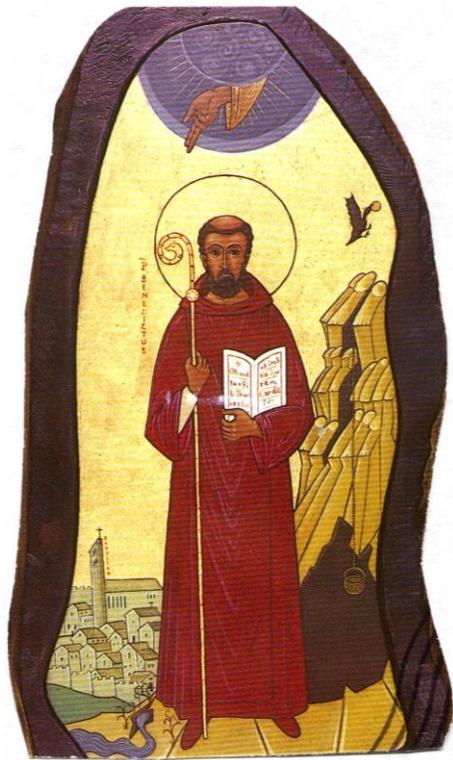
Those who have the faculty of granting reclusion can also revoke it for just motives.

The Father Major and, in more urgent cases, also the Prior, having heard their Counselors, have the faculty of suspending reclusion temporarily whenever the common good or the good of the individual requires it.

Temporary recluses are deprived of active voice; perpetual recluses of both active and passive voice.

SECOND PART

THE EREMITICAL COMMUNITY



CHAPTER VI

SOLITUDE AND SILENCE

81. “No exterior solitude can bring tranquility to the spirit without the aid of the true solitude which is interior”, Blessed Paul admonishes us (Q I 37) But he is far from denying that external conditions can favor the contemplative life.

Therefore, let our hermitages be far from inhabited places and at least two kilometers away from any city or village, safe from the noise of the world.

The peace and beauty of a place contribute not a little to raising the spirit and to rendering the praise of the Creator of all things easy and spontaneous for it. As far as possible, let the hermitage be situated in the midst of forest lands, which shall be preserved by the hermits, augmented and with opportune expedients rendered ever more luxuriant.

82. The buildings of the hermitage—church, cells, guest house, places for the common life—as also the respective orchards and gardens should be circumscribed and enclosed, so that no one can enter except through the door.

No one is permitted to go out without the consent of the Prior or of his substitute.

Within the enclosure of the hermitage the cloister is to be maintained inviolate. Once it has been determined, the cloister can no longer be modified without the permission of the General Chapter or of the Father Major with the consent of the Plenary General Counsel (cf. can. 667).

83. We must always avoid favoring in any way the frequenting of the hermitage by people.

However, “there should never be any failure in the necessary duties of charity through an excessive desire of respecting the solitude; or on the contrary, should the quiet and the necessary solitude of the hermits be disturbed through a preoccupation with showing a greater charity than required” (Bl. Paul, p.60).

It belongs particularly to the doorkeeper to defend the quiet of his brethren, adhering faithfully to the regulations of the Prior in this regard.

84. The Father Major, having heard the opinion of the Visitators, can authorize, in exceptional cases, the entrance of women into the enclosure. They are always to be accompanied by the Prior or by another hermit appointed by him.

It is strictly forbidden to our hermits, except in case of grave necessity, to exercise the ministry of confession for women of whatever age or to assume their spiritual direction.

Our traditional reserve with regard to the opposite sex does not flow from disdain or discrimination but is intended exclusively to render our union with God more stable and less disturbed.

85. The material cloister would be of little help if we allowed the spirit of the world to enter the hermitage through an indiscriminate use of the means of social communication. Therefore, we exclude the use of radio and television. Let the reading of newspapers and magazines be done with moderation and in the measure in which it permits us, as men of prayer, to share in the vicissitudes of the Church and of the world (cf. can. 666).

The exigencies of our vocation require, besides, a great sobriety in correspondence by mail.

86. Let our hermits not leave the hermitage without a serious motive. The Prior himself shall give the example by never going out except for something necessary or greatly useful.

Let them try to expedite their affairs as quickly as possible in order to return eagerly to the quiet and the solitude, and, if they do not go far, they should return to the hermitage on the same day if possible.

Let them try “as far as possible, to preserve the rigor and the style of the eremitical life when through necessity and through obedience it is required to leave the hermitage” (Bl. Paul, Rule, p.33).

It is not our custom to visit our relatives, but they can come to see us several times a year.

87. However, urgent the needs of the active apostolate, the priests of the hermitage are not allowed to lend their assistance outside the hermitage in the various pastoral ministries, nor can they be called for such a motive (cf. can. 674).

“Let us not go out of our field, usurping duties that do not belong to us. Let the monk indeed have feelings of charity for all, but let him believe that for him it is useless to give himself to the exterior ministry for the salvation of his neighbor. Let him still give salutary counsels to whoever comes to visit him, but let him pay no attention to whoever invites him to neglect the profit of his tranquility” (St. Peter Damian, *Opusc.* 12, 30).

88. No hermitage should lack a guest house, which must be situated in a place rather far from the solitary cells. It pertains to the Prior with the consultation of his counselors to balance the frequency of the guests to be received.

As a rule, we do not accept guests in groups, even small groups, and their stay should not ordinarily be extended beyond a week.

The guests are to adapt themselves to our style of life.

Without the permission of the Prior the hermits cannot speak with them. He who has been appointed to serve the guests and bring them whatever is necessary should not concern himself with anything else, but once his assignment has been fulfilled, let him withdraw politely.

The necessary reserve must not prevent the establishment between the guests and the community of a climate of fraternal communion, full of cordial charity and of mutual human and spiritual enrichment.

89. “It would be of little use to have given up relations with the people and the life in the city, if then the hermits do not guard themselves carefully from too frequent relations with the brethren. Such relations, being easier, are also the most dangerous enemies of solitude” (Bl. Paul, *Rule*, p.64).

Our Customs are to indicate the time to be silent and the time to speak, as also the places where there is normally a stricter silence.

In order to safeguard our recollection it is forbidden to speak with those who do not belong to our religious family, unless the Prior has given special permission.

90. By limiting ourselves in the use of the tongue we are promising ourselves above all a better quality of prayer. “The silence of the religious and solitary life has not been instituted so that we might become mute animals but so that, by putting an end to exterior discourse, we might speak unceasingly with God in prayer or to ourselves in meditation on things useful to our souls” (Bl. Paul, Q III 79).

It is not always possible for us to enjoy the recollection of the cell, but we can always take refuge in silence when we restrain our eyes, our ears, our voice.

Silence thus becomes the spiritual atmosphere which facilitates our encounter with God. “In a silent, tranquil and meditative soul Wisdom establishes her abode” (Rudolph, Rule 45).

With progress in our vocation silence will no longer be felt as an imposition but as an exigency of the soul that spontaneously orients its thought and affection to God.

91. It has always been our custom that the hermits can speak about whatever is useful for liturgical services, for study, for work or for any urgent need, but only briefly and without raising their voices. Indeed to speak in a low voice, briefly and somewhat apart, not where the others are or pass by, is a courteous and charitable way of observing silence and can therefore offend no one.

92. In all the hermitages there should be every year, if possible during one of the two Lents, a retreat for some days during which all, especially those who are usually more occupied, can dedicate themselves more freely to reflection and to the deepening of their spiritual life. It is desirable that the retreat be conducted by an expert guide suited to our way of life (cf. can. 663, 5).

CHAPTER VII

LITURGICAL WORSHIP IN THE HERMITAGE

93. “As in every contemplative life, also in the Camaldolese vocation the principal duty of the monks consists in the praise of God, and that is in exalting, magnifying and recognizing His superiority, His love, His faithfulness, His justice and His marvelous design of salvation” (St. John Paul II, 1982 in Fonte Avellana).

In Camaldolese eremitism the praise of God has never been limited to the interiority of the liturgy of the heart or to the sacrifice of praise consisting of a mortified life for the sake of Jesus, but has always included, and in notable measure, liturgical celebration in the strict sense.

In the sacred Liturgy the hermits realize themselves as a praying community that praises the Lord night and day and which is being built by Him as a holy temple, the dwelling of God in the Spirit.

94. “For hermit monks the liturgy must be adapted to their way of life; in it there should predominate the interior part of worship and meditation on the mystery, which is nourished by an ardent faith” (St. Paul VI, Discourse to the monks, Praglia 1982, p.165).

In its external form our liturgy is simple and sober; however, what is done is done with joy and reverence, carefully, in a decorous manner and with the necessary preparation.

It is our ancient custom to relinquish the liturgical chant, underlining in this way the distance which still separates us from the joy of the heavenly Jerusalem.

95. The liturgical center of the eremitical day is the Eucharistic celebration, which renews and deepens more greatly our communion with Christ who died and rose again, and which builds up the fraternal community. In order to express better the union of the eremitical family based on the Eucharistic Sacrifice, it is suitable for the conventual Mass to be concelebrated.

96. The Divine Office is ordained to sanctify the entire course of the day and of the night by means of the divine praise. All the hermits are obliged to assemble in church for the celebration of the liturgical hours.

We should “betake ourselves to church for the Opus Dei not only through habit or because obliged to do so, but rather impelled by the interior desire to praise the Creator” (Bl. Paul, Rule, p.31).

The Office of readings among us has the character of nocturnal prayer and is celebrated in the first hours of the day (around 4 am.). For the other liturgical hours the true time of each hour should be respected as far as possible (cf. can. 1175).

We follow the monastic Office, approved by the Holy See for the monastic Orders of the Benedictine Rule. As far as possible, in all the hermitages of our Congregation the distribution of the psalms of the Office during the week should be identical.

97. Whenever the professed hermits do not participate in the communal celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours “let them not neglect to pay their due of service” (RB 50, 4). They are bound by the obligation of reciting the Divine Office individually, the regulations of the Customs in this regard excepted (cf. can. 1174, 1).

98. The most holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, is the eminent example of the contemplative life. Let our hermits therefore honor Her with true love and with special veneration, also with the recitation of the Holy Rosary (cf. can. 663, 4).

99. Our hermits are to approach the Sacrament of Penance frequently (cf. can. 664).

In order to render this possible and easy, let every Prior in his own hermitage confer on several confessors, according to the number of the hermits, the faculty of receiving the confessions of the members of the community and of those who possibly live day and night in the hermitage (cf. can. 969, 2).

In addition let him see to it that there is frequently an external confessor for the community.

If any one of our religious should at some time wish to approach a visiting priest in the hermitage who has the faculties for hearing confessions, he can do so freely.

100. For hearing the confessions of other members of the faithful, who should come only rarely to our churches for such a purpose, let the Prior present to the local Ordinary those priests whom he knows to be more suitable for such an office (cf. can. 969, 1).

CHAPTER VIII

THE PRIOR

101. The Priors, Superiors of our local communities, are elected by those participating in the General Chapter.

They remain in office for three years, in conformity with article 173 of the Constitutions.

Although the individual hermitages enjoy a notable autonomy of life and administration within the limits indicated by the Constitutions and the Customs, they do not constitute houses *sui iuris* in the sense of can. 613 of the Code of Canon Law, and therefore our Priors are not considered Major Superiors.

Even if they do not have the title of Abbot, let them not neglect to meditate on and to conform themselves to what our Holy Father Benedict writes in chapters two and sixty-four of the Holy Rule.

The hermitages no longer or not yet declared autonomous have as superior a Vicar elected by the General Chapter, or else, outside this assembly, by the Plenary General Council. The Vicar depends on the General Council.

102. Let him who has been elected Prior of an eremitical community, which “he must lead in the return to the Fatherland” (St. Peter Damian, opusc. 14), imitate in everything Christ, who “did not come to be served but to serve” (Mk. 10:45).

Let him be for his subjects a living sign of the love which the heavenly Father has for each one of us.

It is his role to help, guide, animate and unite all the hermits confided to his care. To that purpose let him endeavor solicitously to see that the Rule, Constitutions and Customs are known, loved and faithfully observed.

The Prior is the main one responsible for building in the hermitage a fraternal community in which God is sought and loved above all things (cf. can. 619).

103. “Let his life be for his subjects an example of all the virtues and especially of the observance of the eremitical norms. Indeed, the example of those who are in authority is more efficacious than their words” (61. Bl. Paul, Rule, p.93).

The Prior should manifest solicitude toward all the brethren, but in particular toward those who have more need of fatherly affection and of brotherly encouragement, such as the young, the old, the afflicted, the sick.

Toward the restless and undisciplined his charity must necessarily assume the form of severity and rephension. “But let the reproofs go out from the lips in such a way that the sweetness of brotherly love is maintained in the heart” (St. Peter Damian, opusc. 15, 28).

In order to safeguard the regular observance and the respect of the other members of the community, the Superiors have the right and the duty to impose sanctions on whoever transgresses the prescriptions of the Holy Rule, the Constitutions, the Customs and the orders given vocally or in writing.

In obliging formally to obedience in virtue of the vow, let them, however, always proceed cautiously and with due prudence.

104. It pertains to the Prior to nourish the brethren spiritually with the Word of God, explained and made actual in the context of our search for God in solitude.

He should provide with care and discernment for the acquisition of books useful to the soul and should promote in the hermits the taste for Sacred Scripture, the writings of the Fathers of the Church and the more valid works of monastic spirituality. Above all, let him not neglect our spiritual inheritance; that is, let him seek to permeate himself and the others with the eremitical spirit of our Blessed Founder.

105. In order to preach to our religious in our churches, the permission of the local Prior is required (cf. can. 765).

106. The Prior must watch over the economic administration of the hermitage and know how to be far-sighted and solicitous in everything.

Only through necessity can he fulfill the function of cellarer (cf. can. 636, 1).

“Having received a double assignment, namely, that of directing souls and of providing temporal things for human bodies, let the Prior see that he always interests himself more in the things of the spirit than in the administration of temporal things.

Let him always be most attentive day and night, as far as possible, to arrive first at the Divine Office and see that he does not let himself be taken up by the multiple occupations of his ministry” (Bl. Paul, Rule, p.94).

107. The Prior should periodically visit the cells of the hermits in order to have personal contact with them and to inform himself concerning their material and spiritual needs.

Let the hermits facilitate for their Superior the burden of his office by accepting with docility his guidance and respecting his need of silence and retreat. However, they can always approach him in their necessities with fraternal and filial confidence.

108. Let the Priors always show themselves trustful and obedient toward the Father Major and not neglect to inform him, at least every two months, of the state of their respective communities.

Let them not omit notifying the Father Major as soon as possible of the hospitalization of a confrere and other possible absences from the hermitage.

109. Every Prior is to have his particular counsel formed of two of the more prudent hermits (cf. can. 627, 1).

The Counselors are proposed by the Prior and elected by the conventual Chapter with a secret vote. But in the houses of novitiate the Master of Novices is *ex officio* one of the Counselors.

Let the Prior not neglect to consult his Counselors, not only in the cases foreseen by our own legislation but also in other matters of a certain importance, and thus proceed in all things

with deliberation and prudence. He is not bound, however, to follow their counsels, notwithstanding the obligation of listening to them and of taking their opinions into serious consideration.

110. Every time the Prior leaves the house he is to designate by name a vicar, so that the hermits know whom they must obey and whom to approach in their necessities. The Prior will have the faculty of naming whomever he wishes without taking account of office or seniority.

111. A Prior can be removed from his office for grave reasons, as, for example, when he has caused a grave scandal, when he has been obstinately disobedient to the legitimate regulations of the Superiors in a grave matter, when he supports with obstinacy doctrines condemned by the Church, when his state of health or other incapacities do not permit him to fulfill his function adequately (cf. can. 624, 3).

With regard to the procedure to be followed, the norms of the universal law (can. 192-195) and article 203, c and 192 of the Constitutions are to be observed.

CHAPTER IX

THE COMMON LIFE

112. The love of Christ and the desire of rendering Him thanks have gathered the individual hermits together in the eremitical family the members of which should help one another mutually to realize their contemplative vocation.

In the same measure in which each individual's union with God increases, his fraternal communion is also reinforced.

An authentic life of brotherhood, which will never be possible without abnegation and sacrifices on the part of all and of each, constitutes an example of universal reconciliation in Christ and possesses a great apostolic value: "By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples." (Jn. 13:35; cf. can. 602).

113. After the common liturgical service, in which the eremitical community appears in its highest expression, the most important moment of the community is that of the conventual Chapter, which must be attended by all the perpetual professed not deprived of active voice, including the Father Major or the Visitators whenever they are present.

In order to be able to proceed validly, the majority of those having the right must attend.

114. Every time in the hermitage there will be matters to decide for which the consent of the conventual Chapter is required, the Prior is to assemble those having voice and expound clearly the subject in question (cf. RB 3).

After diligent examination, the opinion of each having been heard, the matter is to be decided with a secret vote. Whatever will be approved by the absolute majority of those present is to be considered as definitive and valid; but if the votes are equal, the president of the Chapter after the third scrutiny will be able to decide the question.

115. Whenever the Prior deems it opportune to consult the community, let him listen to the counsel of the hermits. He himself should not participate in a possible vote, and he is not obliged to conform himself to the vote of the majority. However, without a preponderant reason, of which he is to be the judge, he ought not to detach himself from the vote, especially if it is unanimous.

116. Let the hermits beware of revealing to outsiders anything discussed in the Chapter which could be a source of hatred or scandal. In such cases silence becomes an obligation of conscience.

117. Other important moments of the common life are the spiritual conferences, the meals in common and the Chapter of faults.

While the conference transmits light to the intelligence, stimulates the will and gives ardor to the affections, the common table, to which we go on the greater liturgical solemnities, reminds us of the supper which Christ transformed into a sacred mystery. While the body receives nourishment, the soul too is fed spiritually.

In the Chapter of faults we acknowledge publicly the infractions committed against our Rules and against fraternal charity, and we receive a penance for them. This offers the Prior the occasion to make opportune admonitions.

118. Sickness and old age invite us to reinforce our faith in Divine Providence, which makes all things work together for the good of those who love the Lord. Pain makes us like the suffering Christ, associating us with His work of Redemption and uniting us more intimately with the whole Mystical body.

In order to raise the spirit of the sick and for the motive of charity everyone can freely visit them, except in the hours of strict silence.

119. Let him who is destined for the care of the sick try to assist them as he would the person of Christ Himself (cf. RB 36:1), with careful diligence and with the greatest charity, providing them with all that is necessary.

Attention, however, should be paid not to let the due care of the body degenerate into laxity (cf. Bl. Paul, Rule, p.77).

Let the sick not afflict their infirmarian with superfluous or exaggerated or even complaining requests. From meditating on the sufferings of Christ and also His mercy the sick will draw strength to bear their trial, and the infirmarians will be more disposed to help them.

120. Let the Prior often visit the sick. Medical appointments should be obtained for them and everything done according to the advice of the physicians. However, not everything which secular people allow themselves can be allowed to us hermits even in illness.

121. Let the Prior pay careful attention that the sick brother not lack spiritual comforts, among which, in the first place, are Confession and the Holy Eucharist.

To him who through sickness or old age begins to be in danger of death the Prior is to administer the Anointing of the sick. He should dispose the anointed gradually for a happy passage.

122. The austerity of our kind of life and the continual spiritual application can weary frail human nature. Therefore, in our eremitical discipline some occasions of fraternal conversation are foreseen which should contribute to relaxing the bodies and souls of the brethren and to uniting their hearts.

Community recreations, however, are rare among us. Rare too are walks outside the cloister in less frequented areas. Both, however, can constitute, above all for the young hermits, precious factors of equilibrium and also of incitement to a more intense union with God.

Let our Priors not neglect to grant generously to their brethren, according to the Customs, those occasions of relaxation of which they themselves perhaps no longer feel the need.

123. In our fraternal conversations let us show ourselves affable and charitable, avoiding words and gestures that could offend someone and fleeing from worldly talk and criticism.

Let us too try to merit the praise which Saint Peter Damian gave to his hermits:

“That which surpasses all, that which truly excels above every virtue for one who professes a holy life is that so great is the fraternal charity, so great the union of wills fused in the fire of mutual love, that no one thinks himself born for himself but for all, that the good of others is his good and his, through extension of love, is common to everyone” (St. Peter Damian, opusc. 14).

CHAPTER X

WORK AND TEMPORAL GOODS

124. “Manual labor done in silence, according to the admonition of Saint Paul (cf. 1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Thess. 3:12), even if not necessary to obtain food, is not only useful but indispensable for avoiding idleness, the enemy of the soul, and for preserving humility, which is the root of all the virtues” (Bl. Paul, Rule, p.85).

Our occupations serve to submit the body to the human law of labor and to keep alive the taste for spiritual activities. Thus, taking as their model the Holy Family of Nazareth, those who attend to the daily labors of the house praise the Lord in their works, consecrate the world to the glory of the Creator and order the realities of nature to the service of the contemplative life.

125. “Whatever manual labor that you do, inside or outside the cell, always do it meditating on the law of the Lord or singing the divine canticles as a relief of fatigue. During work nothing prevents prayer, and this is not at all useless. On the contrary, only one prayer, made in the fear of God, in liberty of spirit and with radiant countenance by one who labors is more easily accepted than ten thousand prayers of one who despises manual labor through laziness or negligence” (Bl. Paul, Rule, p.86).

The work assigned to the hermits must always be able to guarantee interior freedom and not give rise to disturbing thoughts about profit and to nervousness because of deadlines to be observed. Thus the monk, attentive not only to what he is doing but still more to the intention with which he acts, will have the possibility of keeping his heart always watchful.

126. “In the hermitage no work is admitted which disturbs the solitude, place of the search for God” (Bl. Paul, Rule, p.87). All the hermits are to be occupied for at least three hours a day in the various manual or intellectual labors of common utility.

It pertains to the Cellarer or to the Prior to assign to each his work, which must be organized in such a way as to give to the hermits the possibility of having their hours of

remaining in the cell for prayer, reading and study according to articles 31 and 32 of the Constitutions.

Let us accept it with understanding and generosity both when the material conditions of a house require for one or the other of the hermits more hours of work or fewer hours of staying in the cell, and when personal necessities require that one or another spend more time in the cell. It is the responsibility of the Prior to discern in each case.

127. Not only on Sundays and holy days of obligation but also on all the solemnities which have the common meal, only the indispensable work is to be done in the hermitage, and our hermits are to have more time at their disposal to occupy themselves with spiritual fruit in their own cells. The same applies to those days which, according to article 92 of the Constitutions, are dedicated to the annual retreat.

128. It pertains to the Prior, after having consulted his Counselors, to distribute the various assignments or “Obediences”. In this “let him beware of belonging to those who impose on their dependents or collaborators hard and difficult tasks which they do not wish to move with a finger” (Bl. Paul, Rule, p.94; cf. Lk 11:46).

Let each one accept with simplicity the task assigned to him, glad to make his energies profitable and conscious of thus building up the Body of Christ according to the design of God.

129. To the Cellarer, nominated by the General Counsel according to article 200 of the Constitutions, are entrusted—always and in everything under orders from the Prior—the care and the administration of the temporal goods of the hermitage.

He is to administer the goods with discernment according to God, his conscience and the spirit of our Congregation, and he is to avoid all waste.

His responsible and diligent labor, which involves frequent contacts with persons outside, permits his brethren to remain undisturbed in silence and recollection. But his important service must not lead him to lose the taste for solitude and the quiet of the cell. If the occupation of his

ministry is a necessity, constant should be his desire for the sweetness of contemplation (cf. Rudolph, Rule, ch. 39).

130. It pertains to the Cellarer to buy the things necessary, sell what is superfluous and assign to possible secular laborers their respective duties.

He must render account of his administration to the Prior every month and to the Bursar General every two months.

Important transactions must always be made in agreement with the Prior.

Let the Cellarer endeavor to observe the many norms regarding temporal care contained both in our own proper law and in the universal law of the Church as well as in the civil laws.

131. Our communities, in so far as they are juridical persons recognized by law, have the capacity to acquire, possess, administer and alienate temporal goods in conformity with our Constitutions.

Such norms serve to favor, safeguard and express our way of living evangelical poverty. We must keep ourselves far from every form and appearance of luxury, of excessive gain and of accumulation of goods, because only thus shall we be able to bear witness to authentic poverty (can. 634).

132. Purchases are made and the juridical acts of ordinary administration are performed validly by the local Superior and also by the officials designated for this or by those appointed, according to article 200 of the Constitutions, within the limits of their office or of the mandate received from the same Superior (cf. can. 638, 2).

133. The acts which exceed the limit and the modalities of the ordinary administration and for which the consent also of the General Counsel is always required are:

- a. truly extraordinary expenses whenever they go beyond the established figure;

b. the acceptance of burdensome donations and inheritances and of legacies of Holy Masses;

c. leases of real estate;

d. the granting of easement;

e. alienations of whatever kind they may be;

f. any obligation from which the patrimonial situation of the hermitage could suffer harm;

g. any transaction concerning votive donations made to the hermitage as such or regarding things precious for their artistic or historical value (cf. can. 638);

h. to stipulate or to dissolve a contract of work.

134. For the actions contemplated under e. and f. whenever they go beyond the sum determined by the Holy See for each region, as also for those listed under g. the permission of the Holy See itself is required besides.

For truly extraordinary expenses of the hermitage the following norm is in force; if they exceed a first sum established *ad hoc* by the General Counsel, the Prior must have the consent, that is, the absolute majority of favorable votes, of his conventual Chapter.

In case such expenses exceed a second sum, very much greater than the first and established as above, beyond the consultative vote of the conventual Chapter the written consent of the General Counsel is required. Finally, a third sum is established, to go beyond which the Prior, having consulted the conventual Chapter, must have the written consent of the Plenary General Counsel.

Such sums, once established, are then opportunely brought up to date by the same General Counsel.

135. Let the buildings of our hermitages be very simple, but functional and aesthetically valid.

In order to begin the construction of new buildings the Prior must have the consent of the conventual Chapter and the written permission of the Father Major, who shall proceed with the counsel of the Visitators.

Likewise, restorations and changes in the interior of the buildings require equal consent and permission whenever it is a question of modifications which notably affect the structure of the building.

136. With regard to donations, inheritances and legacies of Holy Masses which are part of pious wills in general or pious foundations in particular, the norms of universal law are to be observed.

Offerings which are given to us for a purpose specified by the donors must be used for that purpose or else refused.

Gifts, inheritances, remunerations for work or pensions which fall to the lot of one of the hermits belong to the hermitage in which he actually resides (cf. can. 668, 3).

137. For leasing real estate as well as for any kind of easement the following norms are to be observed:

- a just cause is required, such as urgent necessity, evident utility, mercy, charity or another grave reason;
- property should not ordinarily be let below the price indicated in the written estimate of experts;
- the consent of the conventual Chapter and the permission of the General Counsel are required;
- the norms of civil law in force in the territory concerning contracts in general and specifically and concerning payments are to be observed and with the same consequences, unless they are contrary to divine law or unless canon law expects something else.

138. With regard to alienations of any kind, the norms of universal law are to be observed exactly.

However, such alienations are possible only if they are truly advantageous for the hermitage or for the Congregation (cf. can. 1293).

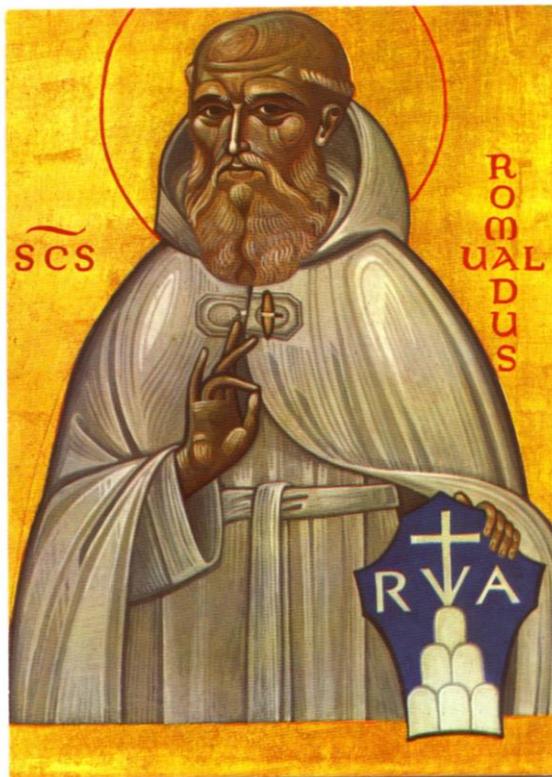
139. The local Superior, in order to contract debts or obligations exceeding the sum established *ad hoc* by the General Counsel, must have, besides the consent of the conventual Chapter, also the authorization of the same General Counsel. The latter shall give its consent or not according to the established formalities on the basis of the total sum concerned, adhering however to what is stipulated by canon 639, 5 of Canon Law.

140. Every Prior and Cellarer shall make it an obligation of conscience to set aside a fitting part of the income of the hermitage for the necessities of the Church and for the assistance of the needy (cf. can. 640). Whatever is given to the poor is given to Christ who suffers in them.

Every sum wasted or improperly hoarded is a theft from and an injury to the least of the brethren of Christ, before whom the administrators must render account.

Third Part

THE CONGREGATION



CHAPTER XI

THE GENERAL CHAPTER

141. The Camaldolese Hermits, spiritual sons of Blessed Paul Giustiniani, lead their solitary life in the communities of the single hermitages, which form the Congregation of Monte Corona.

The Congregation finds its visible unity and its highest expression in the celebration of the General Chapter. The latter, before fulfilling its various duties of government and legislation, should be considered as fraternal communion, united in the praise of God, gathered together by the love of our vocation and built up by mutual charity (cf. can. 631).

142. To the General Chapter, supreme authority of our Congregation, it pertains above all:

- to safeguard the spiritual patrimony mentioned in articles 8-15 of the Constitutions (cf. can. 578);
- to promote an adequate renewal in harmony with such a patrimony;
- to provide for the elections and the appointments;
- to deal with the affairs of greater importance according to what is decreed in the third part of the Constitutions;
- to issue norms which all are bound to observe.

143. The General Chapter is ordinarily convoked every six years by the Father Major with the consent of the Visitors. For the convocation of the extraordinary General Chapter in particular circumstances it is required in addition that the Consultors be consulted.

144. The General Chapter is composed in such a way as to represent the entire Congregation so that it may appear as a true sign of its unity in charity. The Capitulars are such either by right or by legitimate election.

The following participate by right in the General Chapter:

- the Father Major
- the two Visitators General
- the two Consultors
- the Bursar General
- the Priors of each hermitage
- the Vicars at the semi-autonomous houses.

To these are added other hermits of ours of perpetual vows, legitimately elected in the proportion of fifty percent of the Capitulars who are such by right. In the case of a possible fraction the number is rounded upward.

145. When three years have passed since the last Ordinary General Chapter the Intermediate General Chapter is to be convoked. It is distinguished from the Ordinary General Chapter by the fact that elections for the sexennial offices are not held.

146. The composition of the Intermediate General Chapter is the same as that of the Ordinary: see article 144 of the Constitutions.

147. The General Chapter acts validly with at least two-thirds of the Definitors convoked, present at the sessions.

148. At the beginning of each General Chapter all the Priors present are to resign from their office. Those possibly absent are to do so in writing. Likewise the mandate of a Vicar of a non-autonomous house ceases.

At the beginning of the Ordinary General Chapter, on the other hand, such a resignation is to be offered not only by the Priors but by all the members of the General Curia no sooner than the capitular functions proper to them have been carried out.

149. The Priors possibly absent, as also the Vicars of the individual hermitages, are understood to be delegated by the General Chapter and, therefore, destined to carry out the functions of the local Superior until the arrival of the new Prior or else of the letter with which the preceding Prior is reconfirmed in office.

150. In the Intermediate or in the Extraordinary General Chapter, the Father Major presides over it by right, unless he names one of the Capitulars to take his place.

151. With regard to the elections, let us follow canons 146-156, 164-183, 624-626 of the Code of Canon Law and the norms contained in the following articles.

152. All the Capitulars promise together with an oath to elect those whom before God and their own conscience they judge truly worthy and suited to the respective offices.

153. The outgoing first Visitor General, to whom it pertains until the election of the President of the General Chapter to preside over the Chapter, is to propose from among the Capitulars two scrutators. These are then submitted to vote in order to receive the majority of favorable votes.

154. The scrutators must collect the votes and in front of the President determine whether the number of the ballots corresponds to the number of the electors, proceed then with due secrecy to the scrutiny of the votes themselves and make known to all the outcome of the vote. If the number of the votes is greater than the number of the electors, the election is null and void.

155. He is legitimately elected who obtains the absolute majority of the votes, that is more than half, even only a fraction of a vote.

If no one obtains such a number of votes, a second scrutiny follows which, if the outcome is still negative, will be followed by a third, which, however, must be limited to the two candidates who have already obtained the greater number of votes with respect to the others. The others are no longer eligible, and the two candidates are deprived of active voice.

In the third scrutiny, in order to be elected the majority, that is, more votes than the other, is required. If there is a parity of votes, the senior by first profession in our Congregation is considered elected. If they have made profession on the same day, then the senior by Ordination and finally by age is considered elected.

If in the second scrutiny, more than two obtained the greater part or a parity of the votes, only the two seniors among them, in the sense described above, will be eligible in the third scrutiny (cf. can. 119, 1).

156. We must be profoundly convinced that the result of the election is an expression of the will of God and, therefore, must engage the obedience and the submission of the elected, safeguarding always the right of the latter to present motives deemed valid by him for not

accepting. In this case, if the Definitors after attentive consideration insist and intend to maintain their intention, the one elected should consent and accept, trusting in divine help (cf. RB 68: 5) and remembering that “in the service of God the dignities themselves are a service and a submission” (Bl. Paul, F VII 138).

157. In order to orient better the choices of the electors and to render the votes more united while respecting full liberty, some elections are preceded and started by a proposal:

- a. The President of the Chapter, once elected without previous proposal and with secret ballot, proposes the scribe, two accountants and the doorkeeper of the Chapter, all designated from among the Capitulars.
- b. The Father Major, elected without previous proposal and with secret ballot, proposes the two Visitors General.
- c. The Father Major with the consent of the Visitors proposes the two Consultors, the Bursar General and the Priors of each hermitage.

158. All those who are designated thus by proposal are elected by vote one by one.

Before making known to the Capitulars the names of those proposed for election, these latter, as far as possible, are to be previously informed and asked their opinion.

Having accepted the election, the one elected immediately obtains the office with full right; no election among us, in fact, needs confirmation because the candidates for the elections are proposed by the Father Major himself.

159. If a canonical impediment from which it is possible and customary to grant a dispensation interferes with the election of one whom the Capitulars consider more suited and whom they prefer, they themselves with their own votes can postulate him from the competent authority (cf. can. 180).

160. In order that the postulation have value, at least two thirds of the votes are required.

The vote for the postulation must be expressed by means of the words: "I postulate" or an equivalent phrase. The formula "I elect or postulate" or its equivalent is valid for the election if the impediment does not exist, otherwise for the postulation (cf. can. 181).

161. The one postulated does not acquire any right from the postulation, and the competent authority is not bound by the obligation of admitting it.

He who accepts the admitted postulation obtains immediately the office with full right. If the postulation was not admitted by the competent authority, the right of electing returns to the electoral body (cf. can. 181 and 182).

162. Everyone elected to an office which entails jurisdiction or at any rate authority over the persons or the property of a hermitage or of the Congregation is to receive as soon as possible a written document from which he appears as the legitimate holder of the title of such an office.

In the same document mention should also be made of a possible admitted postulation. Such a document, at the expiration of the mandate of the title-holder, must be reconsigned to the competent authority.

163. After the election of the President of the Chapter, it pertains to him to indicate the order of work and to propose the questions to be discussed, asking the opinion of each of the Capitulars.

Last of all, let him also express his own opinion; then with the customary vote the affair is to be decided. That which was agreed to by the absolute majority of those present is to be considered as decided and valid. If after two scrutinies the votes turn out to be equal, the President, can use his right to break the parity with his vote (cf. can. 119, 2).

164. Let each one be clear, brief and concise in his interventions, adhering strictly to the subject in question and aiming only at the greater good of our Congregation.

Let him listen with respect and charity to the opinions of the others without setting himself up as their judge, abstaining from any angry word or gesture toward anyone. Let him then willingly accept the regulations and decisions made, even if contrary to what he would have wished.

165. In virtue of the vow of obedience and under formal precept, it is of obligation to observe secrecy, most especially in front of the persons concerned, regarding all that which, discussed among the Capitulars in the plenary sessions, could give rise to discord, suspicions, strife or scandal among the hermits.

In order to avoid similar dangers it is forbidden to everyone to question the Capitulars on what is being done in the sessions.

166. All the regulations of the General Chapter, unless the Capitulars have ordered otherwise for individual cases, are to take effect from the moment of their publication at the conclusion of the Chapter itself.

Whenever doubts arise afterward about the authentic interpretation of any of these, it pertains to the General Counsel to declare its genuine meaning, which then must be accepted by all with humility and submission.

167. For the regulations of the General Chapter to remain in force beyond the next General Chapter, they must be confirmed by the latter.

168. If during the Chapter a Capitular desires to propose and submit to the judgment of the assembly anything for the good of the Congregation, the President, even if personally not perhaps in agreement, must present it and put it to a vote.

169. If something is proposed to the General Chapter which was first submitted to the conventual Chapter concerned, and not approved by it, the General Chapter cannot validly provide for the request unless explicit mention is first made of the lack of approval by the conventual Chapter.

170. After its other tasks have been completed, the Chapter then proceeds to the elections mentioned in articles 151-158.

In the elections which are to take place during the General Chapter only the Capitulars present in the house have active voice; passive voice is possessed by all those who are not excluded from it by our own law or by the universal law (cf. can. 167).

171. The elections are to be held in the following order:

- the Father Major
- the two Visitators General
- the two Consultors General
- the Bursar General
- the Priors of the individual hermitages according to dignity and then antiquity
- the two Visitators of the residence of the Father Major whenever the latter resides in the same hermitage as the Visitators General.

172. Although it is desirable that no one be elected to more than one office, several offices can be united in the same person if the circumstances require it and the personal qualities permit, unless, from the nature of the case, it is clearly a question of mutually incompatible offices.

173. The Father Major and the two Visitators General are elected for a period of six years. They are eligible, in a case of necessity or expediency, for another six years.

The Priors of the hermitages are to be elected for three years, and for just motives they can be re-elected and, in a case of true necessity, even for a third triennium in the same hermitage.

174. In order that the Superiors may not remain too long in offices of government without interruption (cf. can. 624, 2), it is decreed that the Father Major and the two Visitators General, after a possible second sexennium in office, must remain free from every assignment of government for a period of at least three years so that they may strengthen their spirit with a less disturbed eremitical regular observance.

175. The uninterrupted holding of the various offices of government or even of only one of them cannot exceed the duration of twelve years, after which a cessation from office must be granted for the space of at least three years.

However, one who at the time of the General Chapter has already been Superior for nine consecutive years can nevertheless be elected to the sexennial office of Father Major or Visitor General.

176. The term of office contemplated in articles 173, 174 and 175 can be modified in cases of true necessity by the General Chapter, always with an absolute majority of the votes, or else, in the intermediate time, by the Father Major with the consent of the Visitators and the counsel of the Counselors.

The same authorities can permit under like conditions that a hermit be elected Prior even if he has not yet completed after perpetual profession the years required by article 177 of the Constitutions.

177. In order to be called to hold the office of Father Major a hermit must have spent after perpetual profession at least ten years in our Congregation (cf. can. 623), and ideally he ought to have had a previous experience of government among us.

For the other Superiors, three years after perpetual vows is sufficient.

178. For the offices of Father Major, of the Visitors General and of the Priors, Holy Orders are required.

179. Once the election of the Father Major has been accomplished, the presidency of the General Chapter passes to him with all its consequences.

He must first of all make his profession of faith before the capitular assembly. Once they have been elected, the Visitors General and the Priors must do the same all together before the Father Major (cf. can. 833, 8).

180. The new Plenary General Counsel is to make opportune provision for the composition of the families of the hermitages.

The transfers of the hermits should be limited to the indispensable minimum, nor should heed be paid to the restless and inconstant in search of novelty and of more attractive surroundings. There should be no hesitation, however, in proceeding to a transfer when the true good of a hermit makes it advisable.

181. It pertains to the General Chapter, with an absolute majority of secret votes, to decide on the opening of a new hermitage.

Whenever it is believed opportune not to await the celebration of the Chapter, the consent of the Plenary General Counsel is sufficient.

182. The foundation of a new hermitage is to be accomplished keeping in mind the usefulness for the Holy Church arising from the witness of our contemplative life and with the assurance of the conditions necessary to guarantee to our hermits the possibility of leading regularly the solitary life according to the spirit of our Congregation (cf. can. 610).

183. In order to open a hermitage, the previous written consent of the diocesan Bishop is required (cf. can. 609, 1).

The consent of the diocesan Bishop implies the right to lead a life in conformity with the proper character of our Congregation and in addition the right to have our own church (cf. can. 611).

184. Those to whom it pertains by right to open new houses can decide the closing, temporary or definitive, of a hermitage which, in their prudent judgment, no longer lends itself to the realization of our Camaldolese eremitical vocation or, at any rate, appears to be permanently more a burden than a help to the Congregation.

Such a decision, which requires two thirds of the votes of the capitular assembly, cannot be carried out without first having consulted the diocesan Bishop (cf. can. 616).

185. The scribe is to see that the document mentioned in article 162 is delivered to all those elected, whether present or absent, and to the Priors a copy of all the Chapter's regulations so that they may communicate them to the hermits of their communities.

CHAPTER XII

THE FATHER MAJOR

186. Let all those who take part in the government of our Congregation exercise in a spirit of service the power which they have received from God through the ministry of the Church.

Docile, therefore, to the will of God in the fulfillment of their own commission, let them rule their subjects as sons of God. Encouraging their voluntary obedience with respect toward the human person, they should gladly listen to their subjects and likewise promote their concordant collaboration for the good of the Congregation and of the Church. The authority of the Superiors, however, to decide and to command what is to be done remains firm (cf. can. 618).

187. During the sexennium which follows the General Chapter the supreme government of our Congregation is in the hands of the Father Major with the Visitators.

Among us the Father Major is the only Major Superior in the sense of can. 620 of the Code of Canon Law. He has power, to be exercised according to universal and particular law, over all the hermitages and over all the hermits.

Respecting the autonomy of life and of administration of the individual houses, he does not normally intervene in them. However, for the good functioning of the families and of the places he has the faculty to see to as much as he deems opportune.

Father Major, during his mandate, should visit with a certain frequency each of our eremitical communities.

Any subject who considers that he has been treated unjustly either by his own Prior or by the Visitators on the occasion of the canonical Visitation has the right of recourse to the Father Major.

A permission denied by a local Superior can be granted by the Father Major, or else by the Father Visitors during the Canonical Visitation, only if the hermit makes mention of such denial and not without having heard from the local Superior his reasons for his denial. It pertains to the latter to communicate to the interested party the decision of the higher authority.

188. The Father Major must transmit to the Holy See, in the manner and at the time determined by the latter, a brief report on the state and on the life of the Congregation.

In this report mention is to be made of the religious who have in any way whatsoever been separated from the Congregation (cf. can. 592, 1 and 704).

189. If a grave necessity requires it, the Father Major can be elected Prior of the hermitage where he resides.

In such a case he must name a Vice-Prior to whom he can commit at least a well-defined part of his duties as Prior.

190. It pertains to the Father Major, as head of the whole Congregation, to guide and to animate the zeal of all the hermits in the realization of their vocation. To that purpose he must guard and promote the faithful observance of our Constitutions, Customs and capitular regulations.

Personally or through the local Superiors he is to see that the documents of the Holy Father and of the Holy See concerning the subjects entrusted to him are made known to them and observed (cf. can. 592, 2).

191. It is within the competence of the Father Major alone to give to our religious the permission necessary to be able to publish writings which deal with religious or moral questions (cf. can. 832).

192. It pertains to the Father Major to admonish two or three times, within the limits determined by himself, a Prior gravely delinquent in his duties before arriving at a possible removal as mentioned in article 111.

193. The Father Major with the Counsel of the Visitators has the faculty of transferring a hermit from one hermitage to another whenever the common good or that of the individual demands it.

194. If death or some other cause makes necessary the election of a new Father Major outside the General Chapter, the two Visitators General with the two Consultors are to convoke within three months (cf. can. 165) two of the Priors, according to the precedence indicated in the Customary, in order to proceed validly with the number of six to the election in the manner prescribed for the General Chapter.

He who in this way is elected Major assumes the office until the next Ordinary General Chapter.

In default of the Father Major the two Visitators General together supply for his absence in the government of the Congregation.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GENERAL CURIA

195. The term “General Curia” signifies the group of all those who in various ways share the right of governing our Congregation. They are the:

- Father Major
- two Visitators General
- two Consultors
- Bursar General

196. The “General Counsel” is formed by the Father Major and by the Visitators, who share together in the government of the Congregation.

It pertains to the Father Major to propose to the Visitators the questions to be discussed and to ask their counsel or consent according to the norms of the universal law and of the Constitutions.

The official decisions of the General Counsel are regularly placed on record.

197. The ordinary participation of the two Visitators in the government of the Congregation is expressed in the following way:

a. if, according to the Constitutions, the counsel of the Visitators is required, their convocation is not necessary. It is sufficient that the Father Major address himself to both in the manner deemed more suitable according to the circumstances and listen to their counsel. After that he is not bound to accede to their opinion. However, without a preponderant reason, of

which he is to be the judge, he should not depart from their advice, especially if concordant (cf. can. 127, 2/2);

b. if it is expressly prescribed that the Father Major act or decide with the consent of the Visitors, the latter must be convoked. For the validity of the action, also in the case of appointments to be made, it is required that the consent of the majority be obtained or, if only two are present, the favorable vote of both.

198. All those whose consent or counsel is requested are bound to express their own opinion sincerely and, if the seriousness of the affairs requires it, to observe secrecy diligently, an obligation which can be urged by the Father Major.

199. If in a hermitage for whatever reason the office of Prior becomes vacant and it does not seem opportune to wait until the General Chapter for the election, let the Father Major name, after previous opportune consultation, a new Prior with the consent of the two Visitors and having heard the opinion of the consultors (cf. can. 625, 3).

200. It pertains to the Father Major, having heard the opinion of the Visitors, to name the Masters of novices and the Cellarers as mentioned in articles 53 and 129 of the Constitutions.

201. In the cases foreseen by universal and particular law the two Consultors are also to share in the government of the Congregation. Together with the Father Major and the two Visitors they form the "Plenary General Counsel".

As often as the consent of the Plenary General Counsel is prescribed, its convocation is required.

202. The Consultors, elected by the General Chapter for six years participate by right in the General Chapter and form part of the electoral body in the election of the Father Major if this should be necessary outside the General Chapter.

If ever it should be necessary, outside the General Chapter, to proceed to the removal of one of the Visitators or Consultors or of the Bursar General or to accept the resignation of one of them or to elect a successor, the Father Major is to convoke the other members of the General Curia, who shall proceed with him collegially. If the number of five participants is not thereby attained, the college is to choose among the Priors the member lacking so that he can take part in the above-mentioned actions.

Whoever are elected Visitators, Consultors, or Bursar General outside the Ordinary General Chapter, remain in office until the next Ordinary General Chapter.

203. The consent of the Plenary General Counsel is required:

- a. when there is a question of truly extraordinary expenses which exceed the sum established by the General Counsel;
- b. if there is need to decide on the opening or the closing of a hermitage and it is not deemed opportune to await the General Chapter;
- c. whenever it is necessary to see to the removal of a Prior, in conformity with canons 192-195 of the Code of Canon Law;
- d. in the modification of the limits of the cloister of a hermitage.

204. The consent of the Visitators and the counsel of the Consultors are required in the following cases:

- a. in the appointment, in the transfer and in the acceptance of the resignation of a Prior outside the General Chapter;

- b. in the granting of the “transitus” of a religious of perpetual vows, whether coming to us or in the opposite sense;
- c. in the granting of the indult to a temporary professed to leave the Congregation, according to the norm of canon 688, 2 of the Code of Canon Law. (If, however, it is a question of a religious of perpetual vows, canon 691 is to be observed);
- d. in the convocation of an Extraordinary General Chapter;
- e. on the occasions contemplated by article 176 of the Constitutions.

205. The Plenary General Counsel performs an important function in the procedure of the dismissal of a religious whether of temporary or perpetual vows. In this case the particular norms of the Code of Canon Law are to be observed (cf. can. 699).

206. The Bursar General, elected by the General Chapter for six years, has the duty of administering, under the direction of the General Counsel, all the goods of the Congregation not belonging to the local administrations and to review the economic reports of the latter in order to present them to the General Chapter together with his own report.

207. It pertains to the General Counsel to establish:

- 1) concrete norms for the administration of the property of the Congregation, taking account of the rapidly changing times and of the continual changes of circumstances and needs, and always in conformity with the Constitutions;
- 2) the amount of the annual contribution which each hermitage must pay to the Bursar General’s office.

208. The opinion of the Bursar General shall be requested by the General Counsel whenever relevant economic questions are discussed either of the general administration or of the individual hermitages.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CANONICAL VISITATION

209. Before every General Chapter, the Visitors, by mandate of the Father Major, must visit all the hermitages of our Congregation.

The Father Major himself, if he deems it opportune, can make the visits with one of the Visitors or with both.

It pertains to him to name a substitute Visitor in the case in which one of the Visitors General is canonically impeded or otherwise hindered (cf. can. 628, 1).

210. The canonical visitation, made to the individual hermits, to the community and to the house as such, is meant to reinforce our common zeal in the search for God in a climate of sincere charity and in the genuine eremitical discipline.

It also contributes to reviving the spiritual bond among the various communities sometimes quite isolated.

211. The Visitors and those visited should collaborate together so that the visitation may bear those fruits which we rightly expect.

In the meetings with the individual hermits let the Visitors show themselves paternal and fraternal at the same time, diligent and understanding.

Let the religious be trustful, always disposed to answer, according to truth in charity, the questions legitimately asked.

No one is allowed to hinder in any way such a dialogue, since it is an essential moment of the canonical visitation (cf. can. 628, 3).

212. During the Visitation, the Visitators enjoy the same authority which they ordinarily have together with the Father Major. If during this time difficult or notably important questions should present themselves, the Visitators are always to consult the Father Major and, if possible, await his decision.

During the time of the Visitation the two Visitators are to exercise their authority together, this being required for the validity itself of their actions, unless the Father Major has entrusted some particular task to one of the Visitators.

213. Respecting the autonomy of life and of administration of the hermitages visited, the Visitators are to discern whether the life of the eremitical community is in conformity with the spirit of our Founder and with our sound traditions.

The Priors are invited to approach the Visitators with a fraternal spirit for possible help or advice.

It pertains to the Visitators to inspect the books of the temporal administration and the register of Holy Masses as well as all the buildings and the entire premises of the hermitage.

214. It pertains to the duty of the Visitators to observe above all:

- if peace and charity reign among the hermits;
- if the Constitutions, the Customs and the capitular decrees are observed;
- if the Liturgy is celebrated in a worthy and decorous manner;
- if an atmosphere of prayer and of silence exists;
- if the hermits devote themselves faithfully to *Lectio Divina*;
- if the cloister and separation from the world are properly respected;
- if the religious receive what is reasonably necessary for their lives;

- if poverty is observed and how the duty of helping the needy is fulfilled;
- if the novices and temporary professed receive an adequate formation.

215. At the end of the Visitation the Visitators are to write in the proper Book of the Visitations their opportune regulations and recommendations, which they shall read to the community to promote its good functioning.

It pertains to the Prior of the house visited to see that what the Visitators have left behind does not fall into oblivion but is reread once a year and put into practice by all those concerned.

216. Let the Visitators deliver to the Father Major as soon as possible a copy of the regulations issued by them in the hermitages visited together with their observations. Such documents will be the basis of a synthesis which must be read at the General Chapter.

CHAPTER XV

THE CONSTITUTIONS

217. We must be convinced that our Constitutions, even their purely technical and juridical regulations, have the purpose of leading us to the following of Christ.

“Let the rule of our life,” exhorts Blessed Paul “be the life of Christ, let our written rule be the Gospel: let us have it daily in our hands, and let us take care never to deviate from the very rules of Christ. In these is the true religious life, in these is contained the norm of all perfection” (Bl. Paul, F + 96). “But seeing that it is difficult to arrive at making these proposals of the perfect life our own without an external rule of just discipline, the present Constitutions of the eremitical life have been proposed for that purpose. Let us be convinced that the perfect model of religious life is not described *in them* but that *through means of them* we can reach the more perfect norms, those of the Gospel and of the Apostles” (Bl. Paul, Rule, p.109).

218. It pertains to the Father Major to clarify the doubts of minor importance which may arise concerning the Constitutions, the Customs, the liturgical norms or the regulations issued by the General Chapter.

If such doubts are of a certain importance, the Father Major, before declaring the true meaning, is to consult the Visitators.

It pertains to the Holy See, however, to interpret authentically the possibly unclear norms of the Constitutions.

219. The Constitutions can be modified only with the approval of the Holy See.

In order to request a modification there are required a grave motive and the consent of the General Chapter expressed with at least two thirds of the votes.

The norms assembled in the Customs can be revised and suitably adapted according to the demands of time and place, but only for valid motives and with the consent of two consecutive General Chapters with an absolute majority of votes.

220. It is necessary to bear in mind that the best forms of adaptation and of “aggiornamento” will not be successful unless animated by interior personal renewal, which should always have the first place. In this sense our spiritual inheritance is in the hands of each one of us.

221. All the norms and prescriptions contained in the Constitutions and in the Customs are binding for the life of the hermit of Monte Corona. They form the law under which he wishes to fight (cf. RB 58: 10) and according to which he pledges himself with his profession to live his particular vocation, guaranteeing it in this way stability and assuring it of a felicitous development.

Not all the prescriptions have the same importance. However, every hermit shall endeavor to conform his own life to them.

In order then that all may know and love our laws, the private reading of and meditation on them is recommended, and the public reading of them is prescribed in such a way that in the course of the year the Rule, Constitutions and the Customs are read.

222. In these Constitutions are assembled the teachings of our Fathers, renewed and brought up to date, keeping in mind the directives of the Church. Let us not abandon them, and they will keep us faithful in the service of God. Let us love them and live them generously, and they will be our protection. Our Constitutions, indeed, are the form and, as it were, the sacrament of the holiness to which God destines each one of us. However, it is the Spirit who gives life and who incites us to go beyond the letter while still observing it. Therefore, let us make our own the prayer of our Founder, the Blessed Paul Giustiniani:

“Lord,
You have willed me to be a monk.
You have willed me to be a hermit;
grant that I may really be one,
not exteriorly through my habit,
through ceremonies, in appearance,
but interiorly,
through the dispositions of my soul.

Grant that I may never
wander far
from the true and perfect
monastic and eremitical institution
but to make progress in it day by day.”
(F VII 82).